**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

**Pr. Thomas E. Jacobson: Email, tjacobson001@luthersem.edu; Home phone number in Menno, SD, 605-387-5196**

**The Rod and Staff**



**December 2018**

**Advent**

**“Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation is he.” – Zechariah 9:9b**

Throughout the last year, these monthly newsletter articles have focused on the Ten Commandments in the Bible and how we as Christians understand them. As we have explored the ways that Martin Luther explained these commandments, it is clear that the Ten Commandments *do* provide guidance for our Christian lives, how we live in relationship with God and our fellow human beings.

As important as it is to take seriously the guidance we receive from the Ten Commandments, we need to remember the limitations of God’s law. God’s commandments can show us right from wrong, but most importantly they reveal to us our sinfulness and need for a savior. Martin Luther once commented that if you ever need to know your need for Jesus as your savior, simply work your way down the Ten Commandments, and it will become plain to you. We are not saved by obeying God’s commandments; we are saved by God’s grace through faith, trust in God’s promises in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ. Once we are saved, God calls us to live as His people in the world, and the Ten Commandments then take on new meaning for us.

Knowing our need for a savior from sin, spiritual death, and the power of the devil, the season of Advent has come at the perfect time. Just as a brief reminder, the season of Advent includes the four Sundays immediately preceding Christmas. The word “advent” simply means “arrival” in Latin. But unfortunately, there has been confusion about the meaning of Advent in Lutheran churches over the last few decades, and this confusion keeps us from experiencing the joyful news that comes with Advent, which we desperately need.

In many places, Lutherans have become accustomed to thinking of Advent as a gloomy penitential season that precedes Christmas, similar to how Lent precedes the season of Easter. “You can’t celebrate until Christmas!” they often say. They want to turn Advent into a time of “spiritual preparation” for Christmas. But this misses the historic focus of Advent in Lutheran churches.

Advent, for Lutherans, was viewed as a time of joy and hope in the coming of Jesus Christ to the world, past, future, and present. Following the historic one-year lectionary (cycle of Bible readings for each Sunday) of the Western Christian tradition, the first Sunday of Advent focused on Jesus arriving in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21). Remembering that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the last week of his life, Lutheran preachers used the opportunity to proclaim that Jesus arrived in our world in the flesh in order to save us. They proclaimed the good news of Jesus’ first advent.

The second Sunday of Advent focused on Jesus’ promised second coming (Luke 21). Lutheran preachers encouraged Christians to “lift up their heads and see that their salvation was drawing near.” This was a special comfort for people who were suffering from the effects of war, disease, and famine.

The third and fourth Sundays focused on the life of the eccentric figure of John the Baptizer/Baptist. John is described as “preparing the way” for Jesus, living in the wilderness, wearing camel hair for clothing, and eating locusts and wild honey. For some, John was an example of holy living, but the Lutherans emphasized instead what John preached. John pointed others to Jesus, and so he demonstrated how Jesus arrives in our lives in the present, as we hear the message of Jesus proclaimed.

The season of Advent is a time when we rejoice in the promised coming of Christ in our lives, which has already happened, will happen, and happens even right now whenever we hear the good news of Jesus proclaimed. And so that verse from Zechariah in the Old Testament summarizes our joyous hope this season: *Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation is he.*

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not pray to special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present.



This month, we look at the life of **Lars Olsen Skrefsrud**. He is commemorated on December 11.

Lars Olsen Skrefsrud was a Norwegian man who served as a missionary, linguist, and advocate for the Santal people of northern India. How he got to that point in his life is an interesting story, however. Given his reckless youth, the eventual path of his life was most unexpected.

He was born on February 4, 1840 to a poor farming family. He initially had aspirations to study for Christian ministry, but he quickly adopted an unwholesome lifestyle, which included heavy drinking and even thievery. After robbing a bank and assuming sole responsibility for it, he was imprisoned for four years. However, an acquaintance from childhood and his eventual wife, Anna Olsum, visited him in prison and encouraged him. Through her witness, Skrefsrud’s life was changed, and his faith was renewed. He trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sin.

Thenceforth, Skrefsrud resolved to serve as a missionary, though his application to the Norwegian Missionary Society was rejected. He then travelled to Germany to a missionary society in Berlin. Through them, Skrefsrud travelled along with others to the Santalistan region of northern India. Within a year, a Christian community was established among the Santal people. He also succeeded in providing the Santal people with a written language. In addition, he founded schools to teach practical topics, such as farming, carpentry, and animal husbandry. When the Santal people were persecuted by their neighbors, Skrefsrud appealed to the British government for their protection. He died on December 11, 1910.

Especially among Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans, the example of Skrefsrud became significant. The story of his life’s transformation from petty criminal to effective missionary and social reformer inspired countless others to undertake similar kinds of service. As one testimony to this, a Lutheran congregation near us in rural Irene, South Dakota is named for him.

The life of Lars Olsen Skrefsrud stands as a testimony to the transforming power of God’s Holy Spirit. Whatever our past, God can redeem us and use us for His glory.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Featured Hymn for December 2018**

***Of the Father’s Love Begotten***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 120*

Of the Father's Love begotten

Ere the worlds began to be,

He is Alpha and Omega,

He the source, the ending He,

Of the things that are, that have been,

And that future years shall see,

Evermore and evermore!

O that Birth forever blessed,

When the Virgin, full of grace,

By the Holy Ghost conceiving,

Bore the Savior of our race;

And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,

First revealed His sacred Face,

Evermore and evermore!

This is He Whom seers in old time

Chanted of with one accord;

Whom the voices of the Prophets

Promised in their faithful word;

Now He shines, the long-expected:

Let creation praise its Lord:

Evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven adore Him!

Angel-hosts His praises sing!

All dominions bow before Him,

And extol our God and King ;

Let no tongue on earth be silent,

Every voice in concert ring,

Evermore and evermore!

* Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-410
* Trans. Henry W. Baker, 1821-1877

*Note: Written in the early fifth century, this beautiful Christmas hymn emphasizes the theology of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, that the child born in the manger of Bethlehem is one in substance with God the Father.*

**Monthly Watchword for December 2018**

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

* Matthew 2:10 ESV

**Ushers for November:**

* Head Ushers:
	+ Scott and Christine Eisenhauer
* Ushers:
	+ Lyle and Myva Scott
	+ Gene Eckmann
	+ Tony and Brenda Petersen
	+ Kris True
	+ Kathy Koops
	+ Dylan Kauth

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC:** You can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses:

* **http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters**
* **http://thenalc.org/newsletter/**

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Lord’s Prayer: The Second Petition**

*Thy kingdom come.*

*What does this mean?*

*The kingdom of God comes indeed by itself, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.*

*How is this done?*

*God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life now and in eternity.*

**Birthdays for December**

*Note: This list of birthdays is a work in progress, as we are currently trying to gather membership information from the old congregational record into an electronic form. If your name is not listed in the appropriate month, please let pastor know your birthday so that it can be added in the future. If you would not like your name to be listed, simply let pastor know. The birthdays are provided here as a way of giving thanks for the lives of members of the congregation. Happy birthday to all!*

* December 9: Margo Poppe
* December 13: Jaiden Johnson
* December 21: Patricia Kumm
* December 25: Doug Stewart
* December 31: Samantha Stewart

**Baptismal Anniversaries for December**

*Note: Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of our earthly lives with our birthdays, it is even more important for us as Christians to remember the day when God has given us a new birthday, a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Lutherans confess that baptism is the means by which God gives us as a part of sinful humanity a new relationship with him, a promise that our faith can look to all our lives. In turn, we are called to a life of repentance and faith that trusts in Christ as our salvation. As with the birthdays, this list is a work in progress. Blessed baptismal anniversaries to everyone!*

* December 9: James Carlow
* December 18: Jesse Eisenhauer
* December 24: Delwin Cross

**Worship Schedule**

December 2: First Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion, altar rail (Blue)

December 9: Second Sunday of Advent with Sunday school Christmas program (Blue)

December 16: Third Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion, continuous (Blue)

December 23: Fourth Sunday of Advent (Blue)

December 24: Christmas Eve candlelight worship, 5:00 PM (White)

December 30: First Sunday of Christmas (White)

**Important Announcements**

* The Sunday school Christmas program will be held during worship on December 9.
* We will continue, once a month on the fourth Sunday of the month, having a time of adult education during the Sunday school hour, starting at 9:30. There will be coffee and some goodies available.
* We have now concluded the clothing drive and have a massive pile to give to the Native American Heritage Association. These clothing items will go to reservations across South Dakota. Thanks to everyone for your contributions! Thanks to Jeff Hanson for delivering the vast majority of the donations to the location near Rapid City, SD! The rest will be delivered later this month.
* Christmas Eve worship will be held at 5:00 PM. We will continue using the battery-powered candles.
* There will be no confirmation class on December 26 due to Christmas break.
* There will be no WOW/WNALC women’s meeting in December
* There will be a card shower for Gabi (Mangmoradeth) and Bryce Stark, who were married earlier in November. Please have cards at the church by December 16.



**Thus the most precious treasure and the strongest consolation we Christians have is this: that the Word, the true and natural Son of God, became man, with flesh and blood like that of any other human; that He became incarnate for our sakes in order that we might enter into great glory, that our flesh and blood, skin and hair, hands and feet, stomach and back might reside in heaven as God does, and in order that we might boldly defy the devil and whatever else assails us. We are convinced that all our members belong in heaven as heirs of heaven’s realm.**

***Martin Luther, Christmas sermon on John chapter 1***



**If Christ had arrived with trumpets and lain in a cradle of gold, his birth would have been a splendid affair. But it would not be a comfort to me. He was rather to lie in the lap of a poor maiden and be thought of little significance in the eyes of the world. Now I can come to him. Now he reveals himself to the miserable in order not to give any impression that he arrives with great power, splendor, wisdom, and aristocratic manners.**

***Martin Luther, Christmas sermon, 1530***



**December 2018**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |   |    |  |  | 1 |
| 2Sunday School, 9:30Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (altar rail)Blue | 3 | 4 | 5Pr. Tom in LindyConfirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9Sunday School, 9:30Worship, 10:30 with Sunday school Christmas programBlue | 10 | 11 | 12Pr. Tom in LindyConfirmation class, 5:15-6:45Church council, 7:00Youth meeting? | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16Sunday School, 9:30Worship, 10:30; Holy Communion (continuous)Blue | 17 | 18 | 19Pr. Tom in LindyConfirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23Sunday School, 9:30 ?Adult education, 9:30Worship, 10:30Blue | 24Christmas Eve worship, 5:00White | 25Christmas DayMerry Christmas! | 26 27 28 29 No confirmationclass |
| 30No Sunday SchoolWorship, 10:30White | 31 |  |  |

Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

89039 539 Ave.

Bloomfield, Nebraska 68718



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