

Ripples

Stillwater Free Lutheran Church

“Sharing Jesus Christ with Our Neighbors”

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March

2023

From the Pastor's Desk

I was in a conversation the other day, and was discussing some of the issues of today. Things like the high prices of materials, and groceries, and difficulties of getting things in what we used to think of as a timely manner, and so on. It got me to thinking...

Have you ever noticed that sometimes when we look around us, we focus on how bad things seem? We start to wonder if they could get any worse. Would you believe that there were times in history when things were pretty bleak? Even worse than what we are currently going through!

And, when then during all the trying times and issues, you hear Pastor Craig tell you that you need to be a light to the world of darkness around you. I am sure you get to thinking – why bother, the world usually only shoots the messenger, and they don't want to see any light anyway – right?

Well, let's take a moment and think about one of the prophets, who had one of the more difficult tasks in the history of Israel.

Jeremiah's assignment from God was to admonish the people of Judah to return to the Lord.

The nation was fading under the threat of impending punishment (the Babylonian captivity), and repentance was its only hope.

So, Jeremiah relayed the following message: Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not walk in it." (Jer. 6:16).

The immediate context of this verse has to do with Jeremiah's declaration that a sinister force threatened Jerusalem because of her great wickedness. O, that she would receive instruction from the Lord (Jer. 6:1-8).

Should this disciplinary force assault the land, Judah will be harvested like a crop of grapes — a token of the wrath of God.

Even though false prophets protested, claiming that "peace" would prevail (i.e., destruction would not come), nevertheless Jehovah would "visit" them, and cast them down (Jer. 6:9-15).

Out of this background came the prophet's invitation to return to the "old paths."

Several important truths may be extracted from this powerful narrative.

This one verse is brief, yet very profound in its implications.

The first thing to note is “Thus says the Lord.” This means we First – Listen. That of course, reflects a belief that God communicates with us. If we want to know God’s will for our life or in a particular situation, first we need to believe God is willing and able to communicate with us. God will speak to us through the Bible, prayer, other people, even through His creation.

In Jeremiah, “Thus says the Lord,” announces to us that what follows is very important for us to hear. One aspect of spiritual growth is learning to recognize and listen to God’s voice. When we think we hear God speaking to us, the first thing we do is stop and try to listen with focused attention.

“Thus says the Lord, Stand at the crossroads.”

The word stand implies we stop and reflect. Most accidents that happen at intersections occur because someone is speeding or fails to stop at a red light. Sometimes I think people believe that green means go, yellow means go faster, and red means proceed with caution.

When we find ourselves at a crossroads, we are at a place of decision, a moment when our future will be shaped by the direction in which we go. When we’re at crossroads the thing to do is to stop and reflect and not to rush forward as fast as we can.

When the pace of our life is picking up, when changes are coming at us with increasing speed and frequency, what we may need to do is to stop, stand still, and catch our breath. In times of change and decision when we need to determine our direction, rather than charging ahead, we may need to slow down and stand still.

“Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look.”

Looking implies Gathering Information. God says when we’re at the crossroads we are to look as far as we can down the different roads which is a way of saying, we are to gather as much information as we can about the consequences of our decision. What are the likely results of going in each direction we might take? What will I think about this ten even twenty years from now? Often times we don’t look far enough down the road before we make a decision. Sometimes we cannot foresee all the possibilities, opportunities, or dangers that a certain way holds for us. That is why the next step is vital.

“Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and “Ask for the ancient paths where the good way lies.”

Looking implies our action; we are doing the looking and using our powers of vision and discernment to help ourselves. Asking means seeking direction and guidance. Asking implies we are going beyond our own abilities, seeking the Lord’s guidance. Asking implies we are humble enough to recognize there is wisdom beyond ourselves in God and in other people that may benefit us as we seek God’s will for our lives.

While we live in a culture that worships at the altar of the new, the latest, and the cutting edge, Jeremiah invites us to ask for the ancient paths where the good way lies. The good way is not one that is hidden or obscured although it may not always be easy.

It wasn’t easy for Jeremiah. The message God gave him to preach was a hard one that condemned religious and political leaders as well as the people for their disobedience, corruption, and worship of others gods. Jeremiah struggled with God, cried all the time, was put on trial by his people, had the scrolls with his prophetic words burned, and he endured opposition right up to the end of his life.

Later Jesus said to those who would follow him (Matthew 7:13-14),

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow & the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

“Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and “Ask for the ancient paths where the good way lies and” “Walk in it.”

Once we have looked and listened and received instruction and guidance then it is up to us to Take action, to take responsibility for the direction of our life. Jeremiah reminds us of our own responsibility for our fate. He warns the people of his time and they refuse to listen. They looked to blame their enemies, God, even the prophet himself, anyone but themselves. Unwilling to hear, they were heading toward catastrophe.

The Result of listening to the Lord, standing and reflecting, looking and gathering information, asking for direction and guidance, and then taking action is we will “Find rest for our souls.” This is similar to when Jesus invites us to himself saying, “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for

I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Why would someone who is weary and carrying heavy burdens volunteer to take on another yoke? Perhaps because it is a yoke custom fitted for us. Yoked with and walking with Jesus in the ancient and good paths God has laid out for us, we will find rest. Rest doesn't mean inactivity or laziness that leads to spiritual weakness. Rather we will have the assurance that comes from knowing the direction we're taking, the decision we've made, has been shaped by using our best abilities of discernment and observation as well as the revelation of God.

Sadly, Jeremiah's people would not follow this advice and they paid dearly for taking the wrong path at the crossroads. God knows we all take wrong turns. We end up at dead ends or in a bad part of town and wonder how we got there or if we'll ever get out. God's grace is such that even when we are disobedient, God keeps trying to speak to us and to direct us on the right path. When God's people failed to listen, God ultimately sent Jesus to make the way plain. Jesus called people who didn't follow God's ancient, good path lost. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He came to help us find and stay on God's good path that leads to joy and abundant life.

It seems to me you can tell by the way people are living that many are unsure of where they are going or don't know where they want to go; that they are in several senses of the word, lost. Many people seem to be accelerating down the road to nowhere at faster and faster speeds, forgetting that if we're lost, going faster only gets us further away from where we need to be.

It has always been and always will be the role of Christians and churches to help those who are lost to find their way to Jesus and life. Those of us who are unsure of what God wants us to do, those of us who are unsure which road to take, may need to humble ourselves and stop and ask God for directions.

Thanks – God Bless!

Pastor Craig

Stillwater Youth Groupies

The Youth are committed to serve the community through our strength in Jesus Christ.

The last time I typed one of these, I only had one kid earth-side, boy do they grow up fast, it felt like just a month ago, Lily wasn't even born! I'm pretty sure I probably made the exact same joke when Charlotte was born, but the more kids you have, the less time you have to make dumb jokes that only you laugh at. Rachel and I are so very thankful for all the prayers and visits and meals and everything else we've received from the congregation during the time Lillian was in the NICU and after as well, you're all such an amazing family to us! All of you included in that last sentiment have really showed us what true Christ-like love and caring looks like for those in need, and it has been a very valuable learning experience! This attitude really relates to something that has been on my heart lately, which is vocation – am I truly doing what God wants me to be doing with my life? I think most of us, myself absolutely included, would love if God just spoke to us like Samuel in the book of 1 Samuel and told us exactly what to do and when, where, and why, but the reality is, God had a very specific plan for Samuel and those were the means He used of showing Him. As you've probably figured out in your life, that is a very rare experience, not to say we don't serve the same God that Samuel did, because we do and He's never-changing, but for most of us, an answer from God like that would defeat the purpose of growing our relationship with Him and in our faith. If we could just get a perfect answer by pressing a "button", why would we have a need to dig into His Word and study His teachings, why would we pray? I recently heard a sermon from an old AFLC buddy who is now a pastor in Waikiki, HI at the Waikiki Beach Gathering, and he was talking about following God's will for your life. I won't give you the whole sermon because I'm pretty much giving you one right now, but the gist was that, as long as we are walking in God's footsteps and truly following Christian living, God has given us freedom, there are different options in this walk of life. Not all of us are called to be missionaries and pastors, serving the Lord is a lifestyle, not a job; you can be an ambassador for Christ delivering pizza if that's the door He has opened for you. Colossians 3:23 states, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men," and that's the key, whatever we're doing, we can be a Christian doing it, and that's what we're called to do. I encourage you all to study your Bible, make devotional time, and listen to the plans the Lord is making for you!

Thanks to that first paragraph, I now have about three sentences to talk about the youth group if I want to fit in the slot allotted to me in the newsletter, but if I never put a

period, then I'll be fine! The youth group had a very successful and fruitful February, praise God! Due to my daughter being born on the first Wednesday of the month, we didn't have youth group for whatever reason, but I didn't have any more kids born during the month, so we were able to have three weekly meetings! Our big event was obviously the Valentine's dinner, and overall, again thanks to the Lord, was just a huge success. Ten youth came out and assisted as we prepared and served Chinese food, and nobody got food poisoning that we're going to talk about, so there's an added plus! Around 45 people showed up and participated in the silent and live auction as well as games and other activities! As a total, we raised over \$3,000 which shattered our previous record number of \$1,600, practically doubling it, so a ginormous thank you to all who were there and supported us, not just financially, but just by being there! Our other event was tagging along with our sister church Faith for their night ski on the 25th, which was also a wonderful time! Since we're on the subject of doing things with Faith, I just spoke to their youth leader, Emily Herset, and discussed FLY, as we will be riding down in our bus together, and with our groups combined, including students and adults, we have 35 people going! So, we might have to install some seats on the roof of the bus and instruct the kids to keep their mouths closed when they see bugs, but what a great problem to have! We will be taking an additional vehicle down with the bus, so I don't think we'll have to do the roof idea, but close quarters always lead to a good time of fellowship! For upcoming events, our next major one is the lock-in, which Faith is also invited to (man, we might as well just combine groups at this point), but that will take place Friday, March 10th. Though the youth group has lots going on most of the time, we are still always looking for ways to serve the congregation and community around us, so let me know if there is every any way that we can assist you!

In closing, please keep this youth group in your prayers, they're a wonderful group of teens, but they live in the same sinful world that we do and are also not immune to temptation seeing evil around them, so please join me in lifting them up in prayer as they continue to try to navigate this world while serving Him! One last thank you as well to the congregation for everything previously mentioned, the prayers, the meals, the support at the v-day dinner; you all mean a great deal to Rachel and myself, and even after four years, we still the feel the same love and support that we received when we got here, if not more! Have a blessed March and don't forget who we are ultimately working for!

God Bless,

Bryce Timmerman



Women's Missionary Federation

Sherri opened with prayer. Sherri did our Bible Study titled "Hagar." This was lesson 2. Karen Berosik gave a devotion.

Elaine read the minutes from our January meeting. We have \$209.30 in the bank. Our money this month will go to World missions.

Bryce and the Youth put on a very nice Valentine's dinner. We had Chinese food which was really good.

We prayed for our friends and families who are in our thoughts and minds.

Sherri and Linda McGrew served a very delicious lunch. Thank you, ladies.

We would like to give a special thank you to Sherri for all she does for our church.

We will hold our next meeting on March 16 in the Activity Center, with Elaine as host and Gayle as co-host. Karen Berosik will have Bible Study titled "Leah", a lesson in steadfast love, lesson 3. Ronna will have devotions.

There were 11 ladies present. Thank you, ladies, for attending our meetings. Our get togethers are all so uplifting and fellowship is great.

Submitted by Elaine Lessor, WMF Secretary

March Stillwater Book Club Update

Our next book discussion will be on Women of the Silk by Gail Tsukiyama on Friday, March 3, at 10:30 AM in the Kids Club Room in the Activity Center following Coffee and Conversation. After our discussion we will have time for



fellowship, enjoy our own sack lunches and eat a yummy dessert provided by Gayle this month. Anyone who has read the book is welcome to join us, or just come to hear about it to see if you would like to read it in the future. Please join us!

The following is a list of the books we have scheduled for the rest of the year.

April 7	<u>The Wedding Dress Sewing Circle</u>	by Jennifer Ryan
May 5	<u>Orphan Train</u>	by Christina Baker Cline
June 2	<u>The Lady's Mine</u>	by Francine Rivers
July 7	<u>Trash</u>	by Andy Mulligan
August 4	<u>Julia's Hope</u>	by Liesha Kelly
Sept. 8	<u>The Lincoln Conspiracy</u>	by Brad Meltzer
Oct. 6	<u>One Thousand White Women</u>	by Jim Fergus
Nov. 3	<u>The Boys in the Boat</u>	by Daniel James Brown
Dec.1	<u>The Beautiful World</u>	by Susan Rohrer

After-School Program

For the month of February, the kids memorized Proverbs 3:5. It's always a good time to put our trust in the Lord and not on our humanness. We continue to cover a Bible story every day. I'm looking into breaking up the ages so we can do Bible stories and the felt board with the younger kids and have a deeper devotional with the older kids!! We continue to ask for prayers for health for the kiddos, my volunteers and myself!

As always, a huge thank you to those who bless with their time and for those who provided snacks!! The time and food are very appreciated!!

Thank you all and God's blessing! ~Ashley

Building Project Report

The metal roofing has been installed on the patio cover. The painting and staining will be done when the weather gets warmer, probably in April or May. The lights will be installed after that. The plan is to install rain gutters and downspouts soon after the roof is complete. Hopefully, weather permitting construction of the wall around the transformer can start soon also. This is required by the fire code as a flash barrier between the building and the transformer. We are waiting for an estimate for new sidewalks around the church. This was not part of the original plan, but it has been suggested we do this before paving the parking lot if funds are available.

As always thanks for your prayers and support. Please contact me with questions regarding the building project!

A fellow servant in Christ,

Ed Van Scoten

Feeding the Flathead

Hats off to Sherri and Pastor Craig Scavo for planning, cooking and serving the meal to just over 60 individuals on Monday, February 27th! They made bean, rice and cheese Burritos, with homemade salsa, chips, orange and a homemade cookie or brownie. Sherri said the evening went well! The guests are so thankful for a hot meal!



Thank you so much to Meri Putzler for helping to serve and supplying the oranges!

Thanks also to Debi and Jerry Stearns for making the treats, I know they enjoyed them!

We are serving indoors at Bethlehem Lutheran on the last Monday of the month. Please consider signing up for even just one month during the year to cook and serve. There are many in our congregation who will help with the shopping and serving too.

Serving others.. together in the name of Jesus,

from Lori and Sherri

Friday Coffee Fellowship



The coffee fellowship group continues to meet at 9 AM each Friday in the activity center classroom. The freezing weather has kept some folks away, but we are still averaging 4-6 each week. There is no agenda, and the conversation usually takes on a life of its own! Treats are

usually provided by one or more of the attendees. At times, the discussion has focused on the use of the kitchen and the importance of cleaning up after use and returning things to the location where they were found. If you are storing items in the refrigerator label it with your name or the name of your group and its purpose. If it is not labeled it will probably be used by someone who sees a need. More recently conversation centered around the old piano. We may have found a home for it at Flathead Industries. The only stipulation was that it can be tuned and that it can be played.

Direct 2022 Choice Dollars Today - Are you or someone you know a Thrivent member? If you haven't already done so, you can still direct 2022 Choice Dollars to **Stillwater Free Lutheran Church!** Don't miss the opportunity to recommend where Thrivent gives back!

Stillwater Library News

Have any of you read a book from the library? Please write a short paragraph about the book and send it to Susan Shea (yesshecanbake@gmail.com) or Meri Putzler (mputzler13@gmail.com). We'd love to hear about the books being borrowed from our library.

New donations to the library are being made. Be sure to check out the new (to us) books listed below.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is a story about two young Afganistani boys who are friends. "An intimate account of family and friendship, betrayal and salvation..." (Washington Post Book World) It's a story about the Afgani culture.

Off Season by Anne Rivers Siddons "tells a tale of first love, marriage and the secrets that determine our lives." (Grand Central Publishing)

Before We Were Yours by Lisa Wingate is historical fiction and takes an event of "family lost and found. It's a poignant engrossing tale about sibling love and the toll of secrets." (People)

Let the Children Come by Tom Fay is the "historical account of the evangelist who saved the lives of thousands of orphans and offered them a safe haven, education, and a relationship with Christ." (Coast Publishing)

Two books by Lisa Jewell, **Then She was Gone** and **The Family Upstairs**. The first is "a gripping ... tale of one mother's quest to uncover the clues...of what happened to her daughter. "(Booklist, starred review). The second book is about "three entangled families living in a house with the darkest of secrets." (People)



A Women of Joy by Dee Brestin



That's just one of the wonderful books placed lovingly on Bonnie's shelf. I have been reading my way through them. This one was marked up and highlighted more than others. I'm thinking some of you may have worked your way through these studies from 1,2, and 3 John with her. This month we will be singing one of the songs printed in the back. The lessons have music interspersed. Our song is about light. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

I am grateful for my Stillwater family. Thank you for loving my West family so very well for all of these years. My mom in law's passing has left a hole in our heart. I know those cracks can heal. This song will be a shout out to her for me. Thank you for being a praying congregation. Thank you for reminding me what is important. And especially thank you for being salt and light in our community.

Serving with Joy, Lavonne

Trustees

The Trustees board includes members Mike Hirtes, Joe Karboski, Rick Karboski and Rick Prestbye are available to address any maintenance issues that you may see. Talk with one of them or leave a description of the issue on the yellow tablet, located just inside the door of the office on the mailboxes.

Senders

When we heard that Allee Meyer plans to lead a group to Kenya this summer with Engineers Without Borders, we ordered some books called “Serving As Senders Today” by Neal Pirollo and assembled a team of senders. The book highlights the great need for a missionary to be sent by a group supporting them on many different levels. It has helped give us ideas for how to best support Allee in moral, logistics, financial, prayer, communication, and reentry support. We hope to read 2 chapters per month until the team takes off in May. Although Engineers Without Borders is not a missionary organization, we believe God will be working in and through Allee throughout this endeavor. Allee is studying structural engineering at Montana State University and her team will be working on a library this summer.

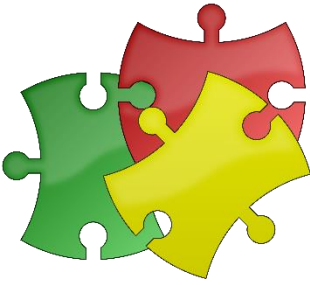
The senders met for the first time on February 18th to watch a DVD based on the book, pray, and discuss fundraising ideas. Two ideas we hope to do are a rummage sale scheduled for Thursday, March 30th. Pending board approval, we’ll be setting up the Wednesday before that so please bring anything you would like to donate at that time.

The second fundraiser we are checking on is a basketball tournament tentatively scheduled for April 28-29th. Start assembling your teams! We’ll invite other valley churches to participate.

We could use two more on the sending team and have books available. If you are interested, please contact one of us (Julie Brubaker, Lavonne West, Neila Elgin, Karen Hartle, Linda McGrew, Leonard Hogan, Sharon Wilhelm).

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Romans 10:14-15



Bits and Pieces

- POTLUCK and fellowship following Communion Worship Sunday, March 5th!
- Two ladies are taking the train to Washington for the March 11th WMF rally and others are welcome to join. Talk to Lavonne West for more information.
- Daylight Savings Time begins at 2 am Sunday, March 12th. Change your clocks AHEAD 1 hour.
- Holy Week ~
 - Palm Sunday - Sunday, April 2
 - Maunday Thursday, April 6
 - Good Friday, April 7
- Easter! He Is Risen!, April 9
 - 7 am Sunrise Service
 - 9:30 am Celebration Service
 - 10:45 am Brunch served by the Youth
 - Children's egg hunts



Prayers for March

“Whatever you ask in prayer with faith, you will receive.” Matt 21:22

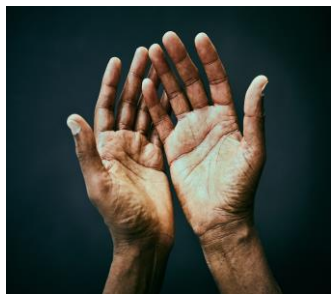
Church Work & Ministry

Sharing Jesus Christ with our Neighbors
Building Project
Church Leaders, Staff & Worship Team
Stillwater Youth Group
Stillwater & National WMF
Feeding the Flathead
After School Program
Intervarsity Christian Fellowship
The Gideons

General Prayers

Marriages and Families
Stroisch family at Stan’s passing
Our Country and Leaders
Workers in the Harvest Field
Caregivers
Military and First Responders

- David Bruyer (Askvig)
- James Gelormino
- Jonathan Gelormino
- Gage Triplett



Health Concerns

Carol Hogan
Bruce Hogan
Megan Tutvedt, Kaleb and Logan Reese
Mother in Philippians of Charina Haynes
Sara Halverson
Sylvan Herset
Joyce Banzet
Michael Poston (Linda McGrew)
Justin Gronley (Joel and Cody Bartholomew’s son)
Ed & Shirley Poe
Michael Bray