

Grace News

Of Water, Words, Wisdom, and Witness

A wise person once said: “Kind words heal and help;
cutting words wound and maim.”

Proverbs 15:4

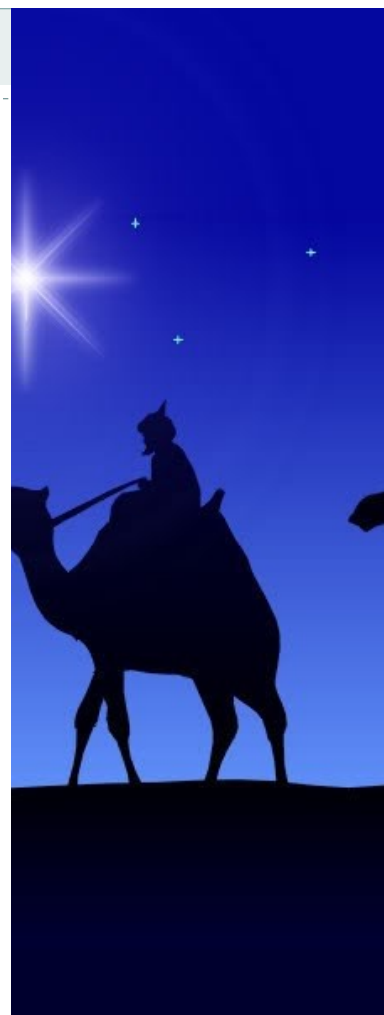
Have you ever noticed the impact that words have on our thought patterns, our feelings, and our actions?

There is a story of a man who lived on the edge of what would be considered civilization: both in terms of his nearness to the local city centers and by his manner of dress, eating habits, and speech. He was an oddity, a curiosity. As such, people came out to take a look at him. Some did so, I would guess, simply because they were curious. Some came because of what he said, and because they took to heart his words, their lives were changed. One day someone quite unexpected showed up. He joined those who took to heart the words of this man, and joining him in the water, he asked to be baptized. The first man was taken back and unsure, no, resistant to proceeding with the request. The second man assured him that this action was necessary. Coming out of the water there was immediately another unexplained experience – a dove appeared and a voice was heard to say from the heavens – “My son, my beloved.” At this point the second man embarked on a mission that would eventually challenge and change the world, and he did so secure in the knowledge of who he was as son and beloved.

I wonder what would be different if those words had never been spoken. Would Jesus have gone on and fulfilled the messianic ministry without this (particular) affirmation of kinship, relationship, and love? What I am convinced of is that this encounter with John, this action of baptism, and the words spoken by God in response to these actions and words shaped the self-understanding and actions of Jesus. I am also convinced that without said actions and words, things would be very different.

Words have the ability to create and shape our reality. It is one reason why we spend so much time with our children correcting what and how they say things. “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all” is a favorite in the cache of resources of every parent. We are all very aware, especially in regards to children, that words do hurt – whether they are intended to or not. Thus the admonition to think before speaking, or again in our instant everything world, reread your e-mail before you send it, and why there is the constant reminding

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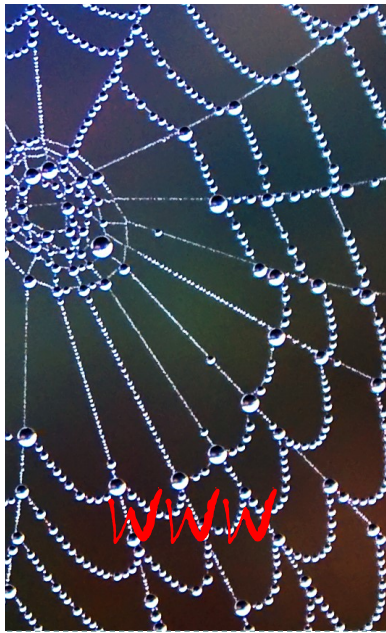


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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Would Jesus have gone on and fulfilled the messianic ministry without this (particular) affirmation of kinship, relationship, and love?
- And what about our Lord’s admonition to be awake, be aware, be ever-vigilant?



WE HAVE A NEW WEBSITE!

With the **IoT** (Internet Of all Things), we come full circle and once again add another tool to our outreach to the community and beyond. Our thanks to Michelle and Kevin for the work they put into gathering information, designing an eye catching site, asking for and receiving all sorts of input, suggestions and corrections—in short, putting this whole thing together.

With the rise of smartphones, websites (mobile friendly websites in particular) are more important than ever before.

- **Having a web presence creates credibility.** According to Brian Sutter at Wedge Advanced Software

Product (Wasp), 97% of consumers search online for products and service (2016).

- **It also helps you get discovered** and can set you apart.
- **Gathers feedback.** Use forms, email and social media like Facebook and Twitter to allow people to communicate with you.
- **Communicates effectively.** Whether your website is built for

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A New Website!*

“...once again we add another tool to our outreach to the community and beyond.”

A WORD OF THANKS

Over the past 6 six weeks or so, emotions have run high! That race from Thanksgiving (actually the pre-race starts at Halloween if not the 4th of July) to Christmas is often a time of being overwhelmed. That is why the season of Advent is so important, to ground us once again in the story of Incarnation and hope.

I want to thank all of you for your calm demeanor during this time, your grounding in the Word, as we also tucked a move in there too. Absolutely nothing to be anxious about!

And, for Cindy and myself, I want to extend my thanks to your for your words, cards, and gifts during this season. You have graced us in so many ways. We appreciate your generosity, your care, but mostly your prayers as you extend your care and concern to us and our family.

Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.

THANK YOU



SIGHTS (AND SOUNDS) FROM OUR NEW HOME





A new beginning starts at mid-night—or any time!

RING IN THE NEW YEAR

In Isaiah 43:19-21, the prophet talks about new beginnings. Our church calendar begins anew during Advent, while our secular calendar starts with New Year's Day. Either time provides an opportunity for family members to reflect on blessings received and challenges faced in the past year and to look forward together to the future.

Start your new traditions with a family notebook. Purchase a spiral notebook to place by the telephone. Invite family members to record phone messages, as well as thoughts and feelings, successes and failures. Encourage your family to write positive comments to each other as well. Family members who can't write may dictate their ideas or draw pictures. Save the book and use it during family times through the year. (You may need more than one book!) Look through it together next year. It's fun to see how each person grows and changes throughout the year.

Play together a favorite board game or card game. If you have time, let each family member pick a game to play. Enjoy a special snack. Serve treats that the whole family has helped prepare, such as "ants on a log" (celery stalks filled with cream cheese or peanut butter and dotted with a row raisins). Sandwiches cut with holiday cookie cutters are also fun to make.

Close with devotions. Gather together around a lighted Advent wreath or large candle. Read aloud Isaiah 43:19-21. Talk together about how it feels to start afresh, and that God forgives mistakes and offers us new challenges each year. Share one way that God helped you during the past year and invite other family members to do the same. Then think about the many blessings God has given you. Distribute slips of paper. On each one have family members draw or write about a way God has blessed them. Roll up each slip and tie it with yarn to form a prayer scroll. Put them in a basket or box, which you label: Our Basket of Blessings. Read the blessings during the year to remember how God has blessed you. Add more scrolls as blessings continue.

Invite each family member to choose a scroll from "Our Basket of Blessings." Offer a prayer of thanks for the blessing written on it. An older family member may need to help a non-reader.

STARS AND SIGNS

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are!" Have you ever said that poem when you look up at the stars at night? There are so many stars, and some seem brighter than others. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East noticed that one star in particular stood out from all the rest. When they saw that star they believed it was a sign that a child had been born who was King of the Jews. That's what we think about during Epiphany.

"Epiphany" is a Greek word which refers to a visit made by God. The star led the wise men to the place where baby Jesus was, and then it stopped. Stars on Epiphany remind us of the wise men's journey to pay their respects to the baby king. We celebrate Epiphany on January 6. Some people celebrate Epiphany in the same way others celebrate Christmas, because on Epiphany the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the baby Jesus.

Make a big star and hang it in a window or wall that faces east on or around January 6. Leave the star there for the whole season of Epiphany, to remind you that God has visited you. Read Matthew 2:1-11.

GOD LOVES ME!

When nothing seems to be going right, what one comforting truth can we hold onto? God loves us no matter what. God's love doesn't depend upon whether we've behaved well or badly. It doesn't depend upon whether we've succeeded or failed. God loves us and always will love us. Knowing that God loves us no matter what gives hope and courage.

Our children first learn about

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CHURCH HAPPENINGS

Next Text

Next Text, whether Classic or 2.0, is a weekly gathering to reflect on the readings for the upcoming Sunday. It is often a lively conversation about insights and thoughts about the way God chooses to disclose God's own self while calling us into a shared concern and ministry for God's creation. Join us at 6:32am @ the Pheasant or 10a in Davis Hall each Monday morning.

Tapping Into Faith

In good Lutheran Tradition we combine a time of fellowship, good drink and excellent conversation about the many areas of God's revelation and the ongoing challenge of being a strong voice of proclamation in our communities. Join us the last Friday of the month @ 7pm @ the Hermiston Tavern for a time of good conversation.

Novel Ideas

The Novel Ideas Book Group will be reading/discussing *A Paradise of Glass* by Petra Durst-Benning at the January Novel Ideas Book Group. This is the third book in the Glassblower Trilogy. Dusti Hunter will be leading the discussion. The meeting date is January 31st @ 5:30ish in Davis Hall @ FUMC.

Monthly Benevolence

Update coming....

HEAR THE GOOD NEWS

BY ELIZABETH A. EATON



But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels

of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour (Matthew 24:36-44).

Welcome to Advent. This is the Gospel lesson for the first Sunday in Advent this year. This warning from Jesus comes after his words about the end of the world. The apocalypse is upon us, there will be tribulation and the world will see the day of God's vengeance on human sin. How perky. This doesn't quite fit with Christmas decora-

tions, lovely carols and the relentless merriness that has been in stores, in advertisements and in the media since Labor Day. And what about our Lord's admonition to be awake, be aware, be ever-vigilant? We won't know the hour. We might be left behind. At the very least it's exhausting to be on watch all day every day. How is this passage from Matthew good news and how is it good news at this time of year?

How does this text help us to know that we are liberated by God's grace? It sounds like law to me. It seems to be about what we need to do to be ready on that great and terrible day, so that we will be taken and not left behind. Blessed Advent? Bah humbug! There is a secular counterpart to this apocalypse. We have long frightened children into good behavior in the weeks before Christmas by singing "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." You know the words to the song, the admonition that children remain cheerful, obedient and on the ready. The day is drawing nigh. And if that isn't enough to instill dread and the possible need for future therapy into the hearts of children, the song continues with the specter of the omniscient Claus—sleeping or waking children are never beyond his gaze. It's interesting that pop culture can give voice to the prevailing theology of many in our congregations. We don't trust that God's promised grace is real and for us. So we come to believe and act that the word of God is not gracious, but vengeful and punishing. Through that lens there is no way we can see the gospel for the first Sunday in Advent as the announcement that we are

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Hear The Good News*

GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Contact Us:

Give us a call for more information about our services and ministries.

Grace and Mercy L.C.
POB 1108
Hermiston, OR 97838

(541) 289-4535 (church cell)

(509) 398-0258 (pastor's cell)

gandmlutheran@gmail.com

graceandmercy.lutheran.org

Visit us on Facebook at Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church

Worship: Sunday Morning @ 8:45
@ First United Methodist Church,
191 E. Gladys

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Hear The Good News

liberated by God's grace. But hear the good news. Jesus was announcing the end of the world—a world in bondage to sin and death, a world that believes in a god of “what have you done for me lately?” It's the day of God's vengeance. And this is what God's vengeance looks like—a helpless baby in a stable in Bethlehem, a helpless man on a cross outside of Jerusalem. Matthew 24:36-44 is God's word of promise, a gift to us that we might open ourselves, our eyes, our lives to the incredible, surprising, immeasurable and intimate love of God. It's right there in front of us—two men working in a field, two women grinding meal, in the ordinary, in the everyday. God doesn't want us to miss it. God wants us to watch.

A monthly message from the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her email address: bishop@elca.org. This column is based on her reflection for a new collection of Advent devotions by Eaton and leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Episcopal Church (download at elca.org).

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that whatever we Tweet and Facebook is permanent. Once spoken or sent, words are often difficult and sometimes impossible to retrieve, and they do have the ability to shape thought, feelings, and action.

I wonder if this isn't also part of the reason why there is such heavy emphasis on baptism within our flavor of Christianity. Deep within the rite are the words: “child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever (LBW pg. 124; ELW pg. 231). Through water and word a change takes place within us. We are claimed and marked by God as God's own. We are placed within a community that bears the name *People of God*, and we are called to be a bold witness and worker for the kingdom that is being revealed and is already near. All this contained within a few words, words that bring healing, identity, and purpose.

So here we are in the midst of a season of transition, both weather wise and in the life of this congregation. In times like these things are often different, or at least different from what we remember. It is at times like this that the choice of words that we use to describe the situation, our feelings, or the actions around us are very critical. Are they healing words? Are they words that will cause hurt?

Years ago I asked the Bishop the purpose of interims and interim ministry. After some thought he said, “It is a time when the earth is broken open so that something new can grow.” I have carried these words with me ever since. They are indeed words that help define, shape, and dictate my thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is a reminder of the calling that we have all received in our baptisms to bring healing and restoration to the world, to be about the Word that is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and yet is ever creating something new.

So I ask and remind us all, if “we are children of God” and therefore “loved by God”, how will these words shape and direct our thoughts and actions? How will our words and actions be words and actions of healing?



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God Loves Me!

God's love through the love that we give them. None of us is a perfect reflection of God's love, but if we try our best, and are willing to admit our mistakes, our children will know that we can be trusted and that we do love them. As they grow, their trust in our love will transfer to a trust of God's love.

Tell your child that God loves him or her. Assure him or her that God's love is forever. Your child's self esteem will grow as he or she realizes how valuable he or she is to God. What better gift can you give your child than the knowledge that he or she is loved by God?

Serving God's People

<i>Date</i>	<i>Reader</i>	<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>Acolyte</i>
Jan 1	John Larson	Cooper/Larson	
Jan 8	Rochelle Meyers	Meyer/Meyers	Laura & Daniel
Jan 15	Phil Schmidt	Lee/Boyd/Wendling	Mickenzie & Karlee
Jan 22	Dawn Largé	Hertenstein/Largé	Joseph & Lucas
Jan 29	Kathleen Madore	Madore	Micah & Chloé

Celebrations

<i>Date</i>	<i>Celebration</i>	<i>Celebrant</i>
Jan 1	Birthday	JoAn Hill
Jan 5	Birthday	David Marks
Jan 6	Birthday	Laura Meyers
Jan 6	Baptismal Birthday	Kj Inch
Jan 8	Birthday	Geri McMullen
Jan 9	Baptismal Birthday	Kari Inch
Jan 11	Birthday	Mildred Kasari
Jan 14	Birthday	Theron Armstrong
Jan 20	Birthday	Dylan Wilkinson
Jan 22	Birthday	Vanessa Lindley
Jan 31	Birthday	Dorothy Schmidt

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A New Website!

customers or employees, web-based communication and email communication are cost-effective and time-saving devices.

- **Build relationships.** You can find value in having an online presence by building relationships with people via your website by sending them monthly emails or newsletters to stay in touch.

With that in mind, we welcome you to a new era and avenue of communication—the Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church Website.

<http://graceandmercylutheran.org>

<http://graceandmercylutheran.org/documents>

January 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 1 Christmas 8:45a Worship & Communion 10a Education Hour New Year's Day	2 6:32a Next Text Classic 10a Next Text 2.0	3 8a Coffee	4	5 9:30a Quilting	6 Epiphany	7
Pastor Inch—Vacation						
8 Baptism of our Lord 8:45a Worship & Communion 10a Education Hour	9 6:32a Next Text Classic 10a Next Text 2.0	10 8a Coffee 6:30p Leadership Mtg.	11 10a Gather Study	12 9:30a Quilting	13	14
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						
15 2 Epiphany 8:45a Worship & Communion 10a Education Hour	16 6:32a Next Text Classic 10a Next Text 2.0 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-(Observed)	17 8a Coffee	18 9:30a Foot Clinic	19 9:30a Quilting	20	21
Pastor Inch		Pastor Inch—Continuing Education				
22 3 Epiphany 8:45a Worship & Communion 10a Education Hour 5p Prison Ministry	23 6:32a Next Text Classic 10a Next Text 2.0	24 8a Coffee	25 10a Gather Study	26 9:30a Quilting	27	28 7p Tapping Into Faith @ Hermiston Tavern
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						
29 4 Epiphany 8:45a Worship & Communion 10a Education Hour Annual Meeting	30 6:32a Next Text Classic 10a Next Text 2.0	31 8a Coffee 5:30p Novel Ideas in Davis Hall				
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						