

SAINT MARK'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 28, 2007

THE THIRD QUARTER

Volume 12, Issue 4

Jesus said, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" (Luke 17:10)

Lord, What Have I Done For You Lately?

Usually, in our ME-centered world, we hear this above phrase in very much the opposite order. Often a person thinks and says of those around him or her, "What have you done for me lately?" If we are honest with God and honest with ourselves, the answer to that kind of question before God would endlessly continue. His giving can be easily seen and calculated in the past, present and future.

- IN THE PAST: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16).
- IN THE PRESENT: "He (God the Father) causes his sun to rise on the veil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). "He (God) gives us the victory (over death) through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:56).
- IN THE FUTURE: "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). Jesus said of his sheep (all believers), "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10:28).

Indeed, the list of God's temporal and spiritual and eternal gifts could go on and on. So we have no reason ever to ask our Savior God, "What have you done for me lately?" But it then begs the question, "O Lord, what have I done for you lately?"

Volunteer soldiers of our armed forces so often serve as admirable examples of those who willingly serve without seeking personal praise or accolades.

To reinforce that kind of comparison, we recently sang the beloved Christian hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers". In so many ways that is what we are, "Christian soldiers". Comparisons can readily be made of those kind of people who regularly give out of love (a love for God, a love for country and a love for the corps).

- Consider Saint Paul's encouragement to "Put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians chapter 6). We are continually in combat against the spiritual forces of evil, even if our nation should some day cease her military conflicts.
- Consider how we are on a mission. It is a cause already defined by Christ, "To seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).
- Finally, consider how we will need to and also want to hear and obey our Commander, namely Jesus Christ. Remember the picture of Christ in John's Revelation, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True ... The armies of heaven were following him ... On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 20).

As our verse above, from the Gospel Reading of Pentecost 20, reminds us, we serve gladly and willingly not because we have to, but because we get to. The Lord Jesus allows us by his grace and mercy to serve under his command. So we cannot help but to say, "I have only done my duty".

CHURCH NEWS

SPECIAL TIMES OF WORSHIP ARE FAST APPROACHING:

- Thanksgiving Day worship will be on Thursday, November 22, at 9:00 a.m.
- Mid-week Advent Vesper services will be on Wednesdays, December 5th, 12th, and 19th. Everyone of these services will begin at 7:00 p.m. (Please note, we will continue to hold Monday evening services at 7:30 p.m.)
- On Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24th, our Sunday School children will be enriching this service with songs and recitation. This special service will also begin at 7:00 p.m.
- On Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25th, we will celebrate our Savior's birth in worship at 9:00 a.m.
- On New Year's Eve, Monday, December 31st, we will thank God for his blessings of the past year gone by, and anticipate his guidance and strength for the journey ahead. This special Communion Service will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Marriage and Family Workshop on November 9

Saint Peter Lutheran Church of St. Peter, MN, is hosting this event from 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM. Anita Smith with Cornerstone Christian Counseling will conduct a workshop on "Managing Your Time In A Busy Family." This workshop is free. They only ask that you reserve a place by calling Saint Peter Lutheran Church (507-931-1866) or by sending an e-mail (spevluth@hickorytech.net).

If you don't have the time to come, you may need this workshop!

A MEETING TO KNOW ABOUT!

- The Voters will again need to assemble on Sunday, November 11, following our morning worship service. We will need to consider a resolution for the permanent financing of the building project. Our hope is to use an organization of our church body, known as L.A.C.E.

REFORMATION CELEBRATION PLANNED WITH POTLUCK!

On November 4, we will celebrate our Lutheran heritage and origins, namely SOLA SCRIPTURA (Scripture alone).

- We will also have a potluck meal here in the fellowship hall. Each family in attendance will want to bring a main dish to pass (preferably a German food) plus a side dish or dessert.

SUNDAY'S BIBLE CLASS TOPIC:

With the start of Sunday School has also come the start of our Teen and Adult Bible Classes. The Adult Bible Class begins at 9 a.m., each Sunday morning. Our study is taking us through Luther's Large Catechism. REMEMBER: Sunday School isn't just for children, it's for everyone.

TRUE NORTH CAMPUS MINISTRY MEETS ON TUESDAY!

Our first meeting this fall was on Tuesday, October 2nd, at 7:00 p.m. This will remain our weekly time of meeting. All College or Tech students are invited to attend. Young adults (who may not be college students) are also welcome to attend. These meetings/Bible study and discussion groups will take place at the Hobson Student Union of BSU. The room reserved for us has been the South Conference Room. These meetings will continue to take place every Tuesday evening during the course of the school year. (We will not meet on November 20th during the week of Thanksgiving.)

Participate in decorating the church for December!

A Planning Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 14th at 6:30 p.m.

With the recommendation coming from the recent Voters' meeting, the Board of Elders will host and steer the meeting for all who are interested in decorating the church for the Advent/Christmas Season. Come and share your input and your willingness to help.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR OUTGOING OFFICERS!

AND GOD'S BLESSINGS UPON OUR INCOMING OFFICERS!

- Two terms expired upon the Board of Christian Education. Those Outgoing men are Lou Tasa and Paul Pfeiffer. The two new incoming men are Jon Konecne and Brett Wyman.
- Three terms expired upon the Church Council. Those Outgoing men are Nathaniel Barckholtz, Carl Brummund and Joshua Quint. The three new incoming men are Darold Krenz, John Mathweg and Paul Pfeiffer.

SCHOOL AND SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATES

KIDS' GROUP NEEDS

VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS!

A flexible schedule of future activities has been put out by the Board of Christian Ed. On average, there is one activity planned for each month of the school year. Please consider signing up to help with this form of Christian fellowship for the benefit of our elementary school age children.

REGARDING SUNDAY SCHOOL ...

ADVENT OFFERING

At the start of Advent the children will take home a small stocking to start collecting their offering that they will give to the mission work that is done by WELS. The focus of the Mission Partners for St. Mark's is the work that WELS does to reach out to the Hmong people. Please encourage your children to think about their offering during the Advent season and to bring it back at Christmas time. The first Sunday of Advent is December 2nd.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

A schedule of the practices is being put together and will soon be available. Parents will be asked to let the Sunday School teachers know if their children will be able to make the practices and the Christmas Eve service as well. This is very important to get done in early November so that the service can be worked out and recitations can be assigned. The service will be held on December 24th, at 7:00 p.m. Catie Belleveau is coordinating and directing the service. If you have any questions you can talk to her, to Nathan Bitter, or to your child's Sunday School teacher.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THOSE STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES ALREADY PONDERED ... UNDER THE OVERALL THEME: *“For Me to Live is Christ”*

#1 For Me to Live is Christ – in My Daily Tasks

What a relief to know that our standing with God isn't based on what we do, but on what Christ did. That changes our whole perspective and focus on life. Think about it. He paid the price – we owe him our lives. Even more than that he IS our life. He guarantees his plans for us unfolded at the proper moment – plans to keep us close to him; plans that put us in touch with God himself; plans to accomplish his purpose for us. Like Paul our motto becomes: “For me to live is Christ,” – even in my daily tasks. (cf. Philippians 1:21). And what a high position we all share. Eph 2:6 ***God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...*** There are many callings in the world, but our calling as Christians raises us up into a special union with Christ himself. Look back at the waters of baptism when you were *“buried with him and raised with him through our faith in the power of God. God made you alive with Christ.”* (Colossians 2:12-14). It makes us princes and princess of the King of the Universe. It gives us standing and respect in the eyes of the one who counts. Colossians 3:1-2 ***“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...your life is now hidden with Christ in God...”*** This is what separates the tasks of the Christian from the rest –we find our meaning and purpose of any task wrapped up in him and not in us! When our lives are lived not for ourselves but for God, what seems to be menial, routine, everyday tasks turn grand and holy in God's sight.

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#2 For Me to Live is Christ – in My Daily Relationships

Are you getting this so far? For me to live is Christ - in my relationships. What we do here at church, in our collective work, is important. But it isn't to stay here at church. It is to touch the world for Christ. We come together at church to get the energy and encouragement to carry this calling into our daily relationships. Those callings will look different for each of us. God has made each one of you unique, utterly exceptional, with tremendous significance to his purposes. Like a potter forming the clay, God shapes you, your personality, gifts, interests, likes, experiences for his outstanding purposes. All of us have a calling in which we live – not for yourselves – but for the one who has made life worthwhile – compelling you by his love. In these we become, as Luther said, “the masks God wears” to show his love to others without others seeing who's really behind it. Just think how he did that for you. Along the journey of your life, God put into your world people who knew what love had to be for you, even if you didn't recognize it. They are the ones who noticed your needs and worked hard to supply them. They are the ones who were there when you skinned your knee, when someone crushed your feelings or when you needed a job. They are the ones who hugged you and didn't hold your sins against you. They were the ones God sent to make sure you feel his love.

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#3 For Me to Live is Christ – with My Resources

Proverb's wisdom says ***“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing.”*** (Proverbs 3:9) How do you honor the Lord? Ask **“How Should I Honor You with This, Jesus”** Let your giving be ...

Priority – God is given honor when you return to God off the top of what he has given you – before your bills and purchases – determining your lifestyle choices off the rest. Show he is of first significance in your life and it will focus your other priorities too.

Planned – God is honored when you decide ahead of time what you will be returning to him regularly rather than being unprepared. Even our human relationships recognize the honor of someone thinking enough about you to plan a special gift for you.

Percentage – God is honored when what you return to him in offerings represents the level of gifts he's given you. When you review all the income and blessings he entrusts to you, honor him with a significant percentage that shows him your respect and trust. If you need a goal, consider 10% as a benchmark but not a stopping point. Start now.

Generous – Honor God by imitating him with a generosity that celebrates all the great things he has done or that responds to crying needs. Honor God by accepting these challenges and promises: *“Whoever sows generously will also reap generously”* (2 Corinthians 9:6).

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#4 For Me to Live is Christ – with a High Purpose

Life makes sense when we accept our valuable place in his plan. Our daily tasks aren't about our success or comfort, but about something bigger – displaying his grace to others so they too might believe (2:7) ***in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*** With that big picture in mind we have really one job description no matter what the task: *“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”* (1 Peter 2:12) Did your tasks do that this past week? In the morning before all the parts of life rush at you, spend some time in quiet prayer grasping your calling in the daily tasks ahead of you. Throughout your day in everything you do at home, work, church and community let this be in the prayer in your heart, **“let this task be lived for you, Jesus.”**

Together ...in God's Word and in our mission

Breaking News



"There's no English word to describe it. Surreal comes close, but it doesn't quite cut it."

October 25, 2007

Southern California fire update

It appears the property of all WELS churches and schools has been spared damage in the fires raging across Southern California this week, but the full impact upon members' homes is still unknown. No loss of life or serious injuries among WELS members have been reported, although numerous families were forced to evacuate.

Aaron Glaeske, pastor at Ascension, Escondido, Calif., reports at least two members there have lost their homes and possibly a third. He says, "We're still trying to figure out if everybody is okay." In speaking of the fires this week he says, "There's no English word to describe it. Surreal comes close, but it doesn't quite cut it."

Further north in Fallbrook, Rich Kogler, pastor at St. Stephen, says he's concerned about the home of one family in particular which was in the path of the fires. Authorities have blocked off many neighborhoods and so it's still too early to tell the extent of the damage.

Kogler himself evacuated to nearby Murrieta to stay with his daughter. He's hoping to get back to the church by noon Thursday. Flames came as close as a quarter of a mile from the property. "We're thankful. The Lord is so good," he says.

Fire crews used the church as a staging ground throughout the week. Kogler says the congregation is planning to set up a soup kitchen for the firefighters once members are given access to the building.

Rev. Paul Janke, president of the Arizona-California District, reports that WELS elementary schools in Carlsbad, Fallbrook, Escondido, and San Diego have all called off classes for the rest of the week because of the poor air quality. But a joint Reformation service this Sunday will be held as scheduled at Reformation in San Diego.

Rev. Phil Schupmann, chairman of WELS Committee on Relief, says he will await word from the congregations whose members have been impacted before deciding what aid the committee will offer. In the meantime, those wishing to make a donation to WELS Committee on Relief can do so at www.welsrelief.net.

Pastor Kogler says he appreciates all the prayers that have been offered synodwide on behalf of the congregations in Southern California. "It has been amazing how people in our fellowship have shown their concern. We can't thank people enough."

