



The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 * (708) 442-5250
“Faith Active in Love”
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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Issue 10

We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope, as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Fall Festival Rummage and Bake Sale

Saturday, October 12th, 2019

9:00 a.m. ~ 2:00 p.m.

(Half-price rummage from 1 to 2 p.m.)

Home Baked Goods
Rummage Tables
Taffy Apples (with and without nuts)
Homemade Salsa
Jewelry
Used Toys and Books
Raffle

Kitchen opens at 9 a.m.

Lunch served from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
(Hot dogs, polish sausage, sloppy joes,
potato pancakes, zucchini soup.)

Donations are still being accepted for the Annual Fall Festival Rummage and Bake Sale. These items need to be clean and in good working condition; and we kindly ask that no clothing, computers, TVs, or software be donated. Items may be brought to the church on Sunday mornings or during the week when the church office is open. A classroom in the lower hallway is posted for donations. For more information, or if you have questions, please contact Vera Borysek at (708) 562-2307.

A Note from Vera:

Contributions of homemade bakery items would be greatly appreciated. Please drop off your baked goods on Friday, October 11th between 1 and 3 p.m. Raffle books are available from Vera Borysek. Past volunteers will be scheduled in their usual places for the Fall Fest. If you are unable to volunteer this year please let me know. New volunteers are always welcome and appreciated. A group of 32-36 workers are needed to cover all the areas, keeping the Fall Fest running smoothly. Contact Vera Borysek at (708) 562-2307 for more information or to volunteer. Thank you.

Who Wants a Twenty Dollar Bill?

This sermon was preached at Sts. Peter and Paul on the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 15th, by Charles Matthies. The assigned texts were Exodus 32:7-14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; and Luke 15:1-10.

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?” Well, Jesus, that would be me. You see, I guess I would call myself a “Bird in the Hand” type of guy. If I have one in hand of something, I would struggle with the thought of risking that for the possibility of getting two more out of a bush. So, as far as risking ninety-nine of something to get just one more, to me the odds just aren’t worth it.

That’s why I think I would have been a terrible shepherd if I lived in Jesus’ time. Carol Ruiz has been facilitating a discussion about Psalm 23 after our summer services based on the book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, which was written by W. Philip Keller. Keller spent time as an actual shepherd, so he has first-hand knowledge of what makes a good shepherd and what makes a terrible one.

Through our readings and discussions, it has become clear that sheep are just about the neediest creatures on earth. Keller states they require endless attention and meticulous care. If they were left on their own, their chances of survival would be next to nothing. They’ll drink dirty water and graze on barren pastures rather than seek clean water or find new grazing territory. If one of them shows any bit of assertiveness and takes off, the others will blindly follow along, even if the leader is taking them to unsafe places. If a sheep gets knocked over on its side by a predator, it can’t even get itself back up to flee—it is easy prey.

This is where the good shepherd comes in. Good shepherds will take great pains to ensure that all aspects of their sheep’s lives are satisfied. They will take special trips while their sheep are penned up to seek out fresh water and fertile grazing grounds. When they find them, they will come back and lead the sheep to the new area. The good shepherd will continually examine each member of the flock under their care, looking for insects, burrs, and other things tangled in the sheep’s wool and remove them. The good shepherd will also be conscientious and regularly examine each member of the flock to look for any infections in the sheep’s skin hidden under the wool and treat that. And yes, if one of the flock is lost, the good shepherd will seek it out to return it into the fold.

Jesus is a good shepherd. He says in John 10, verse 14, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” And He also knows about seeking the lost. He says in Luke 19, verse 10, “For

the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” Jesus is seeking the lost in today’s Gospel. Or perhaps rather, the lost are seeking Him.

Our first verse says that tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus. Both of these groups could be considered lost. The tax collectors were known as representatives of the Roman government and had a reputation for overtaxing the citizens and keeping part of the excess for their personal use. Sinners, the second group, were those who failed to observe the law or had committed some type of transgression. Both groups most likely knew they were in the wrong and wanted to listen to what Jesus had to say.

The second verse talks about two different groups of people who also could be considered lost, but in a different way than the first two groups. The Pharisees and the scribes were following Jesus as well, but they weren’t interested in listening to Jesus. They were instead grumbling about what He was doing. It occurs to me that when one person is interacting with another, listening and grumbling are mutually exclusive actions; you can either do one or the other, but not both. We see this often in many of our currently elected representatives. (OK, that’s my political soapbox moment for today.)

So our lost Pharisees and scribes were grumbling about Jesus associating with the lost tax collectors and sinners. By extension, this was forcing the Pharisees and scribes to then also associate with the tax collectors and sinners, since they were all following Jesus together. Most likely, having to associate with such “undesirables” caused the Pharisees and scribes to grumble even more. In response to all the grumbling, Jesus tells two parables about seeking the lost in this upside-down Kingdom of God.

Both of Jesus’ parables have the same structure; a treasured object is lost, the owner who lost the object searches for it, and rejoices when it is found. It is in that rejoicing that the overall message of the parables comes through; the love the owner has for the lost object, which exemplifies the love God has for each of His children.

Pastor Jeff Griffis of Faith Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama mentions several different aspects of God’s love in these parables. The first is the value God places on each of His children. As I mentioned earlier, a shepherd in Jesus’ time placed great value on each of his sheep; they were his livelihood. Losing even one out of one hundred would affect a shepherd deeply. The same goes for the woman with ten coins. As most Biblical scholars feel, each of the woman’s coins were worth about a day’s wages, losing one of the ten would greatly affect her financial situation. In these stories, Jesus is saying, “You are prized. You are precious. You are treasured.”

A second aspect of God’s love is reflected in the searching for the lost object and the tireless nature of the search. The shepherd searches for the lost sheep until he finds it. The woman searches for the lost coin until she finds it. This is not some quick, cursory glance to see if the lost object can be spotted. Every corner of the search area is covered. Failure to find the lost object is not an option. For those Pharisees, scribes, tax collectors, and other sinners who are lost, God will search to find them. Not to punish, but to rescue.

The third aspect of God’s love is the celebration that occurs when the searching succeeds. Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, in his exposition on today’s text, says that “God rejoices, angels rejoice, when a sinner repents! There is a celebration for every victory, for every person who was in jeopardy and is now rescued. Jesus’ redemption is no mass salvation, but one-by-one, person-by-person, name-by-name.” He provides the following poem to expound on this:

*Seeking, Searching,
Scouring the hills, Sweeping the house,
Actively intent on finding.
And, upon finding, breaking out in unrestrained joy—
Joy that invites friends to a party,
Joy that rejoices over finding and rescuing.*

*The joy of a shepherd over his found sheep,
The joy of a housewife over a found coin,
The joy of a father over a wayward son, now returned home.
Searching diligently, Rejoicing loudly and passionately,
That is what discipleship is and demands of us.
For we, too, have been found by God.
We, too, have been the focus of a search-and-rescue mission.
We, too, have been the honored guest at God's party.
We, too, have become the searchers and rescuers and partiers.*

I subscribe to an internet feed called “Darren Daily”. The content is provided by author, entrepreneur and motivational speaker Darren Hardy. Five days a week, Monday through Friday, I receive an email with a link to what’s normally about a 4 to 5 minute video in which Hardy gives the viewer one thought to make you more productive, help you start a good habit, help you stop a bad habit, or just make you feel a little more positive about yourself.

One installment I can recall begins with Hardy sitting on his back yard patio, holding up a piece of currency, and asking his viewers the same question I’m going to ask the congregation: Who wants me to give them this twenty dollar bill? Raise your hands.

But suppose I take this bill and crumple it up into a ball so that, although you still know it’s a twenty dollar bill, you can’t really tell. Now who wants me to give them this twenty dollar bill? Raise your hands.

And suppose I now come down to the floor of the sanctuary and slam this crumpled-up bill to the floor, and then take my foot and stomp on it and then grind it into the floor. Now who wants me to give them this twenty dollar bill? Raise your hands.

You and I—each one of us—is this twenty dollar bill in the eyes of God. Like the twenty dollar bill, our sinful nature and the things we’ve done that we shouldn’t have and the things we haven’t done but should have done often cause us to shrivel up and cower in shame when we think about how we haven’t lived as God would want us to. Also, like the twenty dollar bill, the trials and tribulations of life often come from out of nowhere and knock us down, flatten us out, and make it almost impossible for us to see how we can get back up. We get lost in our misery; so lost, in fact, we’re like the idol worshipers in today’s First Reading. We’re like Paul, who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. Finally, we’re like the lost sheep and the lost coin in today’s Gospel. We need someone to come and find us.

That someone must be someone who understands our needs, not our wants. It must be someone who desires a deep, loving relationship with each one of us. It must be someone who doesn’t grumble about associating with the lost, but instead actively seeks them out, and wants to be a part of every aspect of their lives. It must be someone—like a good shepherd.

Last Saturday I attended a spiritual retreat for the Diakonia program of which I am a graduate. Pastor David Miller, who facilitated the discussion, spoke about the love and relationship God wants with each of his children. We most often use the Greek term *agape* to describe this love, meaning selfless, sacrificial or unconditional. But Pastor Miller also raised the notion that the term *eros* can be used to describe God’s love, not in a sexual sense, since *eros* is the root of the word erotic, but in the sense that God wants to be intimately connected and united with every aspect of His children’s lives, perhaps best summarized in the words of Psalm 139:1-7:

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,*

*O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?*

Pastor Griffis tells the story of a young woman who had been seeing a psychiatrist. The doctor had established that she was a wife and mother of three children and he asked, "Which of your three children do you love the most?"

She answered instantly, "I love all three of my children the same."

He paused. The answer was almost too quick—too glib. He decided to probe a bit. "Come, now, you love all three of your children the same?"

"Yes, that's right," she said, "I love all of them the same."

He said, "Come off it, now! It is psychologically impossible for anyone to regard any three human beings exactly the same. If you're not willing to level with me, we'll have to terminate this session."

With this the young woman broke down, cried a bit, and said, "All right, I do not love all three of my children the same. When one of my three children is sick, I love that child more. When one of my three is lost, I love that child more. When one of my three children is confused or in pain, I love that child more. And when one of my children is bad—I don't mean naughty, I mean really bad—I love that child more." Then she added, "Except for those exceptions I do love all three of my children about the same."

In Luke 15, we hear parables about a God who is a Father. As a Father, He loves everyone. But the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin make it clear that when you are away from Him, when you are lost, He loves you even more.



St. Francis of Assisi, October 4th

It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching. ...As for me, I desire this privilege from the Lord, that never may I have any privilege from man, except to do reverence to all, and to convert the world by obedience to the Holy Rule rather by example than by word. Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.—St. Francis

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:15 a.m. Confirmation Class
9:30 a.m. Adult Choir Rehearsal
10:15 a.m. Liturgy of Holy Communion
11:30 a.m. Youth Choir Rehearsal

Choir Rehearsals
Wednesdays, October 2nd, 16th, 23rd, and 30th
at 7:30 p.m.



From Touchstones

It is a terrible, an inexorable law that one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own: in the face of one's victim, one sees oneself.—James Baldwin

Acting totally in our self-interest is shortsighted and foolishly simple. Attacking another person or another nation reflects upon us like a mirror. When any person is undermined, the human race is diminished in some measure. And humanity is our family.

Sometimes we see a reflection of ourselves in someone else and fail to recognize it. What we hate most in another may well be what we are hating in ourselves. Knowing this can be useful. Perhaps our teeth are set on edge when we think about an ex-wife, or father, or former friend, or a religious or racial group. How are we like that person or group? What do they cause us to face within ourselves? When we stop diminishing the other person we may still not like him or her, but we can come to terms with ourselves. We learn to live and let live.

God, help me engage in the brotherhood of my own family and with all people—and to see my own face, even in my enemy.

Find recovery resources at Hazelden.



The Annual Picnic and Blue Grass Liturgy were held indoors this year due to rainy weather. The tables were still colorful and bountiful.



Carole McClelland signed for the hearing impaired. Carole and her husband, together with their children Olive and Valor, have been serving as missionaries among deaf populations for the past 9 years. Yearly mission trips have taken them to Israel, Romania, Bulgaria, Brazil, the Philippines, and other countries. George Valek reported on his travels in June on the Appalachia Service Project and Claire Watkiss spoke about her nearly month-long service trip to Lampe, Missouri at a Young Life Camp called Clearwater Cove where she was part of "Work Crew." The Blue Grass instrumentalists included

Keith Altavilla on guitar, Kristine Boike on fiddle, Bryan Galdun on bass, and lead John Broussard on banjo. Photos by Emil Galdun.

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DATED MATERIAL

The Love That Embraces All of Us

by Andrew King, lectionary poet
(Mark 9: 30-37)

*The light is passed from face to face
as if from flower to flower
as children, hand in hand, race
to greet the one in whose embrace
the smallest finds acceptance. Power*

*is not so often used to serve the weak,
the under-valued vulnerable,
the helpless. But Jesus seeks
his followers to bend to serve, speaks
of being welcomed among the little*

*and the least; welcoming the very One
who sent him. Have we yearned
for greatness? Here it is, among
these shining faces; and in Christ's gentle song,
the love that embraces all of us, unearned.*



Upcoming Events...

Ramona A. Suffern Annual Mission Dinner

Sunday, November 10th, noon.

Covenant of Churches "Enriching Community" Event

Riverside Presbyterian Church
Sunday, November 17th, 5 p.m.

Terry Sullivan Trio

Sunday, November 24th, 3 p.m.

Lux Cantorum Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 8th, 4 p.m.



A sign-up page is now available at the west entrance to the dining hall for hosting Sunday morning coffee hours. Hands-on orientation for hosting these events will be provided by Janet Broussard, Ann Head or Sue Skudrna. Please speak with any of the three for further information.



On Prayer

by Ole Hallesby

Norwegian Lutheran Theologian and Writer (1879-1961)

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me (Revelation 3:20).

To pray is nothing more involved than to let Jesus into our needs. To pray is to give Jesus permission to employ His powers in the alleviation of our distress. To pray is to let Jesus glorify His name in the midst of our needs.

The results of prayers are, therefore, not dependent upon the powers of the one who prays. His intense will, his fervent emotions, or his clear comprehension of what he is praying for are not the reasons why his prayers will be heard and answered. No, God be praised, the results of prayer are not dependent upon these things!

To pray is nothing more involved than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting Him to exercise His own power in dealing with them.

He who gave us the privilege of prayer knows us very well. He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

That is why He designed prayer in such a way that the [weakest] can make use of it. For to pray is to open the door unto Jesus. And that requires no strength. It is only a question of our wills. Will we give Jesus access to our needs? That is the one great and fundamental question connected with prayer.



Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 3rd. Don't forget to turn your clocks back on Saturday evening.