



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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THE HERALD – MAY 2016

We are a congregation that strives to be an inviting, faithful, and growing presence in our community and in our world, with a passion for living and spreading the love of Jesus Christ by using our spiritual and material gifts in the service of all God's people

May 1	10:00 am	EASTER 6	Worship (Faith, Hope, and Love)
May 6-8	Whenever anyone is able		Cleanup, Maintenance at Edgewood
May 8	10:00 am 2:00 pm	EASTER 7 CORPORATE MEETING AT EDGEWOOD	Worship (Death Swallowed in Life)
May 15	10:00 am	PENTECOST	Worship (Gifts of the Spirit)
May 22	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Consolation
May 29	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Forgiveness
June 5	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Treasure in Clay Jars
June 12	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Walk by Faith and not Sight
June 19	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Reconciliation
June 26	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Generosity

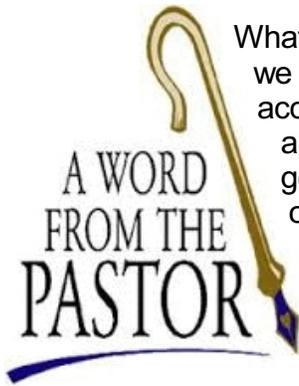
**For the next 6 weeks, we will be looking at the Book of Job
Followed by 4 weeks on the Lord's Prayer**

2016 Zion Council

Nick Beck (Chair) Wayne McCracken (Vice Chair)
Mickford Durgana Ginette McCracken Alethia McIntosh Ed Strath

Non-Council Positions

Ingrid Beck (Treasurer) Brian Cartwright (Recording Secretary)



What is the “kingdom of God?” For many it means the same thing as heaven, after we die. Eternal salvation. Who will be in and who will be out. The everlasting acceptance of God. But this misses the kingdom of God as Jesus always talks about it — life with “God with us”. The disciples make this same mistake. Still not getting it that God’s economy is a place where deserving is not even on the list of qualifications for entrance, like whining children, they rise to the ever-popular and effective “it’s not fair” argument and begin telling Jesus all the things they’ve walked away from in order to follow him. Surely, at least they are deserving of a place in the kingdom of God.

And Jesus, with compassion and gentleness, answers that there is nobody who has left “house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life”.

We work really hard not to need others, and certainly not to need God. The worst thing on earth for some of us would be to appear to need saving! We’re not unlike the rich young ruler, coming to Jesus and saying, “What must I do, oh good one, to be guaranteed security for all eternity? To check off the boxes and know I’ve arrived for good?”

But Jesus, looking at the man, loves him, and then answers with just about the worst thing the poor guy could hear, just about the only thing he isn’t willing to do: “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” And the grieving man turns and walks away, because what Jesus is asking him to do feels impossible.

But what Jesus is asking for is the dismantling of illusion. The illusion that your wealth will save you, or your goodness — no one is good but God alone! — or your retirement fund, or how well you follow all of God’s commands, or your community service hours or fleetingly great health, or the admirable behaviour of your offspring, or any of the other thousand things we grasp at to be saved.

Jesus is asking us to let go of all of that. To see it all for what it is — part of the experience of living, a source of joy and gratitude, or grief and sadness, and often all of these things mixed up together — valuable, yes, but also unable to make us real or whole or complete or alive.

But we don’t really mind being half-dead. We stumble along with all our incredible baggage as though we need it, and we’re missing out on the kingdom of God right here, right now, being with Jesus as he is and where he is — “God with us” — alongside neighbour, friend and stranger in the world with us. God is the one who brings salvation. But, wow, do we have a hard time receiving. We’d so much rather earn!

That brings us to the Sabbath. As a discipline, we’re not so great at it. Many of us bumble through that day unsure what to do with ourselves or why what we’re not doing matters. Most of us can’t quite make it through a day without at least accomplishing some things to feel good about ourselves.

God’s whole human project is about connecting us with God and each other, and our whole sinful project is to cut ourselves off from God and each other. And when we go back to the Ten Commandments and look at the ways God said that life works best, right between how we’re to be connected with God and how we’re to be connected with each other, we find this big, strange Sabbath command, which we’re used to just kind of skipping over but which is a key to the whole thing, because it basically says:

You are going to keep disconnecting from me — the source of your life — and from each other, your sisters and brothers in this life. Instead of wholeness, you will keep choosing brokenness; instead of life, you'll keep choosing death. You can't help it. You are going to keep thinking this is all about what you can earn or prove or buy or win, so you'll keep seeing each other as competition and threat and burden and obstruction. That is the way of fear. The way of sin. The way of slavery and death.

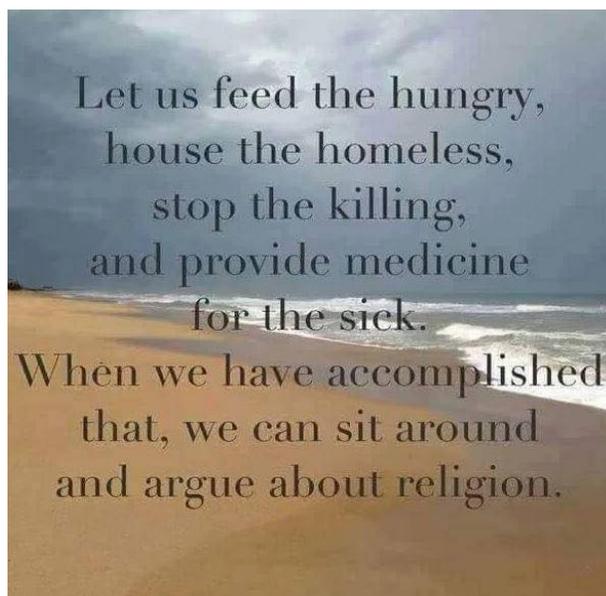
But the reality is, you are free. The reality is, you already belong to me. The reality is, I have all you need; I am all you need. I am a God of abundance and joy, and hope and rest, and peace and enough. And so, because you are going to keep on forgetting this, here's my big suggestion to help you remember. Ready? Every single week, I want you to stop. Just stop.

For one whole day every seven or so, step off the ride. Stop measuring and comparing and worrying and working. Stop judging and competing and producing and buying and trying to win. Just stop. All of you. Rest. Shut it down. Come back to real life. It's enough. You are enough. I am enough for you. I am your God. You are my people. This whole world belongs to me, and I am not letting go. Remember that.

And I know that, if you stop, if you rest like I rest, if you celebrate like I celebrate, if you wake up from your angry and hectic stupor and raise your head and see the world, this beautiful world, and if you look at each other truly, without the screen between you and the to-do list in front of you and the wariness within you, and if, instead of the noise of the pressing world and all its violent, vying agendas pounding in your ears, you listen to the silence, and the pause, and the air, and birds and children and heartbeat and tears and laughter and dreams and sighing, you will remember.

You won't be able to help but remember. You'll breathe again. You'll come back into the kingdom of God, back to your home in me. You'll see again that I am right here. That life is a gift. That instead of living chronically fearful and anxious, there is so much to be thankful for, and so much to delight in. You'll care for each other and share with each other and be again my people, and I will be your God, because it's how I've made it all to be in the first place, and how it will all be again in the last. This is the reason for Sabbath.

It is one of God's strategies for helping us come back into the kingdom of God, where we all belong to God and we all belong to each other, where we are not the ones holding the reins — God is.



As some of you may know, I have on occasion made contributions to "Eternity for Today." The first

seven devotions from the current issue were my latest contribution. I was recently surprised with a comment that was shared with me by Pastor Dennis Becker, whom some of you may know. Pastor Dennis sent me the following which I would like to share with you:

Linda:

Some kind words were expressed for your recent devotions. Allan Grundal is a former Bishop of the Saskatchewan Synod, well respected, retired pastor in the West.

Good Evening, Dennis

I certainly appreciate your work in putting together the "Eternity for Today" devotionals and also your own devotionals when you need to fill in! Good article on you in the Canada Lutheran, too!

But there are also times when I especially appreciate the other authors...whatever be the reason.

Since I don't have contact info for Pastor Linda Douglas, I would appreciate if you would pass on to her the following message:

I simply want to thank you, Pastor Linda, for your series of devotionals, just completed, in "Eternity for Today".

The most satisfying and meaningful aspect has been that you don't get lost in lengthy introductory illustrations, but express your own reflections almost immediately as very obviously rising right out of the scripture passage for that day.

Thus your own words very quickly bring a sense of God's Spirit applying the essence of those Biblical words to our present life concerns.

God has given you a gift, it seems to me, which is difficult to describe, but very real...and faithful to the intent of those specific verses of God's Word.

I would hope to see more of your devotional expressions in the future.

Thank you again...and Easter blessings,

+ Allan Grundahl

