



WITTENBERG WAY

March 2024



Rest for the Weary

-Jesus

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Dear Grace Family,

In George Eliot's short story, *Janet's Repentance*, the lead character is married to an abusive alcoholic. In an attempt to numb herself from the pain, Janet starts sipping from his drinks and eventually becomes an alcoholic too—paradoxically, the very thing she hates most about her husband. One night, in a fit of rage, he locks her out of the house. Here is how George Eliot tells it:

She was tired, she was sick of that barren exhortation — Do right, and keep a clear conscience, and God will reward you and your troubles will be easier to bear. She wanted strength to do right — she wanted something to rely on besides her own resolutions; for was not the path behind her all strewn with broken resolutions? How could she trust in new ones?

Janet then recalls the new minister in town, Reverend Tryan, who has a reputation for being “very fond of great sinners.” Janet herself would even poke fun at his earnestness but, in her exhaustion, she finds herself going to his door. He welcomes her and listens to her story. After she has said all there is to say, the minister says these words:

Do not believe that God has left you to yourself. How can you tell but that the hardest trials you have known have been only the road by which He was leading you to complete the sense of your own sin and helplessness, without which you would never have renounced all other hopes, and trust in His love alone? ... It is you Christ invites to come to him and find rest. He does not command you to walk alone without stumbling. You have only to rest on him as a child rests on its mother's arms, and you will be upborne by his divine strength.

When your ability to carry the load exceeds capacity, Jesus offers to exchange your yoke for His. It is not a bait and switch, nor a false promise of a life without burden — we all have a yoke to carry — it's just that His is so much lighter. He is God, after all, and He doesn't mind doing the heavy lifting. To borrow a line from Idina Menzel, "Let it go!"

I mention Eliot's story because last year a writer from *The New Yorker* used the phrase "the Great Exhaustion" to describe the overall sentiment of our culture after several difficult years. From marriage and family to the stress of work and finance amidst growing inflation, to various cultural crises (take your pick...border, homelessness, housing, fentanyl, to name just a few), everyone is reeling from a sense of burden and impending doom.

This experience is compounded when you turn to entertainment for momentary distraction. With an

endless barrage of streaming services available broadcasting thousands of films, television shows, and limited series, you can add what psychologists call "decision fatigue" to the mix losing the ability to filter what is important from what is not as you scroll mindlessly through the black hole that is social media. And if the political landscape scares you at all, and why wouldn't it, throw in another election year for good measure. "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus," is the correct response in case you were searching for the right words.

If you're like me, the question isn't whether or not you're tired, but what you are tired of. Fatigue can manifest in a variety of ways — physically, mentally, emotionally, even spiritually.

This is one of the reasons that I love to gather together with you for worship. It is called a "day of rest" for good reason, an opportunity (if even for a few hours) to find sanctuary in an actual sanctuary where we are reminded of God's love and get to experience it firsthand as we trust His gracious Words of absolution and receive His precious body and blood. It's the only place where you are provided eternal promises filled with real hope since God always keeps His word. While it's technically my busiest day of the week as a pastor, it is one that I find an incredible consolation. The Lenten season certainly adds to the work, but I find this to be a special time for us as a church. This year, I have especially enjoyed the sacred moments of quiet during Holy Communion on Wednesday evenings when our organist Dale walks from the balcony to the rail to commune. Even in churches, you don't often get moments of solitude like this as the prevailing notion is that you mustn't have any dead air time. Nonsense! A little contemplative quiet is good for the soul.

What I'm trying to say is that the feeling of fatigue is not without hope because it is a precondition for renewal just as Good Friday is a precondition for Easter. You may at times feel faint and weary, having exhausted all other options, but the gospel is the one inexhaustible thing! Don't forget that. It is a love that bears all things, hopes all things, and endures all things even when you're tired of being tired (1 Cor 13:7). Your wilderness journey may have its difficulties winding its way through "the Great Exhaustion" with everyone else in the world, but you have an even greater Savior, who will lead you safely home.

Prayerfully Yours,

Pr. Thomas



CHERISH WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN (LCMS STEWARDSHIP)

In the Small Catechism, Luther follows a pattern when explaining the Ten Commandments. With each commandment, there is something prohibited and something commanded. There is something wrong that must be avoided, and there is something right that must be done.

The one time this pattern is not followed is with the Sixth Commandment.

“You shall not commit adultery. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other” (SC I).

Here, the catechism focuses solely on the positive: we should live in a chaste and decent manner in both word and deed, and husbands and wives should cherish and honor one another.

Keeping this commandment, and all of the commandments, is a lot easier if you see your chastity and your spouse as a gift from God that is to be protected and cherished. In the same way, you will find keeping the Fourth Commandment easier if you see your parents and other authorities as a gift from God, given to you for your blessing.

This is the key stewardship insight that runs through all of the Christian life: Everything that we have has been given to us by God. We deserve none of it. All of it comes to us by God’s fatherly kindness and open-handed generosity. If I know that everything I have — every possession, every relationship, every ability — is a gift from God, then my perspective changes. All of these things are both gifts to be cherished and things that I should direct towards God’s purposes. My possessions should be shared generously according to how God has called me in my family, church, and community. My spouse should be cherished, loved, and encouraged in faith. My children are on loan from my own Heavenly Father, and I have but a brief time to show them the path of righteousness. My neighbor is a gift from God so that I can imitate His kindness toward me.

No matter the gift, everything has been given to me by God so that I may participate in His own goodness and open-handed generosity.



HOW TO GIVE

- Your offering envelopes or those in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code here
- Text the amount to 84321
- The Giving Page at grace.sandiego.com
- Time and Talents

FEBRUARY 2024 GIVING

February Actual Offerings	\$ 17.026
February Budget	<u>\$ 19,652</u>
Shortage	\$ 1,821
YTD Actual	\$ 32,888
YTD Budget	<u>\$ 39,304</u>
Shortage	\$ 6,416



During the Lenten midweek services, we have collected offerings in support of Vicar Rowan Turner at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. We have collected almost \$1,000 to date. He is an especially gifted young man who no doubt will be a great blessing to Christ's Church. In this issue, we've included a recent update from him on his family and studies as well as an excellent article he wrote about a Lutheran theology of worship.

Rowan and his family

LENTEN OFFERINGS

Greetings, Brothers, and Sisters in California,

We have often prayed for you and hope you are doing well.

The second quarter at Concordia Theological Seminary is done and dusted! I worked flat out for the last ten weeks and look forward to spending much more time with my family until the next quarter starts. I cannot tell you how thankful I am to be studying at such an incredible school. The education here is top-notch, and not a single day goes by where I don't feel thankful to be here. I appreciate your support; as I have said before, and I'll keep saying, none of this would be possible without your continued support.

Let me tell you about some of the classes I took. In Homiletics 1, we read Walther's "The Proper Distinction Between the Law and the Gospel" carefully. It was terrific, and the class discussions were good, too. We also had to prepare three sermons and preach two of them. There was a meticulous process of sermon preparation that we had to follow. Dr. Fickenscher II, who teaches Homiletics, knows all the mechanics of preaching inside out. He is from California and plans to return at some point. He is a lively character, and so his class was quite entertaining.

In Lutheran Confessions 1, we studied the Augsburg Confession and the Apology. We had to write two papers, and we also had two exams. The exams had multiple potential essay questions, so it required much studying. We were randomly assigned essay questions for both exams. Thankfully, I hit the jackpot by getting good topics for both exams.

For Catechetics, I had Dr. John Pless. He is the most interesting lecturer to listen to. He is like a multi-volume encyclopedia that comes to life. He taught us much about Luther's Small and Large Catechisms—such a wealth of knowledge. Dr. Pless shows a lot of hospitality towards the students and is appreciated by many.

The professor of Liturgics is Dr. Grime. He was the director of what took ten years to produce the current Lutheran Service Book. We used the Companion to the Lutheran Service Book, an incredible resource. We covered a lot of ground and discussed church worship from the beginning of the church until the present day. The LSB includes material from throughout church history. One topic in particular meant a lot to me. It is the distinction between Sacramental and Sacrificial. I wrote a basic paper summarizing one chapter in the LSB companion book about the Divine Service.



Grace Lutheran Annual Easter Sunday Breakfast

March 31st

9 — 11am

Fellowship Hall

Worship and Celebrate a Blessed and Happy Easter!

Sign up sheet to help is at the Welcome Desk!

REFORMATION OF WORSHIP BY ROWAN TURNER

Introduction

Many theological conversations occur in the abstract, apart from Christian worship. A topic like justification by faith alone is discussed and debated apart from what happens during the Divine Service, a term Lutherans use to describe God's service to us. Lutheran Theology is best understood not in the nude but within the context of our Liturgy. The Reformation itself was also a Liturgical Reformation, and to demonstrate this fact, I will now describe some of the critical terms behind our Reformational Theology of Worship.

Law and Gospel

Jesus said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). When Jesus wanted to wash the disciples' feet, there was serious discomfort on their part. Peter objected to the Lord wanting to touch his dirty feet, to which Jesus responded, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with Me" (John 13:8). When it comes to our relationship with Christ, the direction is primarily from Him towards us. He desires to give us gifts during Divine Service, and to refuse them, replacing them with our worship, is displeasing to God (Winger, LSBCS, 2).

There are essentially only two kinds of religion in the world. The religion of the Law attempts to be made right with God through good works, and the religion of the Gospel trusts that we have been reconciled through Christ, not our good works (Pieper, Christian Dogmatics 1, 10). The distinction between Law and Gospel also pertains to our understanding of worship, for there are two kinds of worship. The worship of the Law is the old Adam trying to worship God with his prayer and praise, presenting gifts to God. The Worship of the Gospel understands that God is the primary actor in the Divine Service, giving gifts to His people (Ap V 189). This kind of worship allows Christ to be our Savior (Winger, LSBCS, 2). Our worship service consists primarily of God coming to serve us His gifts, which we receive by faith alone, and that is why the Lutheran Reformation was just as much about worship as doctrine. The Church is where we assemble to hear the Gospel purely preached and the Sacraments correctly administered AC VII 1).

Faith as Worship

Many Christians get in their car on a Sunday morning to go to Church, where they will give something to God. However, as mentioned above, God wants to be the main actor in the Church. If He wants to provide us with gifts, then the best thing we can do is receive his gifts through the instrument of faith. The chief action of God is to preach the Gospel to us, and this is precisely how faith is created (Ap XV 42). God gives His Gospel gifts to us, and we open the palms of our hands and receive those gifts, saying amen. Faith is the highest form of worship, for it receives the forgiveness of sins. We call our service "The Divine Service" because it is exactly that, God's Divine Service, where He comes to serve us (Winger, LSBCS, 3-4). Justification by faith alone is a doctrine directly related to God's Service. God gives gifts, and we receive those gifts by faith alone. After confessing our sins, the minister announces the absolution, to which we respond with the words "Amen." This is faith receiving the gift of forgiveness.

Sacrament and Sacrifice

Lutherans make an important distinction between *sacrament* and *sacrifice*. A *sacrament* is an action that Jesus instituted that brings forgiveness through Word and sign, for example, Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. As mentioned above, God wants to give us gifts of the Gospel. We use the term *sacramental* to describe the acts of God delivering Gospel gifts to us (Winger, LSBCS, 6). The term *sacrifice* refers to our response to God's *sacramental* gifts. We respond to His *sacramental* gifts in different ways, such as prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and offerings (1 Peter 2:5).

At the time of the Reformation, discussing two kinds of sacrifice was necessary. The Reformers confessed that Christ's *propitiatory sacrifice* made satisfaction for guilt and punishment, appeasing God's wrath. This merited the forgiveness of sins. The other kind is the *eucharistic sacrifice*, which refers to the thankfulness rendered by those who have received reconciliation and forgiveness (Ap XXIV 19). A eucharistic sacrifice is a work we render God to afford Him honor (Winger, LSBCS, 8). This critical distinction made clear that the direction of the Lord's Supper is from God to us and not us offering anything to God. This means that Christ gives us His body and blood to forgive our sins; the action is His, not ours. When receiving the Holy Supper, the minister says, "The true blood of Christ, shed for you," to which we respond with "Amen." This is the faith alone by which we are justified.

Gottesdienst

The word "worship," as understood by many Christians, refers to giving God His worth, telling Him that He is worthy. We think God is worthy and deserves all honor, but the term "worship" does away with the sacramental aspect of the Divine Service discussed above. Our services have a sacrificial side, but eucharistic sacrifice is a response to God's sacred gifts. The Word Gottesdienst means God's service and carries the sense of God's service to us and our service to God. We mean this when we use the words "Divine Service" (Winger, LSBCS, 9). The terms Gottesdienst and Divine Service encompass our theology's sacramental and sacrificial aspects.

Liturgy, Rite, and Ceremony

Liturgy is a word often misunderstood to mean the order of the service or a more traditional type of church service. It comes from the Greek Word λειτουργία (Liturgy). After much discussion during the Reformation, it became understood as the public ministry. It has to do with the content of the service. The preacher stands in the place of Christ and distributes His gifts to His people; this is the Liturgy (Winger, LSBCS 14). God has not given us all the details of how we will order the service. When the Church does the Liturgy, we need order. This order refers to the "rite." The rite consists of elements instituted by God and those received from the ancient and present-day Church. The rite is essential in expressing all the theology discussed above in a balanced way. We confess God as Trinity, the centrality of Christ, a correct distinction between the Law and Gospel, etc.

The ceremony is how the rite is conducted. Ceremony includes music, vesture, posture, etc. (Winger, LSBCS, 14-18). The Liturgy is mandated and requires fidelity; the rite is mandated and created by the Church and involves discernment; the ceremony consists of human decisions and calls for charity.



Both Lila Ogden and Duncan Mellor celebrated their first Holy Communion after spending several weeks in catechesis with Pr. Brian. They commit to memory several questions and answers from Luther's Small Catechism on the Sacrament of the Altar, complete some reading from *Lutheranism 101 for Kids*, as well homework with their parents, and finally, they must take a quiz at the end with at least an 80% grade to pass. Congratulations on this milestone!



On February 25th, Johnathan Belgau was Baptized in the Holy Trinity. Johnathan is the third son of Jeremy and Jessika Belgau (and youngest brother to Jacobsen and Jensen).



Palm Sunday
3/24
8:00 & 10:30 am

Maundy Thursday
3/28
6:30 pm

Good Friday
3/29
Noon & 6:30 pm

Easter Vigil
3/30
9:00 pm

Easter Sunday
3/31
8:00 & 10:30 am

SHROVE TUESDAY DINNER

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday, also known as Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, or Pancake Day. It comes from the word 'shrive', which means to give absolution after hearing confession. So Shrove Tuesday is the day when people went to confession to prepare themselves for Lent, which begins on the following day, Ash Wednesday.

By the late Middle Ages, the feast of Shrovetide lasted until the start of Lent. It was customary in many cultures to eat pancakes or other foods made with the butter, eggs, and fat that would be given up during the Lenten season. The tradition of British Christians enjoying pancakes on Shrove Tuesday dates back to the 16th century, thus it's more popular in Anglican communions.

Shrove Tuesday serves multiple purposes: encouraging Christians to repent of their sins before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday and also allowing them to partake in a last round of jubilation before the beginning of the austere Lenten season.

This year our Navy trumpeter, Matt Fitzsimmons, approached Pastor Brian and offered to have his brass band perform. It turns out one of their specialties is New Orleans jazz, thus we had the idea to hold a delicious Mardi Gras-themed dinner complete with great music and dancing too.





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Sunday Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Sunday School
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

SHANNON CARREIRO
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA
Treasurer

PAUL HIMMELBERGER
Treasurer Emeritus

DANIEL PAYLOR
Secretary

HEATH RUSSERT
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT
Fellowship/Activities

JOHN BARBER
JOSH MELLOR
Members-at-Large

CARL LEHMAN
Education

TED NILSEN
Head Elder

JEREMY FULLAM
STEVE HOLLMAN
JASON HUNTLEY
DARYL NEWTON
Elders

FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Our monthly council meetings usually focus on things we need to maintain and operate our church. The list is long, and it often seems that for every need satisfied, two more pop up. Now, the good news is that nothing on the list requires a Hollywood hero with a scripted set of amazing skills. In fact, many just call for elbow grease. The not-so-good news? Some of our most dependable elbows have moved away. So, this is the part where I ask you to think about filling their shoes. Below are some of ways you can help.

Got Skills?

Okay. You're not Liam Neeson or MacGyver. But everybody is good at something, and your particular skills might be just what our church needs.

- Sunday Service Can you help on Sundays with Altar Guild? Let Pastor or Gretchen know. Interested in being an usher? Harold is the man to see.
- Musical Talent Do you sing or play an instrument? Our Musical Director Dale wants to hear from you.
- Fellowship Folks here love to eat. That means there are ample opps to show off your culinary chops. But if you can't boil water, just depositing a bag of store-bought goodies in our Cookie Bank (AKA the freezer upstairs) will assure there are snacks on Sunday. Or you can sign-up at the Welcome Desk to help with Coffee Hour hosting. See Kelley, our Fellowship Chair, for more info.
- Maintenance This old church is always in need of TLC. If you know your way around a tool box, talk to Heath, our Trustee.
- Communications Are you handy with a camera? Pastor is looking for someone who can shoot and edit video clips for our YouTube channel. Are you a social media specialist? I can put your expertise to good use.
- Leadership If you've been a member of Grace Lutheran for at least two years, consider standing for an open position on our GLC Council. For example, the Stewardship Chair has been vacant for several years. Contact Pastor or any council member to learn more.
- Anything Else? Basically, if you can do it, fix it, clean it or make it run better, let us know.



Shannon Carreiro, President

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Dave, Bill, Phil, Mike, John, Heidi, Edward, Daniel, Nancy, Jan, Kathy, and Karen

PRAYERS AWAITING A CHILD OF GOD

Jordan Gruetzmacher, Rachel Hawthorne, Teagan LeYanna

PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES & SEMINARIANS

Rev. Dr. John Bombaro, Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss, and Vicar Rowan Turner

PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY MEMBERS

Rev. Mario Ancira, Micah Burge, Tajy George, Daniel Fohey, Nathan Farish, Matthew Morgan, Jeff & Jordan Gruetzmacher

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND

Joyce Rochester



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