

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

From Psalm 104: *"I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my **meditation** be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD (vv 33-34).*

The Hebrew word for 'meditate' is *hagah*, which means to carefully consider God's holy word by uttering Scripture aloud – hearing it anew, with an open heart and mind. The psalmist is referring to worship, and what happens *when* we worship.

How many of you come to worship with all sorts of thoughts running through your head? Maybe your thinking about the new week, and all that you must accomplish? Maybe you had a conversation with a family member or friend, and now you can't stop thinking about it? Maybe you have physical ailments that consume your mind with worry or are a constant distraction? Maybe you have small children that require constant attention?

We're complex human beings, and **we come to worship with anything but a clean slate for God to imprint His image on.** A few months ago, I was visiting a church while on vacation, and I noticed these words, printed on the front of the bulletin:

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us today. This is the House of God: be thoughtful, silent, and reverent. **BEFORE** the Service, speak to God. **DURING** the Service, let God speak to you. **AFTER** the Service, speak to one another.

I must say I was truly impressed. People came 5 to 15 minutes early, not to talk with other members, but to sit in the pew and pray and meditate on the readings for that day. I looked around and *everyone* was silent. Their minds weren't consumed with the product of idle chatter or worldly thoughts, but on what they were about to receive: God's blessing imparted to them directly – His words penetrating the heart and mind, so that they receive all that He wants for them.

Some of you come to Sunday morning Bible study (8:30 am), and learn about the three readings that will be read during worship. This hearing the word read and meditating on its meaning is a great way to prepare the heart and mind for what is about to come: **God speaking directly to you.** Everyone who comes to this class says that it has greatly improved their worship experience, by refocusing and equipping the mind to hear. With barriers removed, people are able to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God!

Maybe you're not able to attend the Sunday study, but you can make an effort to come early, and sit in the pew. In prayer, ask God to clear your head, and open your heart to receive the blessings He has for you. Inside the bulletin are the Scripture readings. Take your time reading and meditating on those words. Pray that the words that are confusing or common might be revealed to you with new understanding and fresh insight. Open the hymnal and mark the hymns, so that when it's time, you are ready to "sing to the LORD." I can promise you that if you do this, you will be blessed.

If you have small children, and cannot free up time before worship, the hymnal has the readings for each weekend of the church year. We're currently on the Three-Year Lectionary: Series B. Also, each bulletin lists next week's readings. Save this list. Then,

before getting the children ready for church, read them and prepare yourself for what is about to come.

I believe that **worship preparation** can be **the answer** to those who are experiencing a **'spiritual dryness'** in their life. God promises to work through His word and Spirit to renew and strengthen you – but you can't receive this blessing if you are erecting barriers to block it out from your life. May God help you to clear your mind and open your heart to receive all that He has for you.

Pastor Travis