



# The Epistle of St. Paul

A Newsletter for St. Paul's Lutheran Church

August 2006

## Pleasant Pastures

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### St. Lawrence

A patron saint of libraries and librarians. He is a third century saint and martyr (died 258 AD) who had responsibility for the written archives and records of the early church.

St Lawrence was one of seven famous deacons of the third century Church in Rome. The other six deacons were captured by the Emperor Valerian on August 6, 258, and martyred. They were buried together in the cemetery of Callistus. The oppression of the Christian church was very severe, and many Christians fled Rome or died.

The Emperor believed that Lawrence, as librarian and archivist, would have a list of all the members of the church, and the locations of all her mythical hidden hoards of gold. Captured by the soldiers of the Emperor Valerian a few days later, on August 8, 258 AD, he was told that two days hence he must bring all the treasures of the church to the imperial palace.

Lawrence gathered up the all the diseased, orphaned or crippled Christians and brought them to the palace on the appointed day. He explained to the emperor that "These are the treasures of the church!" Valerian was not impressed. He probably thought that Lawrence was mocking him. But Lawrence was right. You are the treasures of the Church. You are the most precious possessions that Christ has.

While the worldly-minded judge riches by how much they give to me, God judges riches by how much He can give to you! It is God's good pleasure to give. That is who He is and that is what He treasures most! In grasping

this fact, Lawrence boldly taught us all the heart of God.

He paid for this lesson with his life. Valerian was not among the godly-minded who understood Lawrence' words. Instead, he interpreted his words as impudent and disrespectful. According to tradition Lawrence was roasted slowly on a grill on the site of the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Rome. It is said that the emperor was hoping that this slow and agonizing form of execution might induce him to finally give up the names of the wealthy members and the location of the gold and jewels.

Lawrence is often represented holding a gridiron to memorialize this grisly manner of martyrdom. As a result, St Lawrence is also considered a patron saint for cooks. There is also the popular story that he was so willing to embrace Christ in heaven, that he did not mind the pain from the fire of his martyrdom, and indeed, he found the strength to tell his executioners "Turn me over. I am done on this side."

The courage and dignity of St Lawrence and many of these other early Christians in facing their death did much to gain respect for their religion in Rome, and after the death of St. Lawrence, there was widespread conversion to Christianity.

His feast day is August 10<sup>th</sup>, and is usually celebrated by librarians and archivists (in honor of his traditional method of death) with cold cuts.

The annual Perseid meteor shower, one of the best known of the annually occurring meteor showers, and which occurs near his feast day in August, is sometimes called "The Tears of St. Lawrence."

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## Pastoral Pedagogy

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### God Does Not Need Our Good Works

*The following is reprinted from Rev. Klemet Preus' book, The Fire and the Staff.*

Someone once asked Luther what God was doing before He created the world. Luther is reported to have answered, "Creating hell for people who ask such stupid questions." God was not bored. He doesn't "do things" except to bless us. The cupboards of heaven are not stuffed with jigsaw puzzles or stamp books for the Almighty to kill time on a particularly slow millennium. The good Lord isn't sitting in heaven, wringing His hands hopefully, as He waits to see if people will show Him the proper respect. He isn't like a movie critic during the worship service, checking to see if we are doing things properly. He's God. He will be just fine whether we thank, praise, serve, and obey Him or not. Don't worry about God. When we talk about doing good works, we must never believe that God benefits from them. All talk of God is about what God does for us, not what we do for God.

What about the Ten Commandments? Don't they tell us what to do for God? The word commandment is unfortunate. We should call them the ten statements or the ten principles or, better, the ten descriptions of God's children. They aren't even imperative. They are descriptions of those people whom God controls. God says to His people, "You will not kill. You will not commit adultery. You will not steal." He's describing us.

Remember when you were a kid and your dad was called into the principal's office to discuss your behavior? That happened to me. I was accused of showing disrespect to a teacher. It was a false accusation. She had me confused with another guy. My father said, "My son is not disrespectful. He will not show disrespect." Grammatically, that's the same as "You will not kill." Dad did not give me an order He described me. I suppose someone might think that this understanding of the Ten Commandments gets us off the hook. The opposite is true. What if I had, in fact, been disrespectful? Imagine if my dad's description of me were not true. I would have made him a liar. His statement would have elicited more anguished repentance than all the imperatives in the world. Imperatives don't work. Descriptions do. The Ten Commandments describe us.

Luther's Large Catechism instructs us. The Ten Commandments (I will call them the Ten Commandments because of tradition) are given so we can know how God blesses us and how He uses us to bless others. They are divided into two tables. It is often said that the first three tell how we are to love God and the next seven tell us how to serve other people. But even the first three do not have God as the beneficiary. Rather, they tell us of the manner in which God blesses us with grace for eternity. The next seven commandments tell us how God uses His children to bless others for this life.

Learn the Ten Commandments from Luther. He summarizes the first three, "Therefore you must constantly keep God's Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears."

The First Commandment is to believe, the Second to speak, and the Third to listen. So we are blessed by the commandments. In the First, God "makes no greater demand than

heartfelt trust in him for every good thing, so that we walk straight ahead on the right path using all of God's gifts."

The Second Commandment requires that such confidence be spoken, as we "honor God's name and keep it



constantly upon (our) lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the lips (honor God) by confession" so others might believe.

The Third Commandment tells us to place the Word of God onto our ears. So we take time off on a day of rest "to attend worship services [literally 'divine service'], that is, so that they may assemble to hear and discuss God's Word and then to offer praise, song, and prayer to God." The singing and praying is not for the benefit of God. It benefits others. And the learning of the Word is done not to flatter God but "for the sake of the young people" or "for the sake of the whole community" of the church." When we have followed the first three commandments, God is not the beneficiary—we are, along with our children, the church, and anyone who hears our confession.

The second table of the Law tells us how to serve our neighbor in this life and for this life. We respect parents (Fourth Commandment), preserve life

(Fifth Commandment), enjoy marriage (Sixth Commandment), protect property (Seventh Commandment), guard reputation (Eighth Commandment), and we do so joyfully (Ninth and Tenth Commandments). God is not benefited by our obedience to the Ten Commandments. God does not feel better when I get up and change my child in the middle of the night. He does not need the commandments. We do.

God especially does not need my good works in the area of worship. Too often we picture God as the beneficiary of our worship as if He is impressed with the quality of the musical performance in church. God is even depicted as somehow saddened if our whole hearts are not focused into the manner in which we worship. God existed from eternity without my prayers or my music. He'll do just fine. The *Divine Service* is intended to

bless people, to bring the word of forgiveness to them, whatever roll I might play.

Klemet Preus



## Parish Periscope

### ♦ Welcome to the Family!

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, we will mark the feast day of John the Baptizer. Katherine Vanderhyde and Sherry Black are also celebrating the anniversaries of their own washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost. Baptized into Jesus death and resurrection, we were given a whole new life and a whole new family. Now, Jesus' Father is also our Father and Jesus' brothers and sisters are truly our brothers and

sisters. It is that same baptism into Christ that binds all of us together in this Christian congregation.

The remembrance of your own baptism ought to cause each and every one to pause and take stock of the most important things in life. Namely, to cherish and hold to your own baptism with the same joy and sincerity that you had on the day you received it.

Let us endeavor more and more to live out our Baptismal reality together. The world says, "blood is thicker than water." In saying this, they mean to say that bloodlines are more important than Baptism. May it never be! For the water of Holy Baptism IS BLOOD—the blood of Christ. By your baptism, you have not just been washed in water. You have been washed in the blood of the Lamb! (Revelation 7:14). And the Blood of the Lamb of God is certainly thicker than any family bloodlines or social ties.

As we cherish our baptism into Christ, we also cherish one another as true brothers and sisters. Families are eager to be with one another within and without the Divine Service. Families bear one another's burdens in concrete and meaningful ways. We want to know each other and pray for each other support each other and encourage each other. May this baptismal reality permeate our lives together.

◆ **Bible Study Opportunities**

We continue to feature a Bible Study opportunity each Wednesday at 9:30AM. We are working through the Gospel according to St. John (7<sup>th</sup> chapter). The Bible text works as our spring-board into a variety of topics concerning God and religion.

On Sunday mornings Bible Study meets before the *Divine Service* at 8:00AM. We are we are studying the Augsburg Confession. This is the first document which was written and presented as a distinctly Lutheran confession. As such, it remains to this day as

the foundational document for all of Lutheranism throughout the world.

◆ **"For You" - 2007**

Due to the overwhelming response to this summer's Youth Conference, Higher Things will be offering two different Conferences next summer. One in Minneapolis, MN (July 24-27) and the other in Asheville, NC (July 31-Aug. 3). Registration opened for these conferences on August 1. If you would like to attend, please let Pastor Lange know as soon as possible. These conferences have been offered for a number of years now and all of them have sold out before the registration closed.

◆ **Dual Parish Potluck and Meeting**

On Sunday, August 27th we will be traveling to St. Paul's in Kemmerer for our annual potluck and meeting. Please mark this day on your calendar and make every effort to be there. This is an important time to fellowship with our bothers and sisters in Christ and to make decisions which were vital to our working together as a dual parish.

◆ **Congregational Web Site**

[www.lutheransonline.com/StPaulsKemmerer](http://www.lutheransonline.com/StPaulsKemmerer)

If you haven't visited our new web site yet, here is another reminder. Content is constantly being updated. There is something there for everyone—from daily devotions, to congregational calendars, to sermon archives and theological discussions. Tell your friends about it and join in the dialogue.



# Pending Pericopes

◆ **Service Times Changing**

August is the last of the four summer months where we swap service times with Evanston. You might want to note on your calendar that on the first Sunday of September, service times will revert back to our winter schedule.

Beginning on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Divine Service will begin at 11:00AM with the Bible Study following at 12:15PM.

*The Divine Service leads us through the year according to the lectionary series in place since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Below are the upcoming readings for the Sundays and Festivals of the month. You may wish to study them ahead of time as additional preparation for the service.*

◆ **Trinity 8 - August 6**

Psalm: 1  
Old Testament: Jeremiah 23:16–29  
Epistle: Romans 8:12–17  
Gospel: St. Matthew 7:15-23

◆ **Trinity 9 - August 13**

Psalm: 54  
Old Testament: 2 Samuel 22:26–34  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:6–13  
Gospel: St. Luke 16:1-13

◆ **Trinity 10 - August 20**

Psalm: 55  
Old Testament: Jeremiah 8:4–12  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:1–11  
Gospel: St. Luke 19:41-48

◆ **Trinity 11 - August 27**

Psalm: 27  
Old Testament: Genesis 4:1–15  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1–10  
Gospel: St. Luke 18:9-14



