



The Messenger
St. John Lutheran Church

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PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS

Monday and Thursday: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

No appointment is necessary – just stop by! Please call the office and make an appointment if these times are not convenient (345-0120).

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

Last month, the topic of my article was *saving faith*. We said that faith in Christ at the time of our death, is absolutely essential for our entrance into heaven. **This month, we shift to another critical aspect of our Christian life: repentance.** Why? Jesus, Himself, directs His disciples to go out and teach "*repentance and forgiveness of sins*" to the whole world (Luke 24:45-48). Since Jesus commands this be done, *repentance* should be well understood by all of His disciples, including you and me.

Let's begin by understanding that there are **two distinct types of repentance**. Prior to a person being saved (being brought to faith in Jesus Christ), a **conversion must take place**. The Old Adam, man's sinful human nature, is dominating the unbeliever's thoughts and actions. The world and Satan easily lead this unconverted person to accomplish things that are in opposition to God's will. This is where the application of God's Law is critical. When confronted by the truth of God's Law, the unconverted person is brought low. He cannot escape the truth about the reality of his life – he is **not** a "good person." **Then**, as the message of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ is presented to him, he is **changed**, in the blink of an eye – **to be a faithful follower of Jesus** (see Romans 1:16-17 and 10:17). The heart and mind are affected! This is **strictly God's work** to bring us to saving faith. **Man contributes nothing!** (see Jeremiah 31:18, John 6:44). It's **not a process** – something that takes time and effort; **it's instantaneous!** The believer did nothing, nor did he show some form of worthiness in his life. By God's grace and mercy, we are brought to saving faith! (This conversion may also take place through God's action in **Baptism** – when a **child** is too young to understand the truth about his sin. Adults are led to repentance through instruction, and then are marked by our Lord in Holy Baptism).

The **second type of repentance is a recurring work (daily, even hourly), in the life of a Christian**, where **man can and does contribute**. Note that this second form of repentance **cannot contribute to our salvation** – that "work" was already **accomplished for us by God**, in the **first, or initial, act of repentance**. Even here, God's Spirit is active in leading us. In this daily (even hourly) work in us, the Holy Spirit helps us to see our sin clearly. We say, think, do, or leave undone something that the Law of God either prohibits or demands of us. We have violated our Lord's Word. Our conscience bears witness to our failure.

At this point, **the Christian has the option** of allowing God to work in him, leading him to confess that sin (or sins) and to seek God's help to turn from it; **or, the Christian may choose to ignore God's leading**, and simply **live with sin**. **The second option, ignoring God's call to change, is dangerous.** Dr. Martin Luther states that it is dangerous to go against your conscience. If one continues down this path, **God's Holy Spirit will flee the Christian who rejects the Spirit's leading**. This person is seeking a life that is free from God's input and guidance. And God will grant it.

However, **when, with a sorrowful heart, the Christian confesses his sins before God and others**, and **seeks God's strength to turn from sin, God is active and willing to help**. God is always faithful! Confessing your sins in church is **not** a "good work" that **leads God** to forgive you! **Faith in Jesus Christ is a 'blanket of grace' that covers you**, and provides complete forgiveness of sins (even *before* you are led to confess your sins).

In effect, **confession flows from us** (with help of the Holy Spirit) as we seek our Lord's presence. Then, God uses the message of forgiveness, found in His Gospel, to change your heart and mind. They're being changed, so that your thoughts, words, and deeds are more like your Lord's. This

growing in Christ is called **sanctification** (see Ephesians 4:11-16, Hebrews 2:10-12, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, Romans 12:2).

The **process of sanctification** (a lifelong process) **does not** mean that each day you will be more reliant on your Lord. It **does not** mean that each day you will **grow** in your holiness.

Sanctification is a process that can mean one step forward, and two steps back. Daily repentance turns us back to our Lord, and His Word and Sacraments. Reconnected to your Lord, His Word and His Supper are used by Him to grow you to be more like His Son. **Unconfessed sin** (or that pet sin that you're so fond of keeping) **can pull you back**, returning you closer to **your original state** - that fallen state that existed prior to your faith in Jesus (see Psalm 32:3-5).

Separating yourself from worship and God's Word will cause sin to be more prevalent in your life, as you wither and die spiritually (see John 15:5-8).

Jesus' command, that you reach-out to the lost with the message of "repentance and forgiveness of sins," certainly begins with **His initial act of repentance in us: conversion. But forgiveness of sins only continues through a life of daily repentance.** God is at work in us. As we abide in our Lord, and He in us, the 'blanket of forgiveness' continues to cover us. Our faith is strengthened. We remain in spiritual communion (Word and Sacrament) with Him.

That's the daily life of a Christian. Notice that it's **not a life free of sin.** Not at all. It is, however, God's active work in us to **keep us on the narrow road that leads to heaven** (Matthew 7:13-14). Our life in Christ begins with repentance, and it continues with repentance – until we see Him face-to-face. Amen.

Pastor Travis

P.S. One final comment on *repentance*. There are **two senses** of the word *repentance*, found in your Bible. In some verses, *repentance* has a narrow meaning, referring to the Law of God leading a person to the *state of contrition* (a heartfelt sorrow over defying God's will). In other verses, it may be referring to *repentance* in the wide-sense: being brought low by God's Law, leading to confession **and** the renewal that comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

For example, in the Luke 24 text used in the beginning of this article, *repentance* is used in the **narrow sense** of its meaning (see also Acts 5:31, 11:18, 2 Cor. 7:10, Mark 1:15 – and many others). For the Scriptural use of repent or repentance in the **wide sense**, see Hebrews 6:6, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 2:5 (and many others). Keep this in mind as you read your Bible.

SOCIAL MINISTRIES

FOOD TRUCK – We hosted another Food Truck this spring on Saturday April 21st at 11:00a.m. We collected donations of personal hygiene items and cleaning products to distribute on this date. Individuals in need cannot purchase items such as shampoo, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, or household cleaners with their Bridge cards even though they are needed.

We are working with a grant from Thrivent and our local Walmart for the food funding. A collection basket will be in the fellowship hall for donations. We very much appreciate the support we get from all of you! Very blessed to be a part of this church family! Questions can be made to Lisa or Bev.

We will be having a Red Cross blood drive on May 17th, 12pm – 6pm at the Knights of Columbus Hall. The sign-up sheet will be on the wall by the kitchen door. The baby bottle donations drive in support of the Caring Pregnancy Center will run from May 6th till June 10th. The Mother's Day Brunch is on May 6th, immediately following the service. Father's day brunch will be on June 10th, immediately following the service.

Thank you for your support and please keep these events in your prayers.

PRAYER MINISTRIES

Prayer Warriors – Please keep your students in your prayers and drop them a note to let them know you're praying for them.

Praying for you... Have you received a postcard in the mail recently that said, "The Congregation has prayed for you"? As part of the ongoing prayer ministry here at St. John, we pray for the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our members. We also lift up the ministries and outreach of this congregation on a daily basis. If you are interested in praying for these concerns, May Prayer Sheets are available in the Narthex on the cart next to the Portals of Prayer.

LADIES AID

BIBLE AND DEVOTIONAL COLLECTION - The Ladies Aid has recently discovered that Orphan Grain Train is collecting Bibles, hymnals and devotional materials which will be delivered to churches and people in need.

The Bibles can be new or gently used. For example: If you have changed to a different version and have an unused Bible from the past that is gathering dust, we have a use for it. The bibles can be any version; King James (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV) etc.

The used hymnals are sent to Lutheran churches in other countries such as countries in Africa where many new churches are being started.

They will accept any devotional material, new or used, such as Portals of Prayer or similar devotion booklets, Sunday School material, or any devotional material even if it is out of date.

The Ladies have set up a collection box for your convenience. Please place any Bibles or devotional material in this box.

FAMILY FARE "Direct Your Dollars" - As of April 12th we have collected 27,539 dollars in receipts. Remember, you must use your "Yes Rewards" card or give them your phone number for the purchase to count as a "Direct Your Dollars" receipt. For more information check the "Direct Your Dollars" container on the counter by the kitchen.

MEETING - The May 10th meeting of the Ladies Aid will begin at "Big Boy Restaurant" for lunch at 11:30 A.M. with the meeting following at the church at 1:00 P.M.

GARAGE SALE – Don't forget the Ladies Aid Garage Sale is scheduled for Friday, June 1st and Saturday, June 2nd. The hours will be Friday – 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. and Saturday – 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. We will be setting up the big tent on May 29th at 10 A.M and could use the help of some strong men. The ladies will be working in the garage on all of the Mondays in May during crafting time (weather permitting). This would be a good time to bring in any donations.

SPRING RALLY – The LWML Timberline Zone Spring Rally will be held on Saturday, May 5th at St. John Lutheran Church in Au Gres, MI. from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Tired of milk and junk food?

Looking for solid food?

**Check out the opportunities below
and come join us *as we grow in God's Word!***

Sunday Mornings

8:30 a.m. - A Longer Look at the Lessons – Prepare for worship by taking a closer look at the Bible readings for that Sunday's service.

Monday Mornings

10:00 a.m. - We are taking an in-depth look at **1 Samuel**. We will see our Lord's continuing, faithful care for His people, despite their weaknesses and unfaithfulness. Our Lord hears their prayers and calls them to repentance again and again. Ultimately uniting them as a nation under His servant, King David, and ultimately pointing them and us to Jesus our Savior and King.

Tuesday Evenings

7:00 p.m. - Women's Bible Study at Jane Tennant's home – There's a new study called "*The Lutheran Difference: Angels and Demons*".

7:00 p.m. - Men's Bible Study – They meet at the church the 2nd and 4th Tuesday's. They will be using the Bible Study, "Intrepid Heroes of the Faith".

Wednesday Mornings

9:00 a.m. – Men's Breakfast and Devotional - 3rd Wednesday at the church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

**Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Pray, Praise, and Give Thanks: Jesus Teaches us to Pray! Is the title of the lesson series we will be using in Sunday School for the next three months. Through these Bible story lessons, the

children will learn about the Lord's Prayer and how these petitions taught by Jesus are meaningful to them. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught the disciples and us to pray. So what is prayer? In the Small Catechism we find that "prayer is speaking to God in words and thoughts". And, to whom do we pray? The Small Catechism reminds us that, "We should pray to the true God only, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not to idols, saints or anything God has created."

We will begin the month with "God hears my prayers". Through the true story of Daniel in the lions den we will hear how Daniel called upon the one true God. God heard Daniel's prayer and protected him in the lion's den. Just as God listened to Daniel's prayers and saved him from the power of the lions, God hears our prayers and saves us from sin, death, and that prowling lion, the devil, through His Son, Jesus. God invites us to call upon Him and promises to answer our prayers for Jesus' sake.

**In the day of my trouble I call upon You, for You answered me.
Psalm 87:7**

We continue the month with "God tells me to pray for everything". In our true story from God's Holy Word in the Bible from Matthew 8, we will hear how a Roman Centurion asks our Lord to heal his servant. Remember his words to Jesus, "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. Only say the word and my servant will be healed". The Centurion believes that Jesus has the authority and divine power to heal without being present. Our Lord commends his faith and heals his servant. Just as the Centurion prayed for his servant to be healed, God invites us to pray for our needs and the needs of others. According to the Small Catechism, "We should ask for everything that tends to the glory of God and to our own and our neighbor's welfare, both spiritual and bodily blessings".

**I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and thanksgivings be made for all people.
1 Timothy 2:1**

The next week we will hear how "God is worthy of my thanks and praise". This week our story is from Acts 3. It's the true story of the man lame from birth that was laid outside the temple gate to beg for alms. Remember what happened when Peter and John approached the temple and were asked by the lame man for alms? Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" Remember what happened next to the lame man? "Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And, leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking, and leaping, and praising God." Just as the lame man gave praise and thanks to God, we pray, praise, and give thanks to God for who He is and what He has done for us through His Son, Jesus.

**Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.
Psalm 136:1**

We end the month with "Jesus teaches me to pray." From Luke 11, we learn that Jesus taught His disciples and us the Lord's Prayer to show us how to pray. Then He continued with several parables to teach us persistence and confidence in prayer. Jesus encourages us to ask and then follows it with a promise that the Father will hear and answer. And, for that we can give thanks and praise!

**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find;
knock, and it will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7**



Summer is coming!
And, so is VBS!
July 15th-19th
Interested in helping this year?
Join us for our next meeting
on May 23rd at 7 p.m.

EVANGELISM / OUTREACH

During our **Free Food Give-Aways** we have an **evangelism table** where New Testaments, tracts, and information on St. John are handed out free to all who are interested. These resources have been very well received by the community! Please pray that the Christian resource materials and Bibles will be effective in reaching the lost and hurting. We will be receiving a Thrivent Grant to be used for Lent Devotions for our Sunday School children and also for the day cares in the community. Thank you.

Prayer cards are being sent out and Facebook has been updated with pictures from Bible school. Patty Rohman is sending cards to our visitors to let them know we were glad they chose to worship with us and inviting them back. Hope everyone will remember to pray for the people in Texas during the hurricane and flooding they are going through.

We still have lots of car decals if you want one just ask Patty or John or check with Dennis in the office. Don't be bashful to ask. They make great conversation starters to invite someone to visit us on Saturday night or Sunday morning services. Do you know anyone that could use a prayer or a word of encouragement, let me know so I can send them a card. Carolyn Smith

Thy Will Be Done – Learning from the Lord's Prayer

by Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs

It seems a bit brash for a Lutheran to try to comment on the Lord's Prayer. One almost "thinks, Why bother? We have the Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther! In this short article, then, I won't try to duplicate or echo Luther's magnificent teaching about what the Lord's Prayer means. Rather, I'll offer four insights *that flow from*, the Lord's Prayer (MATT. 6:9-13). These four truths have helped me in my life as a Christian who wants to pray, and I ask the Lord of the Church to bless these words as you read them — that they might help you to pray as well.

1. The Lord's Prayer shows us that at the deepest level of our relationship with God, He is and

remains the Giver, and we remain needy receivers. In other words, prayers to our heavenly Father can and should *be, petitions*, that is, requests for His gifts. To be sure, we name as “prayer” other ways of speaking to God (such as praise or thanksgiving). When we, however, earnestly ask God to give us what He wills and what we need, this is not some “lower” or “selfish” way of praying. We are His children, His creatures that He has made. We will always — even in eternity! — stand in need of God’s gifts. God is our Father; He wants to give. We are God’s children; we need to ask and to receive from Him.

The Lord’s Prayer, then, shows us that we occupy a posture of *humility* in relation to God. If we ever think that we do not constantly need His gifts, we are moving down a dangerous path. If we ever think that He does not want to give us His gifts, then we need to return again to the promise that is true because Jesus Himself has made it come true: Almighty God *is* our heavenly Father.

2. The Lord’s Prayer reminds us that in *our prayers, we and our needs do not occupy the most important place*. I’m something of a grammar person, so I’ll just point this out: There are no first-person pronouns until halfway through the Lord’s Prayer. That is to say, there is no “we” or “us” or “our” — and certainly no “I,” “me,” or “my” — until the fourth petition, “give *us* this day our daily bread.” The Lord’s Prayer reminds us that first of all and most of all God’s name is to be hallowed, God’s reign must come and God’s will needs to be done — here on earth as it is in heaven. God wants to give us His gifts — yes, He does — but Jesus’ words remind us that God’s gifts are not just for us in the smallness of our perspectives or our conditions. God’s gifts are for the earth, for this entire broken world. More than anything, God needs to — and will — reign as the true King of all creation. More than anything, we are to desire for evil to be vanquished, for God in Christ to rule in mercy and truth on the earth. And because we belong to God through our faith in Christ, we will also come under those blessings here — on the earth.

3. The Lord’s Prayer teaches us that God has already answered, that He is now answering and that He will finally answer His people’s prayers. That is to say, the Lord’s Prayer points us to the past, the present and the future of God’s faithfulness. Remember Jesus’ terrible, wonderful prayer in the garden long ago? “Thy will be done!” (Matt. 26:42). Already in the past God has answered the Lord’s Prayer, and He did it in Jesus, in His death and resurrection out of death for us. Today, also, God continues to answer these requests as Christ’s disciples lift up their desires and needs to the Father in heaven; God’s Word is our great heritage today! One day soon — and very soon! — the fullness of God’s answers in Christ will come to the earth. Then God’s name will be fully hallowed, God’s reign will brook no rivals in any way, and God’s name — the name of Jesus! — will be acclaimed as holy as every knee bows before the Son, to the glory of the Father.

4. The Lord’s Prayer reminds us that our life in Christ is a battle that is ongoing, and that we need God to give His good gifts until the Day of final victory in Jesus. God’s forgiveness is like a lifeline to us, for we struggle with sin every day. Forgiven, we will also stretch out our hands in forgiveness to others wounded in the battle. The conflicts with evil will continue until the trumpet sounds. On the one hand, we know that God never tempts us, seeking to do us harm. On the other hand, God does send us into places of spiritual warfare where our own strength will not suffice. Rather, our God will deliver us from Satan so that we may continue to stand in Christ until the Last Day dawns, the battle is done and the Lord’s Prayer is finally and fully answered.

The Rev. Dr. Gibbs is professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

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More Than A Feeling – Human Emotions and the Word of God

“I just don’t feel close to God anymore.”

“I don’t feel forgiven.”

“I don’t feel like going to church.”

“I feel like I would be happier if we got a divorce.”

“I didn’t feel the Holy Spirit in the service.”

As a parish pastor, I hear things like this all the time, theological statements built on feelings.

Humans are feeling creatures. Each of us has an inner life, made up not only of thoughts but of emotions that shape our everyday life. We chase after good feelings, like happiness, excitement or satisfaction. We are driven by powerful emotions like fear or desire. We even assign moral authority to our feelings — and the culture around us encourages us to do so: “Go with your gut,” we are told. “If it feels right, it must be right.”

In my ministry, I see the danger of this almost every day. I see people who are tempted to make their feelings into their law, who look first and last to their emotions for guidance and instruction.

“It just feels right,” I hear them say. Something very wrong might feel just right to them. Laziness might feel better than service. Anger might feel better than forgiveness. Sexual immorality might feel better than patient chastity. But these feelings are **not** a trustworthy indicator of right and wrong. Human emotions can miss the mark entirely.

We learn this in the Ten Commandments. When the Lord, in the 9th and 10th commandments, says, “Do not covet...” He is telling us that even our wants and desires, our feelings and emotions, can get things wrong. When we feel like sinning, our feelings are wrong. It is not right just to do “what feels right.” It is right to do what God says.

This is even more important in theology and in the teaching of the Gospel. Here especially, it is vital that we not give greater theological authority to our feelings than we do to the Word of God.

“I feel like God has forgotten me,” someone might tell me. But what does the Bible say? “He has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you’”

... “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me”... “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (*see Heb. 13:5, Ps. 23:4, Matt. 28:20*). If your feelings tell you that God has left you, and the Bible tells you differently, then your feelings are lying to you. Don’t listen to them. Trust instead the sure promises of the Scriptures.

“Pastor, I don’t feel forgiven,” someone else might say. “I don’t feel like God could love me. I don’t

feel saved." But again, what does the Bible say? *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son"...* *"I have loved you with an everlasting love"...* *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"* *"...Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (See John 3:16, Jeremiah 31:3, Colossians 1:13-14, John 1:29). **You don't need to feel saved to be saved.** If your feelings say you aren't, and God says you are, then your feelings are lying to you.

We thus carefully note when our feelings and the promises of God contradict each other, and we trust the Lord's Word. But, God be praised, not every feeling contradicts the Scriptures. Often our own feelings and emotions align with God's Word, and even grow from God's Word.

The Bible speaks of delighting in God's Word (*Psalm 1:1-2*), of joy in God's presence (*1 Thess. 3:9*), of comfort from the promises of God (*2 Cor. 1:3-4*), and of anger over sin (*Eph. 4:26*). The Psalms roll through the full range of human emotions: fear, exultation, confusion, loneliness, audacity, confusion, exuberance. They're all there. And all of these human emotions are, at last, brought to the throne of God, where they submit to God's Word. Our feelings are not our masters. Like our thoughts and our will, our mind and our body, our emotions are also servants of God.

"By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything" (*1 John 3:19-20*).

God is greater than our hearts. Whether we feel it or not, His wonderful word is true, and His comforting promises cannot be broken. His love for us is sure. In this we will rejoice eternally.

Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller

Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Aurora, CO. He is the author of *Has American Christianity Failed?* (CPH, 2016).

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CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

2018 FLOWER CHART — A new flower chart for 2018 is posted. There are many opportunities to sponsor flowers for the altar. Please take a few moments to sign up for a special date. Remember, flowers are \$15.00 and the Ladies Aid would like them paid for when you sign up.

DECALS — Been noticing St. John window decals in the cars in the parking lot or around town? Want one for your vehicle/vehicles? There is no charge . . . just ask Patty Rohman or stop by the church office to get one.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT — St. John Lutheran has entered into an agreement with AuSable Valley Community Mental Health that allows them to use our facility for certain activities during the week. Part of this agreement is that our congregational members will keep confidential the names of people that are using our facility. Please observe this agreement by never mentioning the names of people that you may have seen. Also, remind others of this agreement if you hear of a visitor's name being mentioned. Thank you for your cooperation. Executive Council.

Reminder: There is a box in the Narthex for giving to the **Ogemaw County Clergy Association**. This money is collected hygiene items, for the purchase of food, personal home heating fuels, and funeral expenses for people in Ogemaw Country that are unable to afford these necessities. Make checks payable to Ogemaw County Clergy Assoc. Thank you!

EMERGENCY PRAYER REQUESTS – St. John has developed a system that allows us to rapidly contact all members when a life threatening situation develops, requiring immediate prayers. We are requesting cell phone numbers (for text messaging) or e-mail addresses for all members. For those who don't use e-mails or text messaging, phone calls will be made. Please request a salmon-colored form the office and return it when completed. Thank you.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

5/02 – Janice Doerr
5/05 – Justin Bickel
5/05 – Norma Vecellio
5/06 – Pauline Engel
5/06 – Jane Tennant
5/14 – Nikolas Klein
5/13 – Gail Klemm
5/19 – Victoria Scott
5/30 – Robert Tennant



MAY ANNIVERSARIES

5/11 – James and Jan Barber
5/15 – Bill and Beverly Pourcho
5/27 – Gerhard and Gail Klemm
5/31 – Lyle and Jacqueline Johnson