

Feeling Victorious In The Face Of Death

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 15:54-57).

Have you been to good funeral lately?

Before you gasp with disapproval and shock at such a question from your pastor, read again those verses from First Corinthians, chapter 15, written above.

In the same way we are glad and happy for the advancements of our loved ones, so also we can be happy and glad for the child of God who dies with faith in Jesus. Confirmations, graduations, weddings and job promotions are all examples of real advancement in this life. Jesus has turned the ugly monster of death into a powerless pest. Temporal death is forever buried deep beneath Eternal Life.

Jesus' resurrection is the focal point of a Christian life. Because he lives we too will live. Imagine being a Christian without Easter. The Apostle Paul in the resurrection the great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, asked a "what if" question. (Verses 12-20) "What if Jesus had not risen from the dead?" Paul tells us what it would mean if there were no Easter resurrection.

1. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile
2. If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins
3. If Christ has not been raised, the Bible is not reliable
4. If Christ has not been raised, neither shall we be raised from the dead.

In short, we would be heading for hell if Christ did not rise. The best we could ever hope to have would be this earthly life. We would almost certainly go through life on earth with a philosophy of despair. "Eat, drink, and be merry ...for tomorrow we die." "Better get all the gusto out of life -- you only go around once." But Paul says, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20) No wonder we sing our Easter "Hallelujahs!" Our sins are forgiven. The greatest gift a person can possess is forgiveness from God. The resurrection is the stamp of approval by God on His Son's atoning work.

Christ's resurrection is evidence that the Bible is true. The Old Testament in Psalm 16 and Isaiah 53 as well as other places had stated that Christ would arise. Jesus Himself often spoke of His sufferings, death, and resurrection. That Word was kept perfectly. The fulfillment of the resurrection promise shows that the Lord will keep all of His promises to us. He promises to take care of us in good times and bad. He promises that all things shall work together for our good. He promises that there never will be a temptation or a problem greater than what we can bear. He promises a fabulous future and a perfect paradise in heaven with him. The Lord keeps His promises. Easter shows that! Paul later writes, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:20).The cemetery is not the end for us believers. Our bodies will be there for only a short time. Our risen Savior will return, raise up our bodies, and give us and all believers eternal life. If Christ had not risen, life would be miserable. But he has. Let us rejoice, and show our joy to all those around us!

Our title above is actually an understatement. We do not just "feel victorious". **We are victorious!** In the words of Saint Paul to the Romans, "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39).

CHURCH NEWS:

BABY SHOWER (Rescheduled)! On Sunday, May 4th, at 2:00 p.m., the ladies of St. Mark's will host this opportunity to shower Pat Jones and the Jones' soon-to-be-born baby with gifts and attention.

CHURCH SPRING CLEANING is SATURDAY, MAY 3rd.

We are doing this much the same way we did last year. So you can already sign-up for the cleaning job of your choice. The check list is on the back bulletin board.

THE 30th Anniversary Committee Meets On Monday, May 5 at 6:30 p.m.

All interested members can join in the special work of this committee. Remember, our Anniversary Celebration will on September 14, 2003.

- **LOST AND FOUND ITEMS IN THE COATROOM.** Several articles of winter clothing are in the corner of the coatroom (to the left as you walk into the room). Please claim your items soon. The remaining items will be given to the local Goodwill Store by the end of April.
- **THE LAWN MOWING-VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE NEEDS names.** If you wish to sign-up for a month, please do so to make our schedule complete and to keep our grounds presentable during the warm weather months.

TIME OF WORSHIP CHANGES ON JUNE 1:

The Voters officially ruled that our 9:00 a.m. worship services will include all the Sundays in June through August. Note your calendars with regard to this detail. Monday evening worship will remain at 7:30 p.m.

UPCOMING BIBLE CLASSES:

- **ONLY TWO WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES REMAIN.** They are on Sunday May 4th and May 11th at 9:00 a.m.,. **The topic of study will be Creation. Come and get involved, as we show our appreciation for God speaking to us through the Bible. The Bible is God's conduit of communication, his means of giving grace and strength to his people.**
- **The Women's Bible Study will be May 9 at 9:00 a.m. The ladies meet at the home of the Schnackenberg's. The study consists of lessons under the topic of "The Life Of Christ". Kris Kuether will lead the study. Call Kris Kuether if you have any questions, and also to let her know whether you plan to attend. Children are most welcome to come and play, while class is in session. Call Kris at 444-6334.**

YOUTH GROUP CAMP OUT & RETREAT at Itasca State Park June 25 – 27, 2003

Without any Youth Rally being available for our youth this Summer (the International Youth Rally in Estes Park, CO was filled up before its suggested deadline), we are planning our own summer activities. Our first is planned for Wednesday through Friday during the last week of June. This will be available to our youth entering 8th grade through those graduating from 12 grade. Sign-up to express your interest and desire to participate. The cost for our members will be just \$30 per youth. This will include room and board in the Club House at Itasca State Park. Bible study and recreational activities will be planned.

PASTOR AND FAMILY GONE FOR TWO WEEKS OF VACATION: MAY 23 – JUNE 6

Rev. David Waege will be preaching in Pastor's absence on June 1st and 2nd. Please note that Ascension Day falls on May 29th, (at 7:00 p.m.) Even though this is during Pastor's vacation time, a special song and scripture service is being planned. Chairman John Quint will lead this special service. If anyone does have strong feelings about Pastor Kuether being absent on Ascension Day (May 29th) please express those opinions to him in person or in writing **BEFORE** he leaves on vacation. He will gladly come back for that day if need be. (Please also note other forthcoming church festivals. The festival of Pentecost is on Sunday June 8th and Trinity Sunday will be on Father's Day this year, June 15th.)

SUMMER BIBLE STUDY CLASSES (held on a week night).

A plan to hold a couple classes each month, on Monday Evenings, is being considered. These would run from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. This would enable our Monday night worshipers to also feel welcomed and encouraged to join in this study of the Word. A topic of study will be chosen soon. If you have a suggestion please speak to Pastor Kuether by May 15th.

News from the WELS April, 2003

St Thomas to St Tomas -- a story of change

St Thomas Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona was founded in 1965, and fifteen years later its membership had reached nearly 400. But gradually the neighborhood began to change. Many Hispanics began moving in; many Caucasians moved out. As the pastor and members of St Thomas knocked on doors they found they couldn't communicate with more than half the community.

When I graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1997 I was assigned the call to serve as Hispanic outreach pastor of St Tomas. Since there was no core group I began knocking on doors and following up on contacts from a bilingual Vacation Bible School we had held. Today we have 82 confirmed members with an average church attendance of 110.

We are becoming known as a place to have children baptized, get married, and have a girl's quinceañera (A girl's 15th birthday celebration). Families feel it's important to go to church to thank God for 15 years of life and to ask his blessing on the years to come.

In the Catholic church there are many, many requirements for a wedding, baptism, or quinceañera, and they charge a hefty fee. The result is that there are many unbaptized children, couples living in sin, and people skipping the quinceañera. If a family is interested in having one of these services at St Tomas I ask them to attend our services and to take 1- 4 Bible classes, depending on what kind of service they are having, so they can learn what the Bible teaches about this occasion in their lives.

The evidence of God's blessings is all around us. Through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit we are growing. We are growing personally in our faith and lives. Parents are beginning to incorporate Christian discipline in their homes and hold family devotions. Marriages are being strengthened and couples who had comfortably lived in sin for years are becoming married and living repentant lives under God. New Christians are spreading the great news of salvation to their loved ones. They are discussing difficult topics with their families and standing firm in the Word of God. Men who, by the grace of God, are controlling their alcoholism meet as needed to counsel others with the same problem. Christians are learning to praise God in times of joy and cling to him in times of tragedy. Thanks be to God!

Pastor Tim Otto

Congregation Mission Offering Subscriptions

2003 congregation mission subscriptions increased 5%! In dollars this is an additional \$927,408. We thank the Lord for this largest increase in recent memory! It is gratifying to note the large increases of so many congregations. 25% increased over their last year's subscription by 10% and 19% increased from 3-10%. The financial difficulties of congregations are reflected in these statistics also -- 9% decreased over 10%, 5% decreased up to 5% and 33% made no change.

News from World Missions

India: Because of recent developments in India it has become necessary for the WELS counselors in India to return to the U.S. to make application for a different visa. It is not possible to change visas while residing in India. The laws of India demand that those making application return to their home country to make application for a new visa. Hong Kong: Missionary Gary Schroeder, whose service in Hong Kong began in 1975, retired from the ministry for health reasons at the end of December 2002. Missionary Rob Siirilla has accepted the call to Hong Kong to begin the plan for a regional seminary in that area of the world.

News from Ministry of Planned Giving

The financial stewardship program for 2003 is *Pursuing Godliness with Contentment*. It is available at no charge by calling 800-827-5482 or e-mail mpg@sab.wels.net. It may also be viewed at www.wels.net/mpg.

Completing My Will, Knowing Peace and Satisfaction comes with a 10- step booklet to help you get the job done, a self-help DVD or video. Contact your WELS gift planning counselor or call 800-827-5482 to request your free copy.

Help us support our military personnel

Hundreds of thousands of U.S. military personnel have been deployed in the war with Iraq. While it is important for our nation to supply these brave men and women with the weapons and equipment they will need, it is just as important for God's people in the WELS to provide them with spiritual support.

Through Special Ministries, the WELS provides world-wide spiritual support for soldiers and civilians who live away from their spiritual homes. Two WELS chaplains stationed in Europe and a network of 120 military contact pastors stand ready to serve all who request their support. The Special Ministries office also maintains a ministry-by-mail program that regularly provides *Meditations*, *Forward in Christ* magazines, printed monthly worship services, cassettes and videotaped worship services and e-mail contact.

Won't you help us provide this important spiritual support to our military personnel and their families? Please send the names and addresses of military personnel and civilians who live away from their spiritual homes to: WELS Special Ministries, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222 or e-mail to Jacki@sab.wels.net. For further information: 414-256-3241.