

Pastoral Reflections

St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Preschool

22915 Greater Mack Avenue, St. Clair Shores, Michigan

February, 2020



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A blessed Lent to you and yours. Soon we will be celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord --- a monumental event that changed the world because it changed the eternal addresses for billions of souls. God has triumphed over Satan for all to see. Jesus said, "Because I live, you will live also" [John 14:19]. Indeed it required His Blood and death to pay for the sins of all people. Now that He is risen, we are certain His payment for our sins is sufficient. We will stand before God our Father dressed in the Blood of His Son and be welcomed into glory.

As we begin and continue



through the season of Lent, we remain focused on repentance and our Lord's sufficient payment for our sins at Calvary. Thanks be to God He died for

us. Thanks be to God He was raised for us. Thanks be to God we will live with Him in Heaven.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor Rutter✝

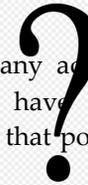
Climate Change? Is the source of 'climate change' mankind, or God?

A general truth, rooted in the Scriptures: when people follow God's Word, He blesses the land. When people rebel against God's Word, He does not bless the land, rather, He punishes the land. Perhaps the increasing frequency of the wild weather and fires and floods and earthquakes across our land and the increasing threats from abroad and from the homeland are a direct result of gross rebellion on the part of our countrymen, including our own personal rebellion --- which in the form of apathy entails silence when God's Word [and will] is challenged. Friends, we know there is rebellion toward

God throughout our land, and we know the frequency of natural disasters is increasing. Therefore, for the sake of the land upon which we live, the time to stop rebelling and to start reading the Bible has come. For the sake of the land upon which we live, the time to attend church every Sunday and be strengthened to be a bold witness for Jesus, that others may see Him in us and come to know Him and consequently cease from their rebellion, has come.

Difficult Question

In how many activities during the week have you enrolled your child that point him to Jesus?



In how many activities during the week have you enrolled your child that point him to the world?

Employment, Temporary Illness, Sports, and the Third Commandment --- additional thoughts ...

The phrase, "I cannot attend church Services because I have to work," is often overused. Granted, some occupations, such as emergency and medical personnel and a few others, require a twenty-four hour,

seven-day per week labor force. However, most occupations do not.

A Christian employee is called to say to his employer, "Sunday is the Lord's Day, I spend the morning at my church." In the most extreme case, a Christian employee is called to say to his employer, "Sunday is the Lord's Day, I attend my church Service, so I cannot be at work until 1:00 p.m. The employer will usually be delighted to accommodate the employee who desires to attend church Services, because the employer knows his employee will grow in Christlikeness --- remain honest and hard-working and kind --- an all-around joy at the workplace. The employer unwilling to accommodate the Christian employee's request to attend church Services, isn't a God-fearing employer --- the Christian employee will ask God to give him a new employer, one who will accommodate his desire to attend church Services.

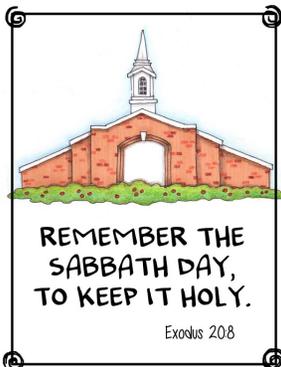
To address an extreme schedule, that of choosing to work seven days per week. To work seven days per week, week after week, is to tell God, "God, You cannot keep me sufficiently alive on six days of wages, I need that seventh day of wages." Friends,

according to the Scriptures, God designed human beings to work six days and rest on the seventh day --- a cycle of six "on", one "off". To work seven days every week is to rebel against the Designer's well-advertised plan, and will consequently cause damage to oneself --- physical damage, mental harm, and most importantly, spiritual ruin. Everyone needs one day of rest every week --- we are designed for one day of rest every week, and to use that one day to experience *the ultimate rest*, that of *hearing God's Word and receiving His gifts*. As His blood-bought children, we trust Him to keep us *alive and well* on six days of wages. He will honor that trust.

To address employees who are required to work on Sundays --- the emergency and medical personnel and a few others; choose an alternate day of rest -- -- perhaps a Tuesday, perhaps a Thursday, and spend an hour or two during that day in the House of God. Ask the pastor for a Service bulletin and a copy of his sermon and the prayers he used. Be seated in the pew and read the hymns, read the

Liturgy, read the Scripture readings, read the Creed, read the sermon, read the prayers; arrange with the pastor during that hour to receive Holy Communion --- he will be glad to accommodate such a request.

To address persons who cannot attend a Sunday Service due to a temporary illness. Once healthy, spend an hour or two in the House of God. Ask the pastor for a Service bulletin and a copy of his sermon and



the prayers he used. Be seated in the pew and read the hymns, read the Liturgy, read the Scripture readings, read the Creed, read the sermon, read the prayers; arrange with the pastor during that hour to receive Holy Communion --- he

will be glad to accommodate such a request.

To address persons who cannot attend a Sunday Service due to involvement with sports. A Christian athlete is called to say to his coach, *"Sunday is the Lord's Day, I spend the morning at my church."* In the most extreme case, a Christian athlete is called to say to his coach, *"Sunday is the Lord's Day, I attend my church Service, so I cannot arrive until 1:00 p.m.* The coach will usually

be delighted to accommodate the athlete who desires to attend church Services, because the coach knows his athlete will grow in Christlikeness --- remain honest and kind and play hard --- an all-around good-sport and an encouragement to his fellow athletes. The coach unwilling to accommodate the Christian athlete's request to attend church Services, isn't a God-fearing coach --- the Christian athlete will ask God to give him a new coach or a new team, one which will accommodate his desire to attend church Services.

It is critical for the well-being of every person to rest weekly in the Word of God. God will abundantly bless all persons who place Him, "first." May His Houses of Prayer be filled every Sunday and may all who are gathered receive His gifts.

Pastoral thoughts regarding the Third Commandment

The gifts that come from hearing God's Word and from receiving His Sacraments and from being in the company of His saints are available every Sunday. As an under-shepherd of the Chief Shepherd, I desire that all our members receive

God's gifts. To that end, may I encourage you to attend church Services every Sunday --- *come and receive and be blessed.*

It's all Myths?

There are many new books written for such a time as this, when a man's faith is challenged by his rising doubts. Books are available today that prove, scientifically speaking, the authenticity and reliability of the Bible, the Resurrection of Jesus, and the origins of the earth --- the entire creation versus evolution debate. Some of these books are in our parish Library. There is no need to have doubts about the Bible or your salvation in Christ. Christianity is not based on any myths, but on hard evidence. If you're willing to spend some time, come and see.

Midweek Noon Prayer Service

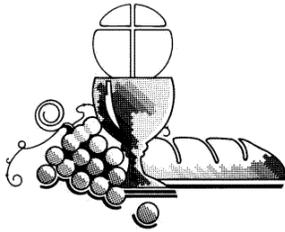
We have resumed, after a brief interruption, the weekly Wednesday, Noon Prayer Service, which began in 1996 and has run (almost) uninterrupted since. The Prayer Circle, of which you are invited to join, meets and prays for



various causes, persons, troubles, etc. Over the years we have witnessed God's answers to our prayers --- sometimes within the week. The pastor does most of the praying, the attendees typically make the requests --- not everyone is required to speak. Attend every week *or as you are able*. And do watch the calendar, because on rare Wednesdays, the Prayer Circle does not meet. Come join us in the Parish Library. Members and friends are always welcome.

Closed Communion Concerns

Many visitors aren't sure if they should receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion with us. Some are offended by our practice and never return. Some members aren't sure why we practice as we do. Actually our practice of Closed Communion dates to the time of the Early Church --- the first century, and was the practice among all denominations until recently --- probably 40 or 50 years ago, when theological liberalism and ecumenical Services gained prominence in America. Our congregation's practice of Closed Communion is in full



agreement with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the 45 other Lutheran Synods across the world with whom we express Church Fellowship. In other words, at St. Paul's we only practice what millions of other Lutherans in the United States and around the world practice.

While I cannot write everything about the theology behind the practice of Closed Communion in this very limited venue, please know that the practice of Closed Communion is borne from the realm of pastoral responsibility as well as spiritual concern for each communicant.

Perhaps a good resource for a clear understanding is the tract published 20 years ago by (then) President Rev. Dr. A. L. Barry, *"Fellowship in the Lord's Supper"* --- available in our tract rack or upon request. You may also consider the Bible verses printed on our communion cards, all of which, when combined, establish the Scriptural framework for the practice. If anyone desires to know more, *please* feel free to contact me --- Pastor Rutter, or another LCMS pastor.

Why Hymnals?

Our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod published a new hymnal in 2006, "Lutheran Service Book", which has been widely accepted across the Synod and considered a unifying factor among us and an excellent resource for reinforcing our doctrines. Hymnals are important. The publication of a hymnal allows the faithful to confess and practice their doctrines on a regular basis, thus nurturing their faith and proclaiming corporately, *"Here we stand."* Hymnals typically nourish the faithful for generations, because the enduring hymns use Scripture verses or paraphrases of Scripture. By contrast, congregations which do not use hymnals often display songs on overhead screens, songs often purchased from publishing houses which widely sell to various denominations --- and therefore are nearly devoid of doctrine, and which often introduce new songs to replace "old" songs --- the "old" songs having been introduced the year before, thus prohibiting the memory to function. In recent years, some congregations, especially mega-churches, which have for



generations not used hymnals, have realized that their members are deficient in doctrine, and consequently have called for a *"return to the hymnal"* --- understanding that rich, doctrinal words sung often remain in one's heart and mind. At St. Paul's, we have a wonderful history of hymnal use. It is important for our members to be familiar with their hymnal, which, in our case, is vast in resources. Read the hymns either at home during private devotions or quietly before Services and be blessed. Notice the Scriptural references and the authors, many of whom were pastors, who desired to teach their flock the doctrines of Scripture --- by singing them regularly.

