



First Hearts January 2021

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From the Pastor

2020 was a year that didn't go as planned. None of us were ready for it or had plans for it. Yet, God was still gracious and merciful. Even amid our sorrow, we had Christmas. The newborn babe laying in the manger who will save us.

Christmas and all that goes with it is now past, though. This means trees are down. Lights are no longer blinking. There's a sense of emptiness after all the hustle and bustle. Will life ever return to normal? Will it ever be the same?

Have you ever felt like that? Where can you turn? Pray with the psalmist Psalm 25, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted." (Ps 25:16)

Meditate on these verses from the Bible as well: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Is 41:10)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." (Pr 3:5)

"I have said these things to you, that you may have peace. IN the world you have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

"Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

"Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matt 6:31-34)

There is celebrate! Epiphany is upon us. We celebrate the work of Jesus in the world. His work which brings us life and salvation. Jesus comes to us: the lowly, the broken, the despised and the cast down. Jesus comes to sinners. Jesus comes and brings grace and mercy for all who believe. Jesus comes and redeems a world destroyed by sin.

Epiphany has two bookends. The First Sunday after the Epiphany is the Baptism of Jesus. The voice declares that Jesus is "My Son." Words and voice appear again on the last Sunday of the season, Transfiguration.

"My Son" who saves us from our sins. "My Son" who is the pivot point upon which the history of the world turns. He comes to us as our Savior, Redeemer, Brother, and Lord. One of the Epiphany hymns in our hymnal says it best:

“What joy to know, when life is past,
The Lord we love is first and last,
The end and the beginning!
He will one day, oh, glorious grace,
Transport us to that happy place
Beyond all tears and sinning!
Amen! Amen!
Come, Lord Jesus!
Crown of gladness!
We are yearning
For the day of Your returning!”
— “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright,” Lutheran Service Book, 395:6
Pastor Ed Maanum



Weekly Events

Sunday - Divine Service 8:30 am and 11:00 am; Bible Study 9:45 am
Monday-Thursday - Morning Prayer - 7:30 am

Board Happenings

1/12- School Board 6:00 pm
1/12 - Elders Meeting 7:00 pm
1/26 - Planning Council 6:30 pm

Other Church Activities

1/2 - Men's Bible Study 8:00 am
1/4 - Ladies' Bible Study 7:00 pm
1/6 - Epiphany Service 7:00 pm
1/10 - Confirmation 9:45 am
1/16 -Men's Bible Study 8:00 am
1/16 - Work Day 9:00 am
1/17 - Youth Group (immediately following 11:00 am service)
1/18 - Ladies' Bible Study 7:00 pm
1/24 - Confirmation 9:45 am

	Jan. 1 2021	Circumcision and Name of Jesus	Num. 6:22–27	Psalm 8	Gal. 3:23–29	Luke 2:21
	Jan. 3	Second Sunday a. Christmas	1 Kings 3:4–15	Psalm 119: 97–104	Eph. 1:3–14	Luke 2:40–52
EPIPHANY	Jan. 6	Epiphany	Is. 60:1–6	Psalm 72:1–11 (12–15)	Eph. 3:1–12	Matt. 2:1–12
	Jan. 10	The Baptism of Our Lord	Gen. 1:1–5	Psalm 29	Rom. 6:1–11	Mark 1:4–11
	Jan. 17	Second S. a. the Epiphany	1 Sam. 3:1–10 (11–20)	Psalm 139:1–10	1 Cor. 6:12–20	John 1:43–51
	Jan. 24	Third S. a. the Epiphany	Jonah 3:1–5, 10	Psalm 62	1 Cor. 7:29–31 (32–35)	Mark 1:14–20
	<i>or</i>	St. Timothy, Pastor and Confessor	Acts 16:1–5	Psalm 71:15–24	1 Tim. 6:11–16	Matt. 24:42–27
	Jan. 31	Fourth S. a. the Epiphany	Deut. 18:15–20	Psalm 111	1 Cor. 8:1–13	Mark 1:21–28

Special Message

Who Are You?

Adapted from Pastor Maanum's Sermon 12/13/20

“Who are you?” This is the question the Pharisees put to John the Baptist. He was not the Christ; nor Elijah nor the Prophet.

Who are you? It's a common question when we meet someone new. Well, we are made up of the physical attributes of our genes, sharing our family's appearances, and maybe even some familial mannerisms. And we are made up of our experiences, which are unique to our own person alone. We might say our experiences are the most important aspect of who we 'are'. These things are in the past; our heredity and those things that have happened to us. But the most important aspect of who we are is our creation in the image of God, manifest in Christ Jesus. This aspect of our 'being' is not only our past, as we were created, but it is how we are to live today and for the rest of our life. Is this part of our answer to the question when asked, “Who are you?”

What would happen if you began your answer with, “I am a child of God.”? That's okay to say to our Christian Brothers and Sisters in Christ. But would you say that in a common introduction? Not me! This approach is usually something that emerges during a conversation when one or the other begins to expose their Faith, maybe not even until the end of the conversation, as in, “Have a Blessed day!” What an opportunity lost!

It's easy to live according to our personality and our experiences. After all, these things are engrained in who we are, to the point it becomes our natural,

earthly response. It's far more difficult to live according to our Heavenly creation. Living according to our creation is something we have to learn through study. Why is that? Why is it so hard to learn to be a creation person? It's Sin.

Our experiences are full of Sin. It's almost as if we have to unlearn Sin, and relearn our Faith that is rooted in our creation. That's a head shaker. The fact is, our sinful experiences are opportunities to learn Faith; to grow our Faith. For Sandy and I, our opportunities came early in our relationship. She was diagnosed with Stage 3/4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma as she was graduating from college. We were engaged, and I was living in Chicago. I moved back to Michigan, and we began the fight of our lives. Illness is a product of sin in the world. There was no idea how she contracted this awful disease, except for this explanation. If there was an actual sin involved, perhaps it was simply a falling away from God.

So, with the help of God, we began our fight. It was the, "Hello!" moment for both of us. Had it not been for His Grace and His healing, it certainly may have turned out much differently. This 'experience' was the beginning of our living according to our creation.

Suffice to say, we have had more than our share of "Hello" moments. Sandy and I have been married for over 32 years, by living through our creation. Certainly, I/we are going through a "Hello" moment with my Kidney Failure. That is a result of living according to our creation. As I relate 'who am I' to someone, I don't just describe my experiences, I give glory to God for His Grace that got me/us through these life events.

The more often we learn to call on God's Grace to get us through our experiences ("Hello moments"), the better we will become at acting according to our creation. Will we stop sinning? No. But we will increase our Faith, and be witnesses to God's Grace. And that is His great commission: "Therefore go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20.

So, Who Are You?

In Christ,

Don Linde, Elder
First Lutheran Church & School (LCMS)

In Other News

Stewardship

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

- Who are you?
- To whom do I give?
- And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);
- Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);
- Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);
- Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and
- With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

It’s that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

Looking for substitute Organists or Pianists for Sundays and possibly Wednesdays. We are blessed to have Kay Irwin serving as organist for First

Lutheran. The Board of Elders is putting together a list of substitute accompanists for times when Kay is not available. Please contact Jered Sprecher at jeredsprecher@gmail.com or 917.656.7844

Parrish Education - Are you interested in facilitating Sunday School and VBS? First Lutheran is looking for volunteers to help organize Sunday School and other Parrish Education activities. Please reach out to Pastor Ed or Jered Sprecher.

Youth! Mark your calendars, join in fun and fellowship after 11:00 am church on the third Sunday of every month.

Online Services: Please visit the church website www.firstknoxville.org to view our worship services and to participate in worship at your home. There are also links for Bible study and other resources.

Facebook Page: Follow First Lutheran on Facebook for all the latest updates: <https://www.facebook.com/KnoxFirstLutheran/>



Birthdays

- 5 - Kelly Sternberg
- 6: Natalie Brown, Julie Killian
- 7: Don Yeatts
- 9: Jana Hotaling
- 10: Anna Broyles
- 12: Natalie Hotaling
- 13: William Wade
- 14: Sarah Appleton; Megan Varner
- 15: Steve Byrd; Amelia Hamilton
- 17: Ellie Chrapliwy
- 18: Josh Blumenberg
- 19: Clinton Gross; Shirley Watson
- 20: Ariej' Robbins
- 21: Hannah Keyes

25: Nathaniel Davis; Rosie Rosen; Karin Spaid
26: Liam Bales
27: Bob Eisold; Doug Slifka
30: Adam Breeden; Shirley Eimmerman; Roger Wright, Sr.
31: Sean Bales

Anniversaries:

3 - Jim & Linda Perrine
6 - Bob & Kara Sircy
13 - Don & Carolyn Weaver
14 - Jeff & Stephanie McKenzie
25 - Gary & Christina Boatman