



Your Pastor's Ponderings

As an Easter gift, I thought I'd share this folk story with you. It's called the Tale of the Three Trees.

Once upon a mountaintop, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up. The first little tree looked up at the stars twinkling like diamonds above. "I want to hold treasure," he said. "I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I will be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world."

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be a strong sailing ship," he said, "I want to travel mighty waters and carry powerful kings. I will be the strongest ship in the world."

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and busy women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave this mountaintop pat all," she said. "I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me they will raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

Years passed. The rains came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest," thought the first tree. "I shall hold wonderful treasure".

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters," thought the second tree, "I shall be a strong ship fit for kings."

The third tree felt her hearts sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought him to a carpenter's shop, but the busy carpenter was not thinking about treasure chests. Instead his work-worn hands fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold or filled with treasure. He was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took him to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ships were being made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. Too small and too weak to sail an ocean or even a river, he was taken to a little lake. Every day, he brought in loads of dead, smelly fish.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beam and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened," the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted to do was stay on the mountaintop and point to God."

Many, many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him," her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy manger. "This manger is beautiful," she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. He knew he did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry, jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel.

But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the first tree beautiful. It had made

the second tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. †

That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

Happy Easter. Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed!! Pastor Will



Business Meeting

Joint Council Reminder

Reminder: Joint Council – The Joint Council will meet on Tuesday, April 6th at 7pm @SP.



VBS Follow Up Meeting; RESCHEDULED!!

Please note, due to a scheduling conflict, the Vacation Bible School meeting originally set for April 8th has been rescheduled. We will now meet on April 15th at 7pm at Mt. Calvary.

Represent Your Faith: Help Needed for Synod Assembly –

The 23rd Annual Assembly of the Allegheny Synod of the ELCA will be from Thursday evening, June 10 through Saturday afternoon, June 12 at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona. The theme of this year's Assembly is: God's Work, Our Hands – Telling & Living the Story.

The Opening Service of Holy Communion will be held at First Lutheran in Altoona beginning at 7:30pm. During these days, we will have the opportunity to act as a legislative body for the Synod and to hear and study God's word and sing his praises, to be renewed in faith and Spirit. In addition, we will celebrate the installations of Rev. Timothy Knauss and Rev. Lynn Miller in their positions as Assistants to the Bishop.

Pastor Will is looking for two people to represent their congregations as voting delegates to this year's Assembly. **Early registration is due by April 15th with final registrations due by May 15th.** (Registering early saves the congregation \$15 per person). The cost of this event will be paid by the represented congregation. We are looking for up to six people.

God isn't concerned about our capability merely our availability. Please pray about representing your faith and

congregation at this year's Synod Assembly. Please let Pastor Will know if you are interested in this ministry opportunity.

There's Wisdom in the Word – Parish Bible Study

All are invited to come, pray, and study scripture as we continue to explore the People of Faith found in the Book of Faith. This month we look at the person of Elijah: A royal pain. Elijah was a prophet, sent by God with a message to tell. But Elijah was a prophet who was also obstinate, arrogant, stubborn, and even a bit whiny. Yet, he was very oriented towards God's purpose and his story shows us how our God is Lord above all and what is required of God's followers.

Come join us on **Tuesday, April 27th at 7pm in the lounge @Messiah.**

Becoming the Parent You Want to Be: A Family Time of Bible Study for You and with your Kids

In May, Pastors Will and Elisa are looking to start a **joint Parish Bible study** to help parents with young children learn about some biblical and spiritual traits that can assist them in becoming a better spiritual guide.

This study is more than techniques of getting kids to eat their broccoli and clean their room. The study takes a Biblical approach into the qualities parents want their children to have and what qualities they want their children to see modeled in them. The study is a combination of videos and scripture based lessons. The video portions are led by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott, a pair of Christian counselors, who have appeared in Christianity Today magazine and on ABC's Good Morning America and on Oprah.

The study is open to parents or even grandparents who have young children to take care of. Their children are invited to come as well. We will open each session with a brief worship time for the whole family. Then the children will be able to spend time in the nursery or outdoors playing games with adult supervision while Pastors Will and Elisa and parents participate in the Parenting Bible study. At the conclusion of study time, we will get together for another family activity before departing. Snacks, coffee, and juice will be available throughout.

The plan is to hold these Bible studies on the last Saturday of the month for the next six months (May through October). We will begin mid-morning (time to be announced) and meet through late morning. **The first session is set for May 29th at Messiah.**

Celebrate Easter!

Chocolate candy.
Easter egg hunts.

Getting a picture taken with the Easter bunny.
Buying new spring clothes. Chances are these are the responses most children would give if asked how they were preparing for Easter.

Like children, we would rather concentrate on the positive, happy things like spring, bunnies, chicks, candy and colored eggs, than the suffering and sacrifice Jesus made for each one of us on the cross.

Crowds flock to church on Easter Sunday, where only a few days earlier, congregations were sparse on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. People like to hear good news. Easter declares the good news that Christ is Risen! During Lent, we are called to deepen our spiritual lives through prayer and reading the Scriptures — to examine how we are using our talents and skills in the service of others and our giving to the poor. We are called to live as true disciples of Christ. We could look at Lent as a 40-day crash course in how to live a life as a steward of God's gifts.

As a steward entrusted with such gifts and good news of a risen Christ, what might we do in response? In St. Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians he writes, "He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times." Will we take the many opportunities to share our gifts of money, our talents and our time? Is it time to take God's promise of abundance

seriously and be generous stewards of his gifts?

Happy
Easter!



Holy Week Schedule **Holy Week Worship Preview**

March 28th – Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday:
Regular Worship Times

April 1st – Maundy Thursday: 6:30pm @**Samuels**

Soup Supper followed by Holy Communion & Hand
Washing

April 2nd – Good Friday: 7pm @**SP** – Service of Tenebrae

April 4th – Easter Sunday: Resurrection of Our Lord

6:30am – Sunrise Service of Holy Communion @ **M** Followed
by Easter Breakfast

8:30am – Holy Communion @**SP**

8-9:30am – Easter Breakfast @**Samuel's**

10am – Holy Communion @**Samuel's**



Rise N Shine with the Risen Lord

@**MESSIAH** – Following Easter Sunrise Service @**Messiah**, we invite all early risers to attend our annual Easter Breakfast. All may come and partake of a feast of Ham N Eggs. Anyone who can stick around and help clean up after the meal (before heading home to Easter dinner) your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

@**SAMUEL'S** – In the glow of Easter's early morning, before Holy Communion, we invite everyone to come to their annual Easter Breakfast before worship (April 4) from 8AM to 9:30AM. Come and enjoy great food and good company.



Volunteers Needed for Meals on Wheels

The Meals on Wheels program is in need of substitute volunteers to help pack the meals and drivers or carriers to deliver the meals. This service is greatly appreciated by the clients you would be serving and dedicated volunteers who help, have testified that they thoroughly enjoy their work. Please step forward and volunteer some of your time to help those in need. For more information call 443-2787.



Confirmation- Schedule for April

- April 4th – Easter Break: No Class
- April 11th – Fellowship Event: To be Announced
- April 18th – 5pm: Class @MZ
- April 25th – 5pm: Final Class – Wrap-Up; Year End Reports Due

REMINDERS TO 3RD YEAR CONFIRMANDS

- 1) Day of Confirmation is: **MAY 23rd** – **Please note** the date was incorrectly printed as May 31st in the March newsletter. **The correct date for Confirmation Sunday is May 23rd.**
 - 2) How are you coming on your service project?
Talk to Pastor Will if questions
 - 3) Don't forget to select a Bible verse to read at your Confirmation
 - 4) Don't forget to Turn in your Affirmation of Faith Report **by May 15th**
- PS – Info about your Affirmation of Faith Report may be found in the material you received at the beginning of the year. If you need a refresher, please call Pastor Will at 926-2215.



What's with the Bread and Wine we eat in Church?" – First Communion Class

Pastor Will is holding a first communion class after Easter. This class will help children understand the meaning of communion and just what's going on with that Bread and Wine we eat every other Sunday. In addition, a parent or parents are asked to attend this class with their children. The class will be held at Messiah Lutheran.

Suggested Dates –

- Saturday, April 10th – 10:30am til Noon
- Saturday, April 17th – 1pm til 2:30pm
- Saturday, April 24th – 10:30am til Noon



On the Horizon: Worship Happenings in April

April 1st – Maundy Thursday

This night begins with an integrated worship service and soup supper as we remember Jesus' Last Supper. Our worship begins at 6:30pm @Samuels. In Christ's example of foot washing, we are called to love one another. At the Lord's table we remember Jesus sacrifice even as we are called to offer ourselves in love for the sake of the world.

April 2nd – Good Friday

This is a day of hard truths. It is a day of powerful events that we would rather avoid or ignore. But on this night we are confronted with Isaiah's account of the suffering and servant and the Gospel writers laying the crucifixion before us in all its injustice and horror. For the Jesus we love and worship has been abandoned on the cross. The this night is not only about the tragedy on the cross, it's also about the triumph of the cross where we celebrate Christ's life giving passion from which he offers us strength and hope in remembrance of the whole world for whom Christ died.

April 4th – Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of our Lord

This is THE DAY. Let us rejoice. For Christ is Risen. He who was once dead is now alive. God has indeed raised him. Let us be glad and rejoice in it through our Easter celebrations.

April 11th – Sunday of Doubting Thomas

Today we celebrate the story of Doubting Thomas. Thomas missed Easter. He was absent when the risen Christ first appeared to the disciples. But Christ doesn't let that be the end of the story. He comes back – not only from the grave but again and again. He comes back so that Thomas can experience Easter. He comes back into our lives again and again with the promise of new life.

April 18th – Feed My Sheep Sunday

Today we hear Jesus love his disciples through a meal with overtones of communion. Three times Peter declares his love for Jesus. Three times Jesus invites Peter to show that love through service and sharing. Week in and week out, Jesus asks all of us: do you love me? And Jesus invites us, again and again, to follow him, to feed his sheep, bringing the Easter life to others.

April 25th – Sunday of the Good Shepherd

Today we hear the familiar verses about the great shepherd of the sheep. Christ is the shepherd who leads his faithful to springs of the water of life. Jesus responds to questions about his identity with the claim that he and the Father are one. Those who understand this are his sheep: they hear his voice, follow him, and will never be snatched from his hand. Come hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling you.