

# St. John's Monthly Newsletter

## February 2019

### TREES OF GRACE

Last month we took a look at the theme of God Speaking in the Old Testament. We saw how the Word of God created, brought forth life, and continues to give life today. This month, I want to briefly explore the theme of trees in the Old Testament and show you how they relate to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So grab your favorite beverage and your Bible, as we explore the theme, "Trees of Grace."

As soon as you hear the word, "tree" what do you think of? Sturdiness, longevity, strength, exotic colors and displays, and more come to my mind. I also think about expense! I have a giant tree in my back yard that I hope I never have to remove because it's going to cost a lot of money and will probably require a lot of work. Now take that same term, "tree" and think about it in terms of the Bible. What do you think of right away? I'm sure many of you think of the tree in the midst of the Garden in Genesis 2 and 3. And that's where our journey will begin.

There were many trees in the Garden Paradise of Eden, but only two come to us with names: The "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," and "the Tree of Life." Both trees seem to have been located in close proximity to each other in the midst of the garden, and only one was off limits to Adam and Eve. One would give life and the other would bring certain death; you know how that one turned out!

Soon after Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and blocked from the Tree of Life. Yet that was not how it was supposed to work. We were supposed to have access to the Tree of Life, but now trees were a mixed blessing and curse. Throughout the Old Testament you will find references to trees as being a place of rest and home. Abraham would set up his tents by the "Oak of Moreh," and "the Oaks of Mamre" (Gen. 12:6 & 13:18). Later on, in Joshua 19:33 and Judges 4:11 we see that the oaks marked out territory and homes for the Israelites. In this sense, trees were a blessing of rest and comfort.

Trees also were a curse. In Genesis 40:19 Joseph predicts that Pharaoh's baker would be hung on a tree to death and in Deuteronomy 21 we hear that one of the punishments given to a person who committed a crime punishable by death was to hang them on a tree. Such a person hung on a tree would be considered cursed by God, but was never to be left in such a state for all to see. They were to be buried the same day.

Trees also gave life. Not only was there the Tree of Life in Genesis 3, but there was the most interesting tree in Genesis 6. There a man named Noah was told to build an ark out of Gopher wood. It would be that gigantic ark, made from many trees, that would save not just Noah and his immediate family, but the animals of the world as well. In Numbers 21, God would have Moses put a bronze serpent on a pole of wood so that whoever would gaze upon it would not perish from their fatal snake bites. There in Numbers 21, the image is of a cursed serpent, a defeated snake that could no longer hurt or harm God's people.

Of course the ultimate Tree of Life was still to come. God still wanted to give life by means of a tree and so he did. Long after the Old Testament writings, a tree would be chopped down, roughly hewed, and thrown among numerous other logs. Its purpose would not be made known right away. Finally, on a most fateful day, amongst shouting and angry crowds it would be placed on the back of a man named Jesus to be carried to a little hill outside the city of Jerusalem. And there, Jesus the Christ, would be cursed as he hung on the cross, a tree of life. That whoever would trust in that sacrifice would be saved from the serpent of the Garden. Today, we still look to the cross of Christ, not literally of course, but by faith. Faith that believes the cross was a Tree of Life, comfort, and rest for us.

There is a lot more that could be said about trees in the Old Testament. Yet this should suffice for now. Next time you come across a tree in your Bible reading, take a moment to see what is being said about it and remind yourself of the Tree of Life that your Lord and Savior hung upon for you.

Blessings,  
Pastor Jacobsen

## The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod | Stewardship Ministry

### Newsletter Article – February 2019

The season of Epiphany focuses on how God was made manifest in the flesh of Jesus. The church spends time hearing of the miracles, the signs and wonders, of Jesus in the world.

And this made plain to all that Jesus was who He said He was: He was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only-begotten Son of the Father, in the flesh. For “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

It is revealed for all the world to see that Jesus is God in the flesh. It is made manifest by His words and His work, by what He said and by what He did. And these belong together, for “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Jesus is the Word and will of God in the flesh, that is, He is the walking, talking, enactment of God’s Word.

It is no different for us. We are called not just to believe in God in hearts, but also to trust in God in word and deed.

As James wrote: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22), and again,

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? ... So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ... Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:14, 17–18, 26).

Our faith is lived out in works for our neighbor. Our trust in the Word and will of God is lived out not in word only, but also in deed and in truth.

In other words, the Epiphany of the Lord creates in us an epiphany of our faith in our works of obedience to God who commanded them. By this, our faith is made manifest to the world. It is, as Luther wrote of faith:

“Faith is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1). It kills the old Adam and makes altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and it brings with it the Holy Spirit.

“Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. And so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question rises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them.

“He who does not these works is a faithless man. He gropes and looks about after faith and good works and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, though he talks and talks, with many words about faith and good works.

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God’s grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all His creatures.

“And this is the work of the Holy Spirit in faith. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace.

“And thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate burning and shining from fire. Beware, therefore, of your own false notions and of the idle talkers, who would be wise enough to make decisions about faith and good works, and yet are the greatest fools.” (*Preface to the Book of Romans*)

So, then, let our faith be active by God’s power in the Word through the Holy Spirit. And let then our faith be made manifest to the world by what this faith does: serving our neighbor — in church, in the family, and society — with the works of faith in time, talents, and treasures.

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### Serving this February:

**Elders:** Troy Walker & Chuck Miller

**Altar Guild:** Kim Ervin & Tracie Rankin

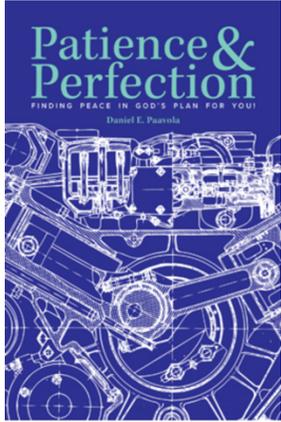
**Ushers:** 8:00 am: Laverne Schaal      10:30 am: Roger & Verna Tice

**Acolyte listing available on the ledge outside the church office.**

## Book of the Month:

### Patience & Perfection: Finding Peace in God's Plan for You!

by Paavola, Daniel



In this life, we'll never be perfect.

We take one step toward perfection and two steps back, losing confidence in ourselves with each movement. We might lose patience with ourselves—can't we just be perfect already!?—but God gently smiles and continues walking with us.

While you can't know all that God plans to do with and for you, you can trust in His perfect plan and His will for you in this life. God is slowly but consistently sanctifying you. He is patient with you. He loves you. And He declares you perfect in Christ.

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

***“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”***

***~Winston Churchill***

**Voter's Meeting:** Our next voters meeting will be Monday, February 11 at 7:00 pm.

**Church Council Secretary:** At the February voter's meeting, we will be voting on a new church council secretary, as the secretary elected is finishing a term on another board. Per the church constitution, all elected officials may only serve on one board or committee. If you would like to make a nomination, please contact the church office.

**New Member Class:** We will be starting a new member class during the education hour on Sunday mornings. This class will begin on Sunday, February 10 at 9:25 am. Miguel will lead this class and share from his experience of joining the Lutheran church.

**Auction:** Ticket for the auction are now on sale. Tickets are \$30 per person, \$50 per couple, and \$200 per table of 8. Thank you!

**Archery - Save the Date:** On March 16 the school will be hosting our Second-Annual Archery Tournament at the EIU Recreation Center. If you can assist or need more info, please contact Trent Duckett or Larry Miller. Thank you!

**Men's Club:** Men's Club has moved their February meeting to Denny's on February 14 at 6:30 pm instead of the church.

## Prayer Requests:

### *Those In Need of Comfort, Health, & Recovery (Recently Added):*

Paul Welton	August Stortzum	Lorriane Seils
Linda Fleming – Friend of Derald & Sara Doehring		Helen Conrady – Niece of Derald & Sara Doehring
Steve Epperson – Brother of Pam Hensley		Nate Maxedon – Larry & Nancy Maxedon’s Grandson

### **For those Serving Our Nation:**

Jason Wetzel - stationed in Iraq

### **Those Who Need Our Ongoing Prayers:**

Helen Alwardt	Oliver Countryman	Erika Kremitzki
Marilyn Perryman	Paul Welton	Norma Schussler
Edith Creek	John Kendall	William Kroening
Ava Gass	Bob Zschau	Carol Welton
Howard Diepholz	Richard Woelber	Paul Welton
Sue Kroening	Warren Moody	
Judy Yott – Aunt of Pastor Jacobsen		Bob Pierce – Father of Tina Smith
Rose Weber – Mother of Julie Gass		Dan Kruger – Brother of Pat Wetzel
Kevin Shaffer –2nd Grade Teacher’s Husband		Carol McDaniel – Sister of Doug Blume & Nancy Gass

## Birthdays:

<b>1</b>	Constance Schaljo, Sandra Woelber	<b>2</b>	Brian Bradtke, Jason Vadakin
<b>4</b>	Barbara Love, Eric Roth		
<b>5</b>	Kimberly Jones, Rachel Orris, Macie Alwardt, Brock Montgomery		
<b>6</b>	Kacie Richey, Laura Haskins, Michelle Saunders, Roger Haberer, Sean Hocking		
<b>8</b>	Brian Kepp, Sheila Winders, Tracie Rankin	<b>12</b>	Sherry Arnholt, Derald Doehring
<b>9</b>	Benetia Brady, Nancy Gass	<b>14</b>	Julie Gass
<b>10</b>	Colton Steffen	<b>15</b>	Nancy Smith
<b>11</b>	Jacalyn Ferree		
<b>17</b>	Brenda Diepholz, Carlee Hoenes, Carol Welton, Imogene Tilford, Clayton Hoenes		
<b>18</b>	Jeffrey Delinsky, Ronald Curry, Lily Maldonado		
<b>19</b>	Carolyn Phillips, James Arnholt, Janet Dahnke, Mason Phipps, Marley Duckett, Mallory Duckett		
<b>20</b>	Jacob Shepard	<b>21</b>	Jean Reid, Paul White
<b>22</b>	Angela Ernst, Collin Richey, Greg Mauck, Korey Adkins		
<b>23</b>	Vallori Degler, Grace Lange, Isabella Compton, Lillian Overton, Gunner Bartels		
<b>24</b>	Fred Smith, Julie Haskins, Canyn Borntrager, Paige Harlin		
<b>25</b>	Elizabeth Deters, Evadine Harrington	<b>26</b>	Herman Taylor, Troy Miller
<b>28</b>	James-Jason Martin, William Havlik		

## Anniversaries:

William and Jill Bell	February 4, 1967
William & Sue Kroening	February 12, 1960
John McCain & Melissa Merritt	February 14, 2003
Earl & Janet Alwardt	February 19, 1966
Terry & Jennifer Cole	February 23, 1991