

St. John's Monthly Newsletter

January 2019

GOD SPEAKS

Happy New Year brothers and sisters in Christ! It is a glorious start to a new year in our Lord and for this new year I wanted to plan out a series of articles on themes in the Old Testament. One of my desires for this year is to take a deeper look into our Old Testament lessons in our Lectionary. Although I won't be able to preach on the Old Testament lesson for every Sunday of the Church year, I really want to help everyone see Jesus in the Old Testament, in every story, in every character, in every era of history. It is my sincere prayer that this year's newsletter articles will help you make some deeper connections to the overall Biblical story. In order to kick off our new year let's examine God's desire to speak.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1) It's really that simple. In beginning the whole story of the world, God chose to speak. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." (Gen 1:3) And each subsequent day in creation God spoke our world into existence. There was one, tiny change to God's overall creation plan when He created man. It was only in that one instance that God chose to breathe into man and give man life (Gen. 2:7). While breathing might not seem like speaking, you need to remember that without breath we cannot speak. Breath is just the more intimate aspect of speaking.

But God did not stop speaking once he was done with creation, he continued to speak. He placed man in the midst of the garden paradise of Eden and spoke to Adam saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen 2:16-17) He also spoke saying that, "It is not good for man to be alone." (Gen. 2:18) From those words God would go about creating woman and the institution of Holy marriage. Yet God was not done speaking, He had more to say, unfortunately we chose not to listen.

Soon after Eve was created, Satan twisted the Words of God and tempted us to listen to him and our own desires rather than to our Creator. I'm sure you're familiar with the story, but notice, when Adam and Eve finally realize what they had done it was, "the sound of [God] in the garden," (Gen. 3:10) that caused them to seek shelter. This wasn't how it was supposed to be at all! Fleeing from the voice of God? Hiding behind bushes with fig leaves as cover? This was insanity. Yet God still spoke. He pronounced amongst the curses to the serpent, Adam, and Eve these famous words, "I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) In other words, God still had a plan, He still wanted to speak with His beloved creation.

You can track the numerous times that God spoke to His people throughout the Old Testament. Sometimes directly as was the case of Noah (Gen. 7:1ff), Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff), and a most famous scene from Moses' life (Ex. 3). Sometimes God would speak through such people to the world as we see with Moses in Exodus 4, the Prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12, or with Isaiah in Isaiah 6. Even with all of these events, God wanted to speak directly to His people, but His people were terrified to listen to the holiness of God (Ex. 20).

To solve this problem caused by our sin, God sent His Word into our flesh to bear our sin and be our savior (Jn 1:1-18). From those first cries of a new born baby in a manger in Bethlehem to His last cry from the cross, the Word of God, Jesus Himself spoke to us. Jesus was the fulfillment of all of what God wanted to say to His people, and it is to His words that we listen and cling. Even from the Mount of Transfiguration our Heavenly Father makes this point cling when He says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." (Matt 17:5) This is why our Gospel lessons hold such importance to us on Sunday mornings; it is why we respectfully stand for the Gospel reading.

As you read and hear from the Old Testament, pay attention to how, when, where, and why God speaks to His people. You'll notice a great crescendo that leads to the birth of Jesus Christ, and in Him you realize the overarching message of the Old Testament to be about Jesus' love for us. Praise the Lord that He is a God of Words!

Have a Blessed New Year,
Pastor Jacobsen

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod | Stewardship Ministry

Newsletter Article: January 2019

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

It is no secret that God calls us to be generous with the gifts He has given us. Throughout the Bible, we read that just as God has generously given to us, so are we to give generously one to another. As Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35) and “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

But God also calls us to give to Him. And He, who does all things well, presses it into service for the benefit of all the people of God. See for example what God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, after he and the people were safely brought out of Egypt across the Red Sea on dry land:

The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins,[a] acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Ex. 25: 1-9)

Notice in verse two that the Lord instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to “take for me a contribution” and that from everyone motivated from gratitude for what God has just accomplished and given to them, Moses is to gather up “the contribution for me.”

Pay attention, though, why the Lord wants the people of Israel to gather up these contributions for Him. God tells Moses precisely why: “let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The purpose for the contribution of the Israelites was so that He may dwell with them, that He would live among them. Through the tabernacle and the priesthood, through their rites and ceremonies, through their feasts and festivals, as through means, the Lord God, who brought them out of the bondage of Egypt would live and dwell among them and be their God, and lead them into the promised land, which flowed with milk and honey.

God dwells among us still. In the fullness of time, God’s son was born of woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law. He brought us out of bondage to sin, death, the devil, and Hell, and He did this by His obedient suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension. But He is not gone. He dwells with us through the means of His Word and His sacraments, through the preaching and the teaching of our pastors, through the rites and ceremonies of our liturgy. He dwells with us in the Church through those means. And He is leading us to the true promised land, to the new heavens and the new earth in the new creation.

In the meantime, as God, even now, continues to call us to give to Him, let us, who have been saved from slavery to sin and death, the devil and hell, be so moved in our hearts as to give generously to Him so that the means of grace, the means of His gracious dwelling among us, would continue now and into the future. For just as He did then so does He do now. He presses the gifts given to Him into service for the benefit of all His people. He puts it to use so that we may have Him with us always, even unto the end of the age.

Serving this January:

Elders: Mark Ewald & Rick Shepard

Altar Guild: Toni Miller, Therese Miller

Ushers: **8:00 am:** Joel DuFrain **10:30 am:** Todd Thoman

Acolyte listing available on the ledge outside the church office.

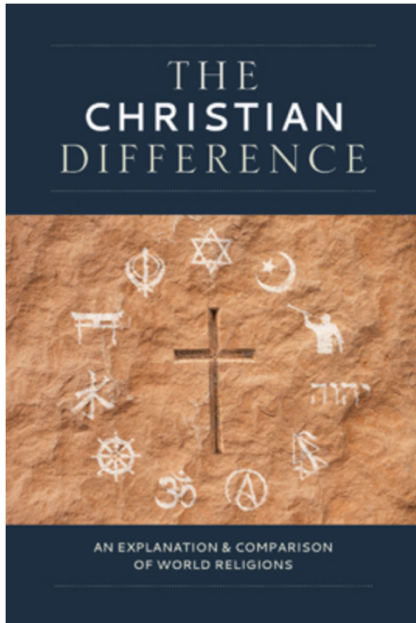
Book of the Month:

The Christian Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of World Religions

by Concordia Publishing House

The Christian Difference details the basic history, personalities, and beliefs of the world's major religions:

- Judaism
- Islam
- Mormonism
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Scientology
- Skepticism
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Confucianism
- Shintoism
- Sikhism.



Each of these religions is compared with Christianity, providing ideas for how to talk to neighbors, family members, fellow students, or co-workers who follow one or another of these beliefs. Each chapter was written by an expert author with a deep interest or experience with the specific religion, written with the intent to give you common ground for you to share your faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reaches out meaningfully to all who are hurting, suffering, and oppressed, giving them endurance and confidence to live in the present and hope for the future. All because Jesus Christ is different. That is the Christian difference.

Call or email the church office if you want us to order for you!

Church Announcements:

Save the DATE! Chili Cook-Off/Supper: If you are interested in entering your chili in the cook-off, call the church or school office. The date is January 27 after 10:30 am service.

Installation of New Officers will be Sunday, January 20 at the 10:30 am service. If you were elected to any church board, please be at the 10:30 am service for the installation.

Annual Reports: All church organizations with a checking account must turn in a 2018 annual report to the church office.

