

Good Shepherd Newsletter December 2021



The Countdown to Christmas has begun. *“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere I go...”*

In the church calendar, we call it the Season of Advent.

This year’s midweek services focus on an Old Testament passage from Isaiah:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6-7.

Why take time in the middle of the week to go to church during the busiest time of the year?

To help us focus.

Our celebration of Christmas is full of “distractions,” those things that push God from being the front and center priority in our lives onto the shelf with the Elf.

Yes, there are a lot of things that we need to do:

We have to put up the tree, bake the cookies, buy presents and then wrap them, finish the family Christmas letter and then mail it along with the Christmas cards. And then there are all the holiday get togethers. That’s an awful lot of to-dos that take up our focus. Advent, is the time when we should slow down and focus or refocus on Jesus. The wrapping paper of Christmas can be an enormous distraction from the gift that we celebrate.

Take a break from the rat race and find that peace on earth and goodwill toward men during our Wednesday night Advent services. Dinner served at 5:30 and the service is at 6:30.

Don’t forget the Christ Candle, the Reason for the Season!

Pastor Ray

Take a close look at this picture. What’s missing?



If you guessed the Christ Candle you would be right



“I do therefore invite my fellow citizens ... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.” - Abraham Lincoln 1863.

Thanksgiving Day’s placement on the church calendar may have been intentional but the historical proof is very tenuous. Wikipedia says the “holiday’s history in North America is rooted in the English traditions dating from the Protestant Reformation.”

We were called to live a life of thanks (Psalm 95:1-5; 1Thessalonians 5:18).

Years ago it was once taught in schools that Thanksgiving was a holiday established when the Pilgrims and their American Indian benefactors celebrated a feast together in 1621. This inaugural Thanksgiving was after a brutal year where only half of the Mayflower’s complement survived.

The origins of our modern holiday are contributed to Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879). Sarah was a prolific writer who came to the attention of Rev. John Lauris Blake, an Episcopal minister, who hired Sarah as the editor of the extremely popular Ladies’ Magazine. Sarah used this platform to advocate for a number of causes, one of which was the establishment of a national Thanksgiving holiday. Her efforts convinced President Lincoln to declare such a holiday in 1863. After years of presidential proclamations, President Roosevelt moved the date for the benefit of retailers who wanted more shopping days before Christmas. The following year (1941) a reluctant Roosevelt signed Thanksgiving Day into law establishing it as an official Federal Holiday on Lincoln’s date.

The church calendar commemorates the Birth of Christ (Christmas), His resurrection (Easter), and the empowerment of the Church by the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). The church year begins with Advent, a four-week season that precedes Christmas. Advent is a teaching device used to retell the story of hope coming into the world in the fullness of time. Jesus is that hope. The color of the season is dark blue representative of the night sky just before the advent of light. Jesus is that light.

The church year ends after a long season of green Sundays (Sundays after Pentecost). Thanksgiving is a holiday that ordinarily falls between the end and the start of the church year. Ending the church year with Thanksgiving is a fantastic summation of what God the father has done.

God gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all that I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him (1st Article, SC).

Grace & Peace,
Curtis

I pray that you had a wonderful Thanksgiving – it is one of my favorite holidays of the year. This is the second in a continuing series of commentaries on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book "Life Together." Today we are concentrating again on chapter 4, Ministry. Bonhoeffer is telling the reader what we must do individually to uplift the Christian Community.

Last month we discussed the ministry of "Holding one's Tongue", which seems to be rather self-explanatory. If we are vocally critical of another Christian it can lead to discord. Being critical of another Christian is an indicator that you are not approving of one of God's children, meaning your judgment is telling you that God can do better. This alone is a dangerous path to take. The implication is that you are critical of God's works in others. Being too judgmental is what non-Christians think is the downside of becoming a Christian. *Please let that sink in.*

Today we will talk about the ministry of "Meekness". Let us have a look at Romans 12:3. "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." When you think about it, each of us is a poor and imperfect sinner. We did not earn our salvation; it was a free gift from God. Accordingly, we should have no reason to have a high opinion of ourselves.

When we have an opportunity to serve others in the time of their need, we should put their needs above ours. Our meekness which comes from thinking little of ourselves will help us feel more highly of others and put their priorities above our own. As we think of serving others according to their needs, we should remember that we all at some point will have a need that we cannot solve ourselves. We will need the help of Jesus and others. We are all part of his kingdom and we have our own unique strengths and weaknesses. There is another roadblock to service others, our plans. That is that most of us will have plans and sometimes serving others means we have to scrap our plans. Serving others means we put them first and our plans second. If this happens to me, I often try to think that God has a better plan than I CAME UP WITH AND I SHOULD GO WITH His new plan that has me serving others. It has been my experience that I receive more than I give when service others – tough to explain, but that is how it seems to work out for me.

There is another, possibly tougher, challenge to be meek. I often fail this challenge but the fact that I am authoring this piece may help me get better. Let us say that someone is being critical of something we did or did not do. My normal reaction is to immediately go on the defensive and explain why I did or didn't do the thing in question with me as being the good guy, "how dare you question that!" I need to be ready to be meek and accept the critique of my behavior. I should acknowledge the fact that I am far from perfect and do make mistakes. I should ask Jesus for a little help in the meekness department. Let us all be ready to try this approach in our personal relationships as the stress level on everyone tends to rise during December. As we try this, let us all think about reducing the stress level in general by remembering the reason for celebrating this time of year – the arrival of our Messiah! Hallelujah!

Merry Christmas to you and yours! God grant you Peace!
Deacon Joe

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great physician of both body and soul, healed a man with dropsy by His Word on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1–6). Dropsy is a paradoxical ailment, with an unquenchable craving for drink even though the body is over inflated with fluid, a craving that, when indulged, served not to ease but to feed the disease.

And so, if a man drinks a great deal but is never filled, he sees a doctor to inquire about what ails him, what is wrong with his body, and how to remedy it. For that is not thirst but a disease (Seneca, *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, 11.3).

But if the owner of five couches goes looking for 10, or the owner of 10 tables buys up as many again, and even though he has plenty of land and money, he remains unsatisfied and desires yet more, losing sleep and always in discontent, does he not also require a physician to diagnose the cause of this distress?

For this is not want or lack, it's a disease (Aristippus, quoted in Plutarch, *Love of Wealth*, 524b). As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, "we may rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man: For the more the one is swollen with excess of water, the more he thirsts; so also, the other: The more he abounds in riches ... the more eagerly he desires them" (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, 4:135). Both require physicians. Both require diagnosis and medicine applied from the outside to the inward being. For these are not desires to be fulfilled but diseases to be cured.

This is why our Lord instructs us to not to be consumed by money. "No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Our desire for money, like the disease dropsy, is never satisfied. We always desire more. We think, "If I just had this much then I would be happy."

But even when that much comes, which God gladly gives, happiness evades us. The desire for more is never satisfied. It demands our constant energy, either in procuring more or protecting what we already have. When this happens, God, in His mercy, shows us that the money that He has given is no longer serving us, but we it. We have another master.

In essence, He says, "Stop chasing after these fleeting things. They are vanity. They are the things that moth and rust destroy. You cannot have two masters. Repent!" And in seeing our great error, we are sorry that we have not fully feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. And, in the mercy and grace that He earned for us on the cross, He takes away this sin, restores us to health, and bids us to live.

So, we no longer hoard money and possessions. We no longer scrape and crawl our way to amass more. We give to those around us, as God in Christ has given to us. We press our money and possessions into service for those who need it: our family, our society and our church. For money is God's gift to us to serve us and others. Not the other way around. It serves us because it is a gift from our Father in heaven.



The December meeting of the local society of the LWML will be a Fellowship event. On Sunday December 12 at 1 p.m. we will have lunch together at the Barvarian Wirshaus Restaurant, 24 Mircle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, then attend the Ft Walton Beach Community Chorus concert, "Wonder Christmas Time" at 3:00 p.m., Ft Walton Beach Civic Auditorium, 107 Miracle Strip Pkwy, Fort Walton Beach. Linda Babiak, a member of the Chorus, has ticket for sale \$10. And can be purchased at the door. If you plan to join us, please let me know as soon as possible, so I can make reservations for the number to attend lunch.

Thank you for continuing to support our mite giving by donating on the first Sunday of the month.

Bea Daily, Joyfulbea@cox.net, 850-862-8130 cell 850-830-3163

THE ANGEL TREE is set up in the Narthex. We are supporting the same families from Kenwood Elementary that we did for Thanksgiving. Take an angel (or two) and put your name and phone number next to the angel number on the signup sheet. ALL GIFTS need to be returned, wrapped, and underneath the tree by Sunday, December 18 so we can distribute them to the families in time for Christmas. Contact Jean Grieve or Dianna Rigganbach for more information: jean.grieve@yahoo.com, 850-217-1937 membership@gslcshalimar.org, 850-6551-1022.

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION TAX REMINDER: Thank you for supporting the mission and work of our congregation. If you would like to claim your charitable contribution toward this mission and work for 2021, then we need to have received it before December 31st.



12/3 Trudy Gronning	12/13 Audrey Gray
12/4 Beatrice Daily	12/16 Maecy Hoppel
12/4 Peter Day	12/18 Larry Hill
12/4 Judy Koepsell	12/20 Bobbie Ehlert
12/5 Cheryl Neumann	12/21 Charles Schwartz
12/6 Andrew Bier	12/24 Brian Dailey Jr
12/8 Dave Lienemann	12/26 Tenley Olman
12/9 David Chandler	12/26 Jane Wilhelm
12/9 Yuri Day	12/27 Kelly Binkley
12/9 Allen Parker	12/29 Sandy Boole
12/12 Randy Lawson	12/31 Isaiah McElroy

12/3 Jim & Beatrice Daily
 12/18 Jim & Sandee Baughman Sr
 12/27 Bob & Nancy Johnson
 12/29 George & Mary Ann Day



December 7 – Angels Among Us
Stories of miraculous encounters
December 14 – Faith and Science
Discoveries from the scientist who led the human genome project
December 21 – The Spirit of Santa
The legend, the love, the lowdown
December 28 – Stuck in a Rut?
Get unstuck...one step at a time

Good Shepherd in Pictures!!!





Regular Sunday Worship Times
Traditional Worship @ 8:00 AM
Contemporary Worship @ 10:45 AM

Sunday School @ 9:30 AM



Good Shepherd Lutheran
Church
Pastor Ray Angerman
Family Life Minister Curtis
Wiese
Music Director Lois Henry
1 Meigs Drive - Shalimar,
FL 32579
850-651-1022
www.shalimar.church

