

# The Epistle of St. Paul's

A Newsletter for St. Paul's Lutheran Church

September 2007

## Pleasant Pastures

### The First Commandment

"You shall have no other gods."

A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe him with our whole heart..... That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God.

Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, come and cling to me. I am the one who will satisfy you and help you out of every need. Only let your heart cling to no one else.

Many a person thinks he has God and everything he needs when he has money and property; in them he trusts and of them he boasts so stubbornly and securely that he cares for no one.... It is the most common idol on earth....

On the other hand, he who has nothing doubts and despairs as if he never heard of God. Very few there are who are cheerful, who do not fret and complain, if they do not have mammon....

So, too, if anyone boasts of great learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family, and honor, and trusts in them, he also has a god, but not the one, true God.

Notice again, how presumptuous, secure, and proud people become because of such possessions, and how despondent when they lack them or are deprived of them... to have a God properly means to have something in which the heart trusts completely.

To have God, you see, does not mean to lay hands upon him, or put him into a purse,... We lay hold of him when our heart embraces him and clings to him... to entrust ourselves to him completely. He wishes to turn us away from everything else, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one, eternal good. It is as if he said: "What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or anything else, turn to me for all this; look upon me as the one who wishes to help you and to lavish all good upon you richly."

(The Book of Concord. Theodore G.Tappert, trans. and ed., Fortress, 1959.)

### The Rhythm of Worship

Our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. Faith that is born from what is heard acknowledges the gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise. Music is drawn into this thankfulness and praise, enlarging and elevating the adoration of our gracious giver God.

Saying back to him what he has said to us, we repeat what is most true and sure. Most true and sure is his name, which he put upon us with the water of our Baptism. We are his. This we acknowledge at the beginning of the Divine Service. Where his name is, there is he. Before him we acknowledge that we are sinners, and we plead for forgiveness. His forgiveness is given us, and we, freed and forgiven, acclaim him as our great and gracious God as we apply to ourselves the words he has used to make himself known to us.

The rhythm of our worship is from him to us, and then from us back to him. He gives his gifts, and together we receive and extol them. We build one another up as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Our Lord gives us his body to eat and

his blood to drink. Finally his blessing moves us out into our calling, where his gifts have their fruition. How best to do this we may learn from his Word and from the way his Word has prompted his worship through the centuries. We are heirs of an astonishingly rich tradition.

### Money as Servant—Not Sovereign

To put it very briefly, God does not want us to serve money and possessions. Nor does He want us to worry. But He does want us to work and leave the worry to Him.

Let him who has possessions be the master of these possessions. He who serves is a servant and does not have the possessions, but the possessions have him. For he dare not use them when he wants to; nor does he dare serve others with them. In fact, he is not bold enough to touch the stuff. But if he is master of the possessions, the possessions serve him and he does not serve them. He, then, may use the possessions, as Abraham, David, Job and other wealthy people did....

When he sees a man who has no coat, he says to his money: Come out young Mr. Dollar! There is a poor naked man who has no coat, you must serve him. Over there lies a sick man who has no refreshment. Come forth, Sir Dollars! You must be on your way, go and help him. People who handle their possessions in this way are masters of their possessions. And, surely, all honest Christians will do this. But the folk who are saving much money and are forever scheming how to make the pile larger and not smaller are servants.

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# Pastoral Pedagogy

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## The Art of Preaching

A Sermon by Rev. Richardt †1998

**Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.**

Anyone who has ever heard a preacher has formed an opinion about him. If I mention the names Billy Graham, Rex Humbard, Robert Schuller, or Oswald Hoffman, many of you know of them, and you have formed an opinion. However, the opinions formed by so many people today are formed with an attitude of, "Preacher, I don't like what you're saying." Because you and I have been born with a desire to despise preaching and the Word, and because the Third Commandment asks us gladly to hear and learn God's Word as it is preached, we need to understand God's reasoning and purpose behind the preacher and preaching.

It all begins with the Biblical Statement, "How can they hear without someone preaching to them?" [Romans 10:17] It is God's desire that His Word be brought to this world through preaching. It is interesting to note that the Bible uses the word "preach," "preacher," or "preaching" 153 times - only 12 times in the Old Testament, but 141 times in the New Testament. The word in Hebrew and Greek means "to proclaim, announce, declare, publish, herald, call out the News of God." So God, through His Church, chooses people to be preachers and sends them out to proclaim His message: "Tell them what I have said. Tell them of their sin. Tell them of their Savior. Tell them how to apply it to their lives." So preachers go forth proclaiming God's Message.

No one subject is more despised today than preaching. Biblically, it's always been true. For 120 years Noah preached and could only get his family to believe. All the others despised his preaching. Moses preached, yet only a small remnant honored his preaching; the rest despised the preaching. In the

New Testament, John the Baptist came on the scene and preached repentance, called sin what it was - an abomination unto the Lord - and lost his head by those who despised the preaching. Jesus came and preached. The Bible says, "Jesus preached for repentance." In doing so, only a handful remained faithful to that preaching. His disciples went out, being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and they preached, and many despised this preaching, thus banishing these disciples from their home and community. Some believed. My friends, it has been shown us in the Scriptures that there have always been some who believed - a few, a remnant - but most despise preaching. It is the same today in this community, and even with many who come to this family. There are the faithful - those who love the preaching of God's Word, apply it to their life, grow in Grace, follow Jesus Christ, and commit themselves to Him. The few are there. But despising preaching is still as popular in our midst as it was in the midst of the first disciples.

Isn't it a shame that God appoints preachers to do preaching, and then preaching becomes despised. But in reality, God is being despised. My friends, to despise the preaching of God's Word is to despise God. It is one and the same thing. As I began this series on the Ten Commandments, some people said, "I don't want to hear those messages. They bother me." Well, I'll be very honest and say, "They bother me too, and there's something within me that says, 'I don't want to hear those messages either.'" That something "inside" is a horrible, corruptible, rebellious, selfish, sinful flesh - and the flesh has had it with preaching. It hurts the flesh. It convicts the flesh. Preaching condemns the flesh and makes it very uncomfortable. In fact, for some it becomes so uncomfortable that they will not park their flesh where preaching takes place. Yet one person said, "There's also something inside me now that loves preaching, that is thrilled with preaching, that says, 'Tell me more, Preacher.'" That "something" is the Spirit of God, the presence of Jesus Christ inside every Christian who calls forth for the richness of preaching. So

all of us who have been born again and have received Jesus Christ delight in the preaching of the Word. But at the same time, we have that flesh that raises its ugly tail and says, "I don't want to hear that." That's a real struggle.

What are preachers supposed to preach about? The Bible says, "The Lord anoints people to preach the Good News" [Luke 4:18]. Paul says, "I don't preach myself, I preach Jesus Christ." He is to be the focal point of every message. Jesus Christ is the Word, and when a preacher preaches Jesus Christ, he's got the Word on target.

When I walk into this pulpit and begin preaching, I have one goal and one goal only: leading you to see more of Jesus Christ. The more you know Jesus Christ, the more you trust Him. The more you know Jesus Christ, the more you are certain that you are a forgiven sinner. The more you know Jesus Christ, the more you are convinced that a place in heaven exists for you. This sermon has a purpose: to let you know that you have a nature that despises God's Word too - and then to let you know that at the other end of your despising is a Savior who was despised by most when He walked this earth, but that even though that happened, He stands and says, "Come unto Me, you despisers, and I will give you rest." The father who sleeps in church during the preaching of the Word - Jesus says, "Come to Me, son, you need cleansing." The 11-year-old boy that can't wait to get out of church - Jesus says, "Come unto Me, son." The church delinquent who attends church just enough to keep the Elders off his back - Jesus says, "Come unto Me." The woman who is preoccupied with thoughts of yesterday and worries about tomorrow, and despises the very sermon being preached - Jesus says, "Come to Me, daughter." The woman who likes to argue about the preaching, the man who's looking for the preacher to say something wrong, the teen who only comes because his girlfriend is there - Jesus says, "Come unto Me." We despise the very preaching that gives us life. We neglect the very Word that brings us hope. We walk out on the very Bible Class that could change our life. We refuse to go to the

very fellowship Bible Study that could encourage us. Yet in spite of despising the Word, Jesus says, "I still care for you. You need cleansing."

It amazes me that I can despise the Word of Someone, and yet that Someone still says He loves me. I can neglect His Word, I can avoid His Word, I can just not be interested in His Word, and yet His love does not grow cooler towards me. He is a perfect Father, a faithful Savior, and an ever-present help in time of need - and preachers tell us those things.

When Jesus was on this earth, He preached. He lost a lot of followers by His preaching. He lost His popularity through His preaching. Truthful preachers are never popular. "From that time on, Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" Jesus was interested in a changed life. He didn't come to keep people the same. He came so that they might be His people. When He calls people to repent and change, He gives them power to do it. He calls for change, gives you power to change, and gives you guidance to keep changed. That's repentance. The preaching of Jesus pointed out sin in the lives of His listeners so that at the end of His message you knew what to do: leave Jesus or leave the sin behind. You see, Jesus always preached, "You cannot commit yourself to Me and also commit yourself to your sin."

Yet it is quite apparent today within the earthly church that people believe that they can walk with Jesus and walk at the same time with their sin. You should know this is despising God's Word. Examples: Couple living together, yet claiming Christ. Member of church, not giving generously. Person who claims Christ but says, "I don't study the Bible." Jesus says, "Repent, change."

Truthful preachers lose a lot of friends. Truthful preachers have a lot of people turn on them. Truthful preachers cause trouble. Truthful preachers expose bitterness, hate, and selfishness, and it comes out in horrible ways. Often some try to destroy the preacher. Jesus says, "I send you out as lambs among wolves, to preach." Preachers get torn apart.



Truthful preachers are also loved greatly. Truthful preachers are encouraged and built up by those who love preaching. Truthful preachers are prayed for, defended, and held up as men of God by faithful listeners. Truthful preachers are respected and honored in the assembly of believers, because those who believe the Truth honor the one who preaches the Truth. Truthful preachers most likely have the greatest friends, and earn the worst enemies on the face of the earth. If you knew Paul, you either loved him or hated him. If you knew Peter, you either cherished him or despised him. If you knew Martin Luther, you either wanted him as your close friend or you wanted him dead. Preachers have a way of doing that, when they're truthful. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those God has called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God."

Truthful preaching will not leave you hanging in mid-air. You will either stumble over it and be lost, regard it as foolishness and be lost, or see it as the

Power of God for your life. In other words, truthful preaching either turns you on or turns you off. If it does anything less than that, it isn't truthful preaching.

A preacher has a warning given to him by God. Let me read it unto you. It comes with the Call to preach: "Woe to me (the preacher) if I do not preach the Gospel." A preacher has his command and it remains that way all his life: "Preach the Gospel," or you have denied your life-calling. I cannot deny my calling.

"Woe unto you, despisers of the Word, who walk out on Bible Study for your appointment with Bob Evans for breakfast." "Woe unto you, despisers of the Word, those of you who have set your mind on avoiding Bible Study because you are to spend time with your morning paper at 10 a.m." "Woe unto you, despisers of the Word, who have slept in and had your coffee and despised the Bible Study, the sermon, just to meet the needs of your flesh." "Woe unto you, despisers of the Word, who have made up your mind in advance that you will not study the Word during

the week, for your T.V., bowling, card-playing, sleeping, and dining is more important." "Woe unto you, you despisers of the Word, who come to the worship service every other week, as you see fit, pick and choose as you see fit, and still claim to be walking with Jesus." The most outward sin, the most evident sin, the most repeated sin, the most committed sin by members of this church is the sin of despising preaching and the Word, and when you do that for long, you will crack through the ice and fall to your spiritual death below. Over two years ago, the world thought it was so appalling that we should call "despising the preaching of the Word" "sin," that they made front-page headlines out of that teaching. They batted us around a while, but by the Grace of God the preaching is still here. "Woe unto the man and his family who doesn't hear it."

Preachers have the greatest responsibility on the face of this earth: to preach Jesus Christ. This preacher knows that, and that is why I call upon the faithful to pray for me daily as I prepare to preach God's Word. And as I or anyone else steps into this pulpit, pray for our spiritual protection, so that we can clearly communicate to you the Message of the Living God.

For God hates sin, and God loves you. Jesus Christ has taken sin and washed our record clear, so that God's love can get through. So in one way or another, that's the preacher's message. And that is what needs to be preached, until we get to heaven. For that is the art of preaching. Amen.

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## Parish Periscope

### ◆ Weekday Bible Class

Our Study of advanced Bible history has brought us to the close of the Old Testament and to a discussion of the time period between the last Old Testament prophet and the arrival of John the Baptist. Our next meeting time will be on Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:45AM.

### ◆ Dual Parish Picnic & Voters

Sunday afternoon, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, members from St. Paul's in Kemmerer and Our Saviour in Evanston will gather in Evanston for our annual get-together. Please mark your calendar and make plans to come. If you have any items that you would like to discuss, give them to either President Jonathan Vanderhyde in Kemmerer or President Steve Sadd in Evanston.

### ◆ New High School Class Forming

With the beginning of a new school year, it is our desire to begin a new class for high school students. This class is intended to equip you to face the challenges to your faith that you will face from intellectual and cultural assaults which you will increasingly encounter as you leave home for work and school. Expect an email soon to set up our meeting time.

### ◆ Time Change

Beginning Sunday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will switch service times. Our Saviour in Evanston will begin Bible Study at 8:00AM with the *Divine Service* at 9:00AM. Then, at 11:00AM St. Paul's in Kemmerer will have the *Divine Service* followed by a noon Bible Study.

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## Pending Pericopes

### ◆ Trinity 14 - September 2

Psalm: 119:9-16  
Old Testament: Proverbs 4:10-23  
Epistle: Galatians 5:16-24  
Gospel: St. Luke 17:11-19

### ◆ Trinity 15 - September 9

Psalm: 146  
Old Testament: 1 Kings 17:8-16  
Epistle: Galatians 5:25-6:10  
Gospel: St. Matthew 6:24-34

### ◆ Trinity 16 - September 16

Psalm: 30  
Old Testament: 1 Kings 17:17-24  
Epistle: Ephesians 3:13-21  
Gospel: St. Luke 7:11-17

### ◆ Trinity 17 - September 23

Psalm: 2  
Old Testament: Proverbs 25:6-14  
Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6  
Gospel: St. Luke 14:1-11

### ◆ Trinity 19 - September 30

Psalm: 84  
Old Testament: Genesis 28:10-17  
Epistle: Ephesians 4:22-28  
Gospel: St. Matthew 9:1-8

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