



ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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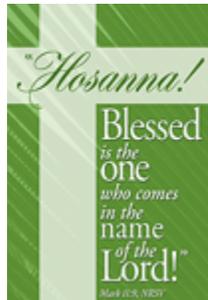
From the Pastor's Desk

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" John 11:25-26



As we begin this month of April, we are still in the middle of our Lenten Journey to the cross. We are listening to Jesus from his Sermon on the Mount teaching us about life. Jesus teaches us how to pray and how to fast. When we pray to our Father it is to be a heart to heart conversation and not a bunch of words we string together to impress someone else when we pray. Jesus calls us to trust in his Heavenly Father, for his Father loves to bless us in abundance. Plus, the Father knows our needs better than we do. So we are not to worry about what we are to eat or what we are to wear, but again to focus upon our relationship with our Father. Jesus tells us not to judge others, as Jesus calls us to love one another, which extends beyond those who love us to neighbors and even to enemies. To live out such love, we are to build our lives on the rock of our Lord Jesus and his love.

Our Lenten journey eventually will lead us into Holy Week. Holy Week begins with such a triumphant feeling as we raise our palm branches just like the people crowding the streets of Jerusalem, to greet Jesus and we join in their greeting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" It is a greeting to receive a King, our Lord Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords. But it doesn't take long and we begin to see that Jesus is a different kind of king. Instead of continuing to seek the praise of the people, which he received coming into Jerusalem, Jesus challenges the Temple and the religious authorities by cleansing the Temple. This challenge against the Temple and the Religious authorities leads into a battle that while the disciples witness it and we hear the story again does not bode well for Jesus. Jesus is rejected by the religious leaders, accused of blasphemy, and they called for Jesus' crucifixion before Pilate. Pilate tries to placate the leaders with having Jesus beaten, mocked and whipped. But the leaders stir the crowd to demand his crucifixion and Jesus is nailed to a cross between two thieves on Golgatha until he draws his last breath and dies. Jesus was greeted as King as he entered Jerusalem and died as the King of the Jews just outside of Jerusalem.



What kind of King teaches us about being the salt of the earth, teaching us not to worry, not to judge, to build our lives on him, suffers abandonment, rejection, mockery, is beaten, spit upon, and killed on a cross, the most horrible death sentence known to man? What kind of King does that? Jesus is definitely not a political King.

Jesus is the Messiah of God, the Son of God. As the Messiah of God, Jesus seeks to bring his Father's love into our hearts. Jesus brings his Father's love into our hearts by revealing God's love and will for our lives. Jesus reveals that our Father loves to bless us in abundance, so he calls us to live in his Father's love that blesses us so we don't worry. Jesus

brings us into heart to heart conversations with our Heavenly Father. Jesus also walks with us. Jesus walks with us when we have been rejected. Jesus walks with us when we have been mocked. Jesus walks with us when we suffer. Jesus walks with us even as we face death in losing a loved one or even facing our own death. Jesus, God's Messiah, our Lord has entered into our brokenness, even unto our death. We are about to hear it again. The disciples running into the darkness, Peter's triple denial, the mocking, the beating, the jeering, the whipping, the crown of thorns, the nails being pounded, his last breath, the slamming of the stone against the entrance of the tomb.

In the face of all this suffering and broken world in which live, Jesus boldly proclaims to you and me, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus has entered into our brokenness and even into the power of death and he has defeated it. Jesus is the resurrection that brings newness of life and eternal life. We no longer live in the death grip of sin upon our throats. Jesus has defeated death, as he is the resurrection and the life. Jesus gives eternal life to all those who call upon his name. Jesus gives us life as he frees us from sin and guilt. Jesus gives us life as he empowers us with his love and Holy Spirit to not to worry, not to judge and know how to pray to the one we can now call Father. Jesus is the life, as he gives us life through empowering us to forgive as we are forgiven, to reconcile with one another as we have been reconciled to our Heavenly Father. Jesus is life as we live in God's love that blesses in abundance and not in the scarcity the world proclaims. Jesus is life as we walk in sorrow from the death of a loved one, and our hearts our comforted as Jesus walks with us as the one who has defeated death, the Resurrection and the Life, who tells us we will see our loved ones again.



We live each day in our broken world, where we hear stories of innocent people being killed by a gunman filled with hate, or destructions of homes and complete towns by floods or tornados or fires, loved ones suffering from and dying from cancer and more. We suffer the brokenness and pain we create through our own sin against the ones we love. In the midst of this brokenness we have entered the journey of Lent that will lead us to Holy Week. We hear again of Jesus knowing our suffering, our pain, our brokenness. We hear Jesus praying with drops of blood, but following his Father's will. We hear Jesus' abandonment. We hear the beating, the mockery, and his death. We are anxious, like the women on Easter morn, to go to the tomb in the brokenness only to find the tomb empty. The tomb is empty. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus lives in our midst to give us hope, joy, peace, love and life.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



When we hear Jesus pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, "...not what I want, but what you want" we are awed by his obedience and service to God the Father. We often quote that verse to remind ourselves to be God-focused when we pray and live out our lives of discipleship. Our minds move quickly from the night in the garden to the cross on Calvary.



every congregation. It only takes one or two minutes and you have listened to God. What takes us 1 or 2 minutes, God can use to work on us all day. The Bible, of course, is another great resource. Today you can use your phone or computer – there are dozens of apps that will even send you a verse each day – you don't even have to look it up, just turn on your phone. Hear from God – every day.

But sometimes I think we skip over a basic question hear – how did he know what God wanted? Now we can get a little too holy here and say, well Jesus and God are one. They are, and that could be the answer. But what about the human part of Jesus – the part like me. I want Jesus' example here to be one I can follow ... and live in ... and live up too. How do I know what God wants?

When you hear God's Word being spoken or read to you – take it in. You can sit there and meditate it... or pray it for a moment. Or simply lodge it in your head for future reference later in the day – sometime in the day you will have a minute or two to yourself. Dig it up, shake it loose – remember it and give it a second thought. God will speak.

Martin Luther used a simple technique called TRIP. TRIP is an acronym for Thanks Regrets Intercession Purpose. Luther would read a verse or two from the Bible and then rehearse each letter/word of that acronym in his head. Thanks – what does that verse remind me to be thankful for? Give thanks. Regrets – what of that verse shows me my shortcomings, my sins, my regrets? Ask for forgiveness. Intercession – who does these words remind me to remember in prayer today? Pray for them ... maybe even check in with them. Purpose – is God asking me to do something? Do it.



That quest is not always easy. Nor do I always dedicate myself fully and wholly to discover that answer. In other words, do I regularly (always) engage God in conversation (pray)? Do I

regularly and diligently listen to God speak to me, most regularly in God's Word? The answer to those questions are minimally "not like I should." Realistically for some, "not at all."

Let me be clear, this is a challenging task. Not easy by any means, knowing what God wants me to do. But the bottom line is that we don't stand a chance if we do not converse with God, particularly engage God in God's Word. Let me suggest, challenge you, for the remaining of the Lenten and Easter seasons – every day read something from God's Word. I do not care how much – a verse, a story, a chapter – something. I do not care if you only read your favorites or from your favorite books of the Bible or only the Psalms – read something.



Some verses will speak right to you that given day. Some will stretch you. Sometimes we think tangent-ly – we are not always quite sure how our brains jumped from this to that, but trust God, he is at work.



In any and all cases, talk with God. Talk and listen. After doing this regularly, more times than not, we learn what God wants ... and learn to follow his call.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to use a devotional book – we provide various devotionals in

Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters