

Happenings at Hope

November – December ~ Vol. 3, No. 6

In this Issue

- 1 – From the Pastor
- 2 – Redeeming Holy Days
From Pagan Lies
- 4 – What God Really Wants
You to Give Up For
Advent
- 6 – Ladies of Hope
- 6 – Parish News

Worship & Study

Bible Class & Sunday School
9:30am

The Divine Service
Sunday, 10:30am
Wednesday, 7pm

Ladies' & Men's Bible Studies
1st and 2nd Saturdays of
the month respectively,
at 9am

Hope Lutheran Church

2930 W 9000 S
West Jordan, UT 84088
westjordanlutherans.org
Rev. Paul Webber
(801)569-1111



From the Pastor

Dear members and friends of Hope Lutheran Church; where has the summer gone? It seems that only yesterday we were celebrating our Lord's Resurrection on Easter. And now, in but a few weeks, we will have come into the season of Advent, during which we prepare to receive and celebrate the birth of our Savior on Christmas.

Advent is similar to Lent, in that both of these seasons of the church year are "penitential." We prepare for the joys of both Christmas and Easter according to the words of the prophet Joel, "'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."

The way in which many people have traditionally observed the seasons of Advent and Lent has been to abstain from some food item or activity that they enjoy. But, is this really what God wants most from us? Does He want us to *give up* something, or would He rather that we *add* something to our lives, especially as we prepare to celebrate Christmas and Easter. In this issue you will find an article that has to do with that very question.

You will also find an article that has to

do with the recently passed holiday of Halloween Did you know that Halloween was not originally, nor is still, a strictly pagan holiday. Even though the way in which we commonly observe Halloween has much more to do with zombies than the Christian Faith, Rev. Joe Abrahamson reminds us what the origins of Halloween really are.

And, finally, I am sure that, by now, you have heard of our recently organized ladies group, Ladies of Hope. Mrs. Charisse Olsen, the secretary of the group, has written a short article for this issue of *Happenings at Hope* explaining what the ladies' group is, what it does, and why all the ladies of the congregation would find it rewarding to become involved with the group.

God Bless You All – Pastor Webber.

Redeeming Holy Days From Pagan Lies: The True Story of Halloween

By Rev. Joseph Abrahamson

There is a lot of new mythology about Halloween that has been invented to claim that Halloween is a pagan holiday. But Halloween is not, nor was it in history, a pagan day of celebration.

In the first three centuries after Christ's resurrection, the lives of the martyrs of the Church were commemorated on the day and in the place where they were killed. There were so many who were killed because of their faith in Christ during those centuries. Throughout the Christian Church different days were set aside not only for each martyr, but a special day for all Saints. The date for this observance has not always been the same in every time in place, but a common day for commemorating the Saints has been around throughout the Christian Church from very early times. And the fact that this day now falls on November 1st has nothing to do with paganism.

OK, so what does this have to do with Halloween? In the Bible, the day begins at sundown or evening. This is why we celebrate Christmas Eve. Halloween is 'All Hallows' Eve', that is All Saints' Evening. Halloween is the beginning of All Saints' Day, starting at sundown on October 31st.

All Saints' Eve (Halloween) and All Saints' Day have a special place in the commemoration of the Lutheran Church because of the Reformation. It was on October 31st, Halloween, that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg, Germany. It was on that date he chose to challenge the corruption in the official church about the notion that salvation in Christ could be bought with money or works. All Saints are saved by Grace,

through Faith, revealed by God's Word in Christ. Halloween was the day on which the Church returned to reliance upon Christ alone and not upon self. It should not be surprising that Satan and the World have gone to such extremes to defile Halloween with anything that would distract Christians and the unbelievers from *Sola*



Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia

and *Solus Christus* (Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, and Christ Alone).

Halloween Traditions

In this world some traditions have become mainstay of Halloween. Though these traditions are not necessarily a problem by themselves, they have been claimed by the Neopagans and Wiccans as evidence that Christianity is a fraud and newcomer that has replaced the "Older" so-called "Truth". But those who claim this lie.

The haunted house started in the early 1970s. The first records of Haunted Houses were from Cincinnati, Ohio where the Jaycees (Junior Chambers of Commerce) introduced the first Haunted Houses as a way to keep kids entertained on Halloween. So which is older, All Saints Day starting in the 2nd Century or Haunted Houses starting in the 1970s?

Jack o'Lanterns are an American invention from the mid 1800's. Ireland and Britain had older traditions of carving vegetables into lanterns. But those traditions are not ancient. It was in 1837 that the term "Jack o' Lantern" first appeared as a term for a carved vegetable lantern. Previously the term referred to the man or boy a town hired to keep the street lamps lit through the night. The pumpkin was used with the cornucopia as a fruit that was displayed throughout fall harvest time in America as a sign of God's providential blessing. There is a lot of folklore about the Jack O'Lantern, but it is fakelore invented to create a fictional scary history for the Jack O'Lantern. But which is older? All Saints' Day or the Jack O'Lantern?

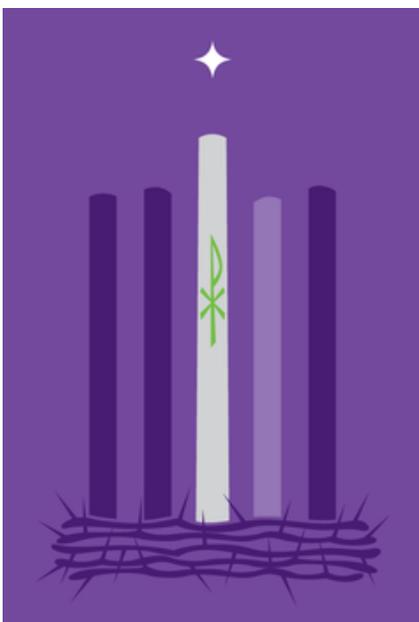
Trick or treating is very popular in America and several other countries. In the Middle Ages (1300's to 1500's or so) there was a practice where children or the poor would go from door to door to beg. In some places these beggars would sing or perform in order to get gifts of money or food from householders.

While this happened every day of the year, because these beggars had to eat every day, they were particular active on holidays. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints' Day were special days when children and adults would go from home to home singing hymns and carols and begging.

Wearing costumes on Halloween is first known in Scotland in 1895 and in the United States in 1911. The earliest use of the words "trick or treat" is from 1927 in the United States. In the early 20th Century there were thousands of postcards made with Halloween themes, but none of them showed "trick or treating" until the 1930s. So again, what is older? All Saints' Day or Trick or Treating?

Halloween / Reformation Day / All Saints' Day is a very special day of the year for the Christian Church. We commemorate all saints past, present, and future with the confession that we cannot save ourselves with our own works, no price we could ever pay would be good enough. But Christ has paid for the sins of whole world. And all believers in Christ, and these are the Saints, will be raised on the last day to eternal life. Reclaiming Halloween means knowing where it comes from, why the day was established, and the historical significance it holds for the Christian Church. Satan and the world are always willing to undermine and steal anything that is of value to the confession of the truth of Scripture. Let us not fall prey to the lies. Enjoy Halloween! Enjoy Jack O'Lanterns! Enjoy Trick or Treating. But confess the truth!

This article is a condensation of the original version, which can be found here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2013/10/redeeming-holy-days-from-pagan-lies-halloween-a-short-history/>



What God REALLY Wants You to Give Up

It is common for Christians to have the practice of abstaining from, or "giving up" some thing or activity which they enjoy during the seasons of Advent and Lent. The reason why many Christians have this practice is, in a sense, admirable: giving up something they want in order to focus themselves more on what Jesus gave up to save us them from their sins.

Still though, even though the motivation of focusing oneself on Christ is admirable, there is a better way to do this than giving up some activity

or food item that you normally enjoy. Instead of *giving up* some *earthly* thing, during the seasons of Advent and Lent, God would rather that we focus ourselves on Christ by *adding heavenly* things—taking in more of His Word, and giving more of our time to do so.

We do well to remember that the point of the Christian life isn't to throw off all things physical in order to attain a higher level of “spirituality.” The point of the Christian life is to immerse ourselves into the means of Grace. Instead of focusing on throwing off all things physical, we should strive to take in all things that are truly spiritual; God's law and gospel, the forgiveness of sins, the true body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

This is why the Lutheran Church has, historically, not advocated that its members abstain from some earthly enjoyment during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Instead, the Lutheran Church has, historically and presently, urged its members to give even *more* of their time than they normally do during these penitential seasons of the Church year to receive God's Word.

What does Jesus tell us about this? Well, in the Bible He doesn't tell us anything specifically about the seasons of Advent or Lent. But, Jesus does tell us this: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The truth of God's Word is what makes us Jesus' disciples. The truth of God's Word is what continues to sets us free from the fear and power of sin and death. This means that the truth of God's Word is the absolute best way to prepare for the joys of Christmas and Easter.

You are all welcome to join us this Advent season in *giving up* our time on the Wednesday evenings leading up to Christmas. On these evenings we will be coming together around the means of grace, and especially we will be focusing on how Christmas is not just as holiday “about Jesus.” Instead, the coming of Christ on Christmas was the work of all three persons of the Trinity.

– Pastor Webber



Thanksgiving-Eve Worship Service

*Wednesday, November
23rd 7pm*

The Ladies of Hope

The Ladies of Hope is a newly organized fellowship group at Hope. You may ask what does this group do, and who are they?

The group's members are ladies who attend church at Hope. Some examples of things that the group is involved with include organizing pot lucks, sending cards to members and visitors, and raising money to donate to various projects. In the last several months the Ladies of Hope have established a food pantry at the church, hosted the joint Reformation service, sent cards for recent birthdays, and purchased new Advent banners. You may have already received a card of well wishes in the mail.

The group generally meets the first Saturday of each month. All ladies of the congregation are welcome to attend. It is a fun opportunity to get to know more about the ladies of Hope's congregation. There is always something going on, so Ladies come join in the fun!

– Charisse Olsen

Parish News

Upcoming Events

November

11-12, Men's Getaway

December

4, Congregational Forum & Voter's Meeting

11, Movie Night *The Nativity*

Special Services

November

23, Thanksgiving-Eve, 7pm

30, Advent Midweek, *God the Father*, 7pm

December

7, Advent Midweek, *God the Son*, 7pm

14, Advent Midweek, *God the Holy Spirit*, 7pm

24, Christmas Eve, 7pm & 11pm