

Happenings At Hope

May – June

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From the Pastor

It isn't uncommon for people to ask me why I wanted to train to be a pastor, or what I most reward about being a pastor now that I am one. So, regardless of whether or not you have, or ever would, ask this question of me, now you will have my answer.

It is certainly rewarding to be able to serve as the pastor of Hope Lutheran Church. However, it is not rewarding in the same way that other God-pleasing vocations are. In so many other jobs and callings, when things go well, you can properly say, "I have done a good job. I have used the abilities which God has given me and have produced a good thing." Now of course not



everyone would say this in the same way, but you get what I mean. Most every calling in life allows you to accurately conclude that, with God's help, you have been productive.

However, this is not true of the ministry of the Gospel. When things go well in a congregation, that is not fundamentally because the Pastor is doing a good job. This is because God the Holy Spirit works faith where and when it pleases Him. We know that, according to God's promises in Scripture, He is constantly at work in us through the means of grace. However, God has not promised where, when, and to what extent these means will have their desired effect in people. It is left for us simply to make use of these means as God has given us opportunity, leaving it to God to work through them.

And that is where pastors, myself included, have to leave it too. I have been called to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. This calling does not include determining by my own power or supposed authority the effectiveness of these divine means of salvation. But I don't need to determine this to enjoy my vocation. It is a great privilege and joy to be your pastor—bringing you God's Word in all its forms and trusting in God to do what He has promised; impart and strengthen faith, forgive sins, and give every other spiritual blessing which has been won for us by Christ.

Arming for What's Ahead

It seems wherever we turn Christianity is under attack. 147 students of Christ are murdered at a Kenyan university. Terrorizing of Christians continues in Iraq and Syria. Here at home, Indiana and Arkansas are pressured to back-peddle on "freedom of religion" legislation. The debate continues on whether Christian business owners may refuse for the sake of conscience to offer their services for ceremonies they regard as immoral (e.g., gay weddings). Does the national mood on this portend an inevitable assault on confessional Bible-believing churches? Will tax-exempt status be revoked for any religious institutions that address homosexuality as sin?

The world presses in on the Christian community, striving to suffocate its life-breath and making the proclamation of God's Word almost impossible. The cultural sea change on how the public perceives homosexuality and same-sex marriage means a really tough rowing arm is needed against the tidal wave generated by secular progressives. Especially affected are the young people, even many from our own churches and church schools. If the corrosive cultural creep comes stealthily and quickly through peer pressure, is it not of highest importance to have our own youth mixing with fellow comrades who believe, confess and live according to biblical principles and who are covered daily by the certainty of Christ's forgiving love?

The weight swinging against Christianity is progressively heavy. But there is a weightier arm that carries the burden of day! That arm was shown at Easter. That powerful right arm was shown at Ascension. That arm of the Sower

scattering the Seed of God's Word was shown at Pentecost and still is being wielded.

The factual truth of Christ's resurrection proves the validity of the entire Christian faith. No teaching of Holy Scripture will ever let us down. Heaven and earth will pass, but the words of Jesus will endure. His ascending into heaven means he rules with his divine glory over all things for the benefit of his believers. And Pentecost reminds us how God the Holy Spirit still is at work in our world as he convicts people of sin, converts sinners to saving faith in the Redeemer, and changes hearts and minds to follow the new way of life.

Believers in the Savior need not worry or despair as we pray for the future work of the church and strive mightily to teach our young and old alike the teachings of the Bible. God is in control and has a plan for the spread of his Word until the day of our Lord Jesus' great return. When Moses was tempted to give up as he led Israel wandering in the wilderness, didn't God ask him a stop-and-think rhetorical question? He asked Moses: "Is the Lord's arm too short?" (Numbers 11:23)

The church is well-armed!

Rev. John A. Moldstad,
President, Evangelical Lutheran Synod



Κύριε ἐλέησον - **LORD HAVE MERCY**

In the Divine Service, following the singing of the *Gloria Patri*, we immediately move into singing the *Kyrie Eleison*. This is certainly not a hard song to memorize. It goes: "Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us."

Now contrary to what you might have assumed, this song doesn't have to do with asking God to forgive our sins. By the time this song comes in the service, we have already asked God to do this, and through the pastor He has already done so. Rather, in the *Kyrie* we are asking something else of God—that He would continue to show us His mercy, so that we can all continue to live God-pleasing lives in peace.

The phrase, "Lord have mercy" really is a catch-all when it comes to invoking God's loving protection. You can never go wrong with asking for God's mercy, whether you are in a situation where you, personally, are in danger, or if you have become aware of the past or potential suffering of others. God isn't ignorant of what is going on. He has promised to hear our prayers and answer them in whatever way He knows is best. When we aren't sure of what we need ask God to do, we can simply pray to Him that He be merciful. God will know how to handle and respond to that prayer. He won't need further clarification or instructions. He'll figure it out as only He can.

Of course we are not alone in singing the *Kyrie* in our services, nor is this song a recent invention. The Biblical basis for this song is found in 1 Chronicles 16:34, "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever."

This song has been present in some form in orders of service ever since those orders of service were written down. And it isn't just in this set time in the service (between the *Gloria Patri* and *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*) that we utter the phrase, "Lord have mercy." This is also how we join in praying the prayer of the church, ending each petition, "Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer."

God's mercy, after all, is the basis for every good thing He does for us. We, personally, don't deserve anything from God except that which He has promised to give us in exchange for sin—suffering and death. However, God has been merciful to us in the person of Christ, who assumed human flesh and the essence of the human condition so that with His righteous perfection, Jesus could be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

For Jesus' sake, God has been merciful to us in forgiving our sins and marking us as His own, redeemed, children. As God's children, we have His promise that He is, and forever will be, merciful towards us. However, God tells us that He is also merciful to those who are not His children by faith, as we read in Matthew 5:45, "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust alike."

When we sing the *Kyrie Eleison*, we are praying that God be merciful to all—to us and even to those who would want to harm us on account of our faith. God has not limited himself regarding how and to whom He shows mercy. God is love, and He shows it to all those to whom He has given life.



The Rite Of Confirmation

In a few weeks, 5 young people in our congregation will publicly confess their faith and be welcomed into participation in the Lord's Supper. This is called the rite of confirmation. This is something which the Christian Church has been doing since the very beginning of its existence. This rite is based on the connection between the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is the way into the Christian Church. It is the divine means through which God imparts faith and forgiveness. But just because someone has been Baptized, and is a believer, doesn't mean that they are ready to partake of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper isn't like a sermon. Anyone can listen to a sermon, and benefit from it, without any previously existing understanding of what a Sermon, or the Word of God, is. However, one should not partake of the Lord's Supper without being able to discern 2 things; what the Lord's Supper is and their own fitness to receive it.

We read in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that the Lord's Supper is a great gift from God for those who receive it worthily, discerning it and themselves. However, for those who who receive the Lord's Supper not understanding what it is and what it means to receive it, they are guilty of sinning against that sacred meal. This is, in part, why the Christian Church has always had the

practice of instructing people in the truths of the Christian Faith before admitting them to the Lord's Supper. This is so that those who have been instructed can (a) understand that Jesus says the Lord's Supper is His true body and blood and (b) they can examine themselves spiritually according to the whole of God's revealed truth.

When someone is confirmed, that doesn't mean that their Baptism is changed, or increased, or improved. It is simply a confirmation of their having been taught the substance of the faith into which they were Baptized. To be instructed in the Christian Faith is the God-intended continuation of Baptism, as we are told in the great commission; "Go and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."

Those who will be confirmed this year have undergone two years of instruction according to Luther's Small Catechism. The catechism is the basic "textbook" of the Christian Faith. It contains the 10 Commandments, Apostles Creed, Lord's Prayer, Explanations of Baptism, Confession and Absolution, and the Lord's Supper, along with questions and answers that serve to flesh out the meanings of these "six chief parts." And, of course, there are many, many selections of Scripture which show that these beliefs which we have as Confessional Lutherans aren't merely things that we or others have made up. Rather, as Lutherans, we believe that which God has revealed to us in Scripture, for our forgiveness and salvation.



An Explanation
of Dr. Martin
Luther's
Small Catechism

The confirmands for this year are (left to right)

Angie Olsen

Grace Hoffman

Britton Hoffman

Jaxon Curtis

Elliot Tackie-Yarboi.



Congratulations to these young people who have been instructed in the truths of God's Word.

Parish News

Special Events:

May

17th – Ascension Day (observed)

24th – Pentecost

Confirmation (potluck following)

June

15th through July 4th – Pastor Webber away at Synod Convention and vacation. There will be no midweek or Sunday Bible Classes on those (21st and 28th) Sundays



May 3rd – Pastor Webber

May 16th – Sam Carson

May 26th – Tiffany Lujan

May 31st – Jaxon Curtis

June 29th – Tammy Curtis