

Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church

(Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod)

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Pastor: R. Wayne Morton

Ministers: Each and Every Member

The Third Sunday in* Lent

March 4, 2018

(Sunday celebrations of our Lord's resurrection are "in" the time frame of Lent, but not part "of" the penitential Season.)

Welcome

In the name of Jesus Christ, we warmly welcome you to God's house this morning. Especially if you are visiting, we pray that you will feel at home with us and discover the blessing of God's grace in this service.

As We Gather:

Today, we encounter a side of Jesus that we do not hear much about. When He saw people in the temple selling sacrificial animals and changing money, He made "a whip of cords and drove them all out"!

In our time, we hear a lot about Jesus being welcoming - and He often was, eating with tax collectors and sinners and welcoming them. Why would Jesus forcefully drive these people and animals from the temple? Certainly not just because they were sinners, because He welcomed other sinners. There must be something more.

And there is. Lent takes us to the cross - where Jesus made the final, ultimate sacrifice, laying down His life to redeem the world. Lent takes us to the cross, where the organized system of animal sacrifice would come to an end. Here today, Jesus was clearing the temple for His sacrifice, the fulfillment of the old system.

This account in the life of our Lord also teaches us also that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is meant to drive out from our hearts and lives all the sin that bogs us down and keeps us from living in ways that honor and uphold the commandments of God. Part of Jesus' ministry is to "clean house." It is the sin that still clings to our hearts that He wants forcefully to cast out. We desperately need this cleansing, and He freely fulfills our greatest need through the Means of His Grace.

(10:25 a.m.) The Ringing of the Bell

(10:25 a.m.) Make a Joyful Noise

(This celebratory element of our liturgy is omitted during the penitential season of Lent.)

The Welcome

(The Pastor may invite the people to God's house by using the following greeting:

"The Lord be with you." **"And also with you."**)

* (stand) The Invocation

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

* (stand) The Confession and Absolution of our Sin

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

People: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore now publicly forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen

Entrance Hymn: #579 "The Law of God Is Good and Wise" (vs. 1-6).

* (stand) The Greeting and Prayer of the Day

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

The Announcement of the Day

Pastor: Today is the Third Sunday in Lent, midway through our six-week journey to the cross. The words are ever more pointed as Jesus reveals the path that is before Him. He will not turn away from His destiny on the cross and by faith this has become our glory and our boast. From Exodus we heard the commandments clearly and the Law of God convicts us of our sin. From his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul proclaims the wisdom of the cross before the foolishness of the world and makes this cross our only hope and boast. In the Gospel according to St. John we hear how our Lord cleared the temple, promised to rise up again in three days, and how the disciples remembered this when He was raised again.

The Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 20:1-17

(In light of God's Law, we acknowledge the depth of our own guilt.)

And God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those

who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Epistle Lesson: The Epistle Lesson: 1Corinthians 1:18-31

(The Word of the cross is folly to the perishing but to those who are saved it is the wisdom of God.)

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God

through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Reader: This is the word of the Lord. **People: Thanks be to God.**

* (stand) **The Gospel Acclamation** (LSB, p. 157, "Return to the Lord, Your God")

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the second chapter.

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

* (stand) **The Holy Gospel: John 2:13-22**

(Jesus clears the temple and points to His resurrection after three days as a sign that He is who He claims to be.)

13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord. **People: Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Hymn of the Day: "You Strode Within the Temple, Lord"

(Tune: ALL SAINTS NEW, LSB #661 "The Son of God Goes Forth to War")

(Text: Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., Copyright © 2000 GIA, Inc.

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**You strode within the Temple, Lord, Where merchants vied for gain
And cried, "Your wares corrupt God's house; This place of prayer, profane!"
With corded whip and fiery wrath You put God's foes to flight.
They could not bear the searching beam Of Your unshielded light.**

**The temple of Your body, Lord, They crushed when You were slain;
But after three days' sleep in death, God raised it up again.
And now You have a dwelling place On earth, in all its lands.
Your people are Your temple, Lord, A house not made with hands.**

**Make ev'ry heart Your temple, Lord, Each life a holy place.
Forgive the sins that flaw Your plan, Your patient work deface.
In love that does not shrink from truth These temples purify.
And then in mercy, Lord, remain; Your Spirit's gifts supply.**

**Come, visit, Lord of righteousness, The church that bears Your name.
Drive out our fear and unbelief, The pride that is our shame.
Renew the life we share, O Christ, In love and prayer and praise.
Then send us forth, our strength restored, To serve You all our days.**

The Sermon

- * (stand) **We Believe, Teach, and Confess: The Lord's Prayer**
(Introduction, Petitions 1,2,3, from *Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 323-324)

The Offering

(If you have not already done so, please register your attendance with the Friendship Form at this time and pass it down and back your pew, taking note of the names of those sitting with you and rejoicing in their presence here today.)

- * (stand) **The Offertory Song: "Create in Me"** (*LSB* pp. 192-193)

- * (stand) **The Responsive Prayer and the Lord's Prayer**

Pastor: Because our heavenly Father promises to hear our prayers and come to our aid, let us pray for ourselves, our fellow Christians and all people. For all the baptized, that the Old Adam in us by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For the true wisdom of God to fill our lives, that we hold tightly to the seemingly weak and foolish execution of Jesus because it is the power of God for our salvation, and that we humbly rejoice that God chooses what is foolish and weak to shame the world and grant life in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For zeal for the Gospel and our Father's house, that we passionately care for God's house as our Savior did, that we boldly speak His seemingly foolish but always saving Word of the cross, and that we be granted a never-ending desire to learn the Scriptures and receive His forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For our Christian lives, that we lead holy lives because Christ has cleansed our bodies to be God's temples, that we live by God's commandments because He has brought us out of sin's house of slavery, and that all our actions love both God and our neighbor, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For those who grieve, that our Father comfort them with His promises; for those who are sick, that our Father grant them peace now and healing at the right time; and for those who are dying, that our Father assure them that life in His presence awaits all who depart with faith in Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For those who govern in our world, that they see that God's commandments, written on our hearts, are not burdens but blessings that lead to improved lives and a better society; that they be guided to godly decisions; and that they defend life and uphold justice, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

For the faithful who receive Christ's body and blood this day, that the Holy Spirit grant us true repentance and faith and joy, because we are receiving Jesus, who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, let us pray to the Lord:

People: Lord, have mercy.

(Here special intercessions may be made. Each petition concludes:
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.)

Pastor: Gracious Father, as You have promised, hear the prayers we bring before your throne of grace through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Now hear us as we pray the way our Lord first taught us to pray:

People: (The Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

* (stand) The Blessing of our God (*LSB*, p. 166)

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you (+) peace (Num. 6:24ff)

People: Amen.

The Closing Hymn: #645 “Built on the Rock” (vs 1-5)

Parish Announcements

Organ Postludes

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MISSION MINUTE: It may take them a while. They’re not going to get it right off. It’s going to sound strange at first, “*foolish*” even (1 Cor.1:20). They’re going to be certain they’re just too “*wise*” for you. But you’re living proof just how wise God was and is to use this “*Christ crucified*” plan of salvation. You weren’t much - Paul reminds you (and me) - when God chose you. He did that on purpose, to bring down the high and mighty, those who are so sure of their own “*wisdom*,” in order that He might make them “*wise*” in Him, too. Never mind that “*Jews demand signs and Greeks wisdom*,” you just keep on “*preaching*” Christ crucified.

AND SPEAKING OF MISSION, please take a few minutes to welcome those **VISITING WITH US AT SHEPHERD THE LAST FEW WEEKS** If you know them, be sure to let them know how glad you were to see them at worship. And if you don’t, make it a point to meet them, to invite them to worship again or to Sunday Bible Class or Ladies’ Bible Study or *LifeLight* Bible Study.

Roberta & Rudolph

Margaret Quay - Whiteriver, AZ. Canyon Day Lutheran church

Lesta Cromwell, and S’Layna Bradley - Pinetop, AZ

Norm & Donna Schaefer - Show Low, AZ

SERVING IN GOD’S HOUSE THIS WEEK:

Organist: Beth M

Elder in Charge: Kevin D

Project Keep-In-Touch Mailing: Martee E.

WE INCLUDE IN OUR PRAYERS TODAY:

All those who are sick

All those who travel

All those who serve

Thanksgiving for the recent snain and row (sleet, ice, snowballs)

All those who mourn the recent passing of Evelyn H

Bob D - daily regaining strength following surgery

Spur Ministry - Pastor Steve Thompson

Immanuel Lutheran Church - Flushing, NY. The Rev. Dr. Simon S. Johann

Lutheran Church of the Messiah - Valley Stream, NY. Presently vacant.

March SS/BC Mission Project

LIFE THOUGHTS IN THE CHURCH YEAR (from Lutherans for Life): “God made a human body – even one crucifixion destroyed – His sanctuary (John 2:19). Is this why He bluntly forbids murder (Exodus 20:13), because every human body belongs to Him (Exodus 20:2)? Indeed, He has chosen what is weak, low, labeled “not a life” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28) to be His own forever. Neither sin nor flesh’s shortcomings nullify it.” (Prayer: Jealous God, possess us heart, body, and life that we may build up. Amen.)

"This is the week that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Sun	3/04	8:15 a.m. - Handbell Choir Practice 9:15 a.m. - Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30 a.m. - Divine Service 11:45 a.m. - "First Sunday of the Month" Potluck Luncheon
Tues	3/06	5:00 p.m. - Confirmation Class final examination
Wed	3/07	9:30 a.m. - Ladies' Bible Study 6:00 p.m. - Lenten Midweek Supper 7:00 p.m. - Lenten Midweek Worship
Sun	3/11	8:15 a.m. - Handbell Choir Practice 9:15 a.m. - Sunday School/Bible Class 10:30 a.m. - Divine Service - Holy Communion (2 nd Sunday) 11:55 a.m. - Dorcas Society "Mites for Missions" Coffee Fellowship

WHAT WE'RE NOT GIVING UP GIVING UP FOR LENT THIS YEAR IS WORSHIP. And, because Sundays are not a part of Lent, we'll be gathering together for Lenten worship every Wednesday night. Our Lenten midweek series this year is all about the Lord's many invitations to return to Him. Each week features one of those Old Testament invitations. Last week, we turned to the prophet Jeremiah as we contemplated the invitation of our God, "Return to the Lord, Who Will Restore You." This week, our invitation comes via the prophet Hosea: "Return to the Lord, Who Will Raise You Up". Each Lenten service begins at seven o'clock.

AND TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO WORSHIP, WE'RE SERVING UP SUPPER, TOO! Each week, our Lenten midweek service will be preceded by a Soup, Salad, or Surprise dinner right here at church, hosted by one (or more) of our "families" - singles, couples, or the kids, too. We meet right here at church, so you don't have to get the house ready for company along with dinner. Sign-up is easy; just see Pastor with the Wednesday of your choice. What to serve is just as easy; you may serve anything you choose! The three remaining Wednesdays in Lent this year are:

Lente M T W T F S S
Lente M T W T F S S
Lente M T W T F S S

WHERE ARE OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFERINGS OFF TO THIS MONTH? Sorry, we can't tell you yet. We only just decided this morning. We made up our minds in our Sunday School and Bible Class opening. We do it every month. We chose someone who is sharing the love and/or mercy of Jesus. Join us, and be a part of next month's decision.

WHAT WAS THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY? Christian Ed. - 14; Worship - 39 (Members 291, Friends 11, Guests 5) How many were here because you invited them? How many will return because you welcomed them?

CALL IT A REMATCH. ATHEISTS MAY GET A SECOND CRACK Three years ago, a federal judge in Wisconsin ruled that the long-standing clergy housing allowance violates the First Amendment. Judge Barbara Crabb declared that the \$800-million-a-year tax break is an unwarranted benefit for religion. But then the Department of Justice appealed, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned it on something of a technicality - ruling that the plaintiff - leaders of the atheist Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) had no legal standing in the case because they hadn't been damaged and could claim the "minister of the gospel" benefit for themselves. So they did, and when they were turned down by the IRS, they re-filed their suit. Last fall, Judge Crabb once again ruled in their favor. Now the case is being appealed again to the Seventh Circuit.

The clergy housing allowance allows "ministers of the gospel" -within certain limitations - to exclude from wages the amount they spend maintaining a household - mortgage, utilities, maintenance, property taxes, etc. Part of the defense of the allowance has been that "ministers" are considered self-employed by the IRS, which means that they don't have the benefit of an employer to split the required Social Security tax withholding (currently 15.3%) with them. As a result, they wind up paying 7.65% more of their income than other "employees."

“WE’LL TRADE YOU YOURS FOR OURS,” Turkish president Recep Tayyip pastor Andrew Brunson for

Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. Gulen has been living in exile in the U.S. since 1999. Nevertheless, he is accused of masterminding last year’s failed Turkish coup through his international network of followers. Brunson was jailed last October - following more than 20 years of living and ministering in Turkey - “suspected” - along with 50,000 other judges, lawyers, soldiers and journalists - of involvement in the coup. The offer was the first acknowledgment from the Turkish government that Brunson was in fact being held as a political prisoner.

IT’S NOT THAT THERE’S MORE OF IT. IT’S NOT THAT THERE’S MORE OF *THEM*. IT’S THAT, FRANKLY, THEY’RE DIFFERENT THAN THEY USED TO BE - WEALTHIER THAN THEY WERE THIRTY YEARS

AGO. The persecution conservative Christians are experiencing. From people who don’t like them - according to researcher George Yancey at the University of North Texas, typically the politically liberal, highly-educated, and less-religious. Yes, “Christian activists . . . pay a stiffer price for that animosity,” he reported in the *Review of Religion Research*, but that’s not because more people are opposed to them. Rather, it’s that those people are wealthier now than they were thirty years ago. Oh, and the election of conservative Christians doesn’t help, he notes. That only adds fuel to the opposition fire.

LIFE QUOTE OF THE DAY (from Lutherans For Life) “When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we ask God to ‘deliver us from evil.’ We ask Him to protect us against the callous evil of abortion, the taking of a human life. We are harnessed with the burden of belonging to a nation that practices this barbaric procedure and calls it a ‘right.’ May God have mercy on us.” (Chaplain (Lt. Colonel) Steven Hokana, Assistant Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) (LCMS)).

CELEBRATIONS THIS WEEK: Birthdays: 3/5 - Toni Russell. Anniversaries: next Sunday - 3/11 - Mark & Leslie Theiss.

AND JUST IN CASE YOU HADN’T HEARD:

“SHEPHERD OF THE MOUNTAINS LUTHERAN CHURCH MEMBERS, My thanks to all the friends who have remembered me and my family with cards and their love since the death of my son Andy. So many have sent cards and emails and maybe I’ll be able to thank you in person some day. I’m enclosing what was printed in church bulleting & someday I’ll tell you about all the letters from people Andy helped in his corn business and life I never knew about until now. Thanks so much and I’d like to pass these thoughts along: No matter what led you to where you are today, the Lord has a purpose for your life - Somebody needs to be loved by you. In Christian Love, Arleen French & family”

THEY’RE LIKE ANOTHER MEMBER, ANOTHER FAMILY, THRIVENT FINANCIAL FOR LUTHERANS. True, they don’t get to church that often - maybe only once or twice a year - but they’re very regular about sending in their offerings. In fact, they use direct deposit; they plop them right into our checking account at the Lutheran Federal Credit Union. Last week, they deposited another \$127.00. Thank you, TFFL, and thank you Thrivent members Dennis, and Kevin, and Patti and Mark for making the Choice™ for Shepherd of the Mountains.

You’re familiar with this one, right? Thrivent Financial for Lutherans offers insurance and financial services products at rates and returns competitive with the for-profit insurers and financial services companies. But TFFL is a fraternal organization, not a for-profit corporation, so, as long as it continues to distribute amounts equal to what it would have to pay as corporate income tax if it were a tax-paying corporation to its members (policyholders and investors) and its members’ causes (churches, parochial schools, mercy ministries, etc), it escapes corporate taxes. (Viva the fraternal, right!)

WE NOMINATED, AND WE ELECTED. In anticipation of this summer's English District - LCMS convention, we nominated incumbent the Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy for District President. Then we nominated the Rev. Daniel Pezzica for Vice-President of our Western Region. After that, we put forth the name of the Rev. Ted Laesch to serve in the seat Pastor is vacating on the District Board of Directors (ordained minister representing the Midwestern and Western Regions). And last, but not least, we chose Pastor to be our Voting Pastoral Delegate and Beth to be our Lay Delegate at June's convention in Ann Arbor, MI. (No one else had stepped forward, and we trusted them to vote with our interest in mind, just as they both have in the past. True, they won't be coming back to deliver an in-person convention report, but they'll let us know about anything that's relevant to us.

"I AM MOST GRATEFUL FOR YOUR RECENT AND GENEROUS GIFT OF \$91.75 FOR OWEN'S MISSION. This program remains very dear not only to Lutherans For Life but also to the scores of schools and thousands of students with whom we share it. The Touch of Life fetal models and the accompanying message we share provide a tangible and lasting impression of how precious every human life is to our God and Father. Rest assured that you are making the greatest investment in the next generation. As these children (and their parents and teachers!) learn that human beings have worth by God's acts of grace and not because of their own good works, they receive an everlasting hope and joy. . . . In truth and love, Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans for Life."

WHO JESUS IS . . . IN EVERY BOOK OF THE BIBLE In Matthew He is The Messiah, the King of the Jews. In Mark, He is the Wonder-Worker, the Servant. In Luke, He is the Son of Man, feeling what you feel. In John, He is the Son of God. In Acts, He is our Holy Ghost. In Romans, He is the Justifier. In 1 Corinthians, He is the Love that never fails. In 2 Corinthians, He is our Righteous-ness. In Galatians, He is our Redeemer from the curs of te Law. In Ephesians, He is Head of the Church. In Philippians, He is the God who supplies all our need. In Colossians, He is the Fullness of the Godhead bodily.

CLEAN UP GOD'S HOUSE DAY: You do *your* spring cleaning each year, but who does *God's*? Wouldn't it be great to spruce up His place here after the grime and dirt of winter and construction? Have you had a project you've had your eyes on - a touch-up here, a clean-up there, a tossing out of some accumulation there (think refrigerator and freezer and storage), a small improvement here? Well now's your chance. When can we get this all done? Before Easter - before Palm Sunday - would be the goal! You're welcome to work whenever it best fits your schedule, but we'd sure like to invite you to a grand group clean-up. Plus, it's a whole lot more fun that way! Our Church Council is mulling over dates and will choose the best of the bunch. If history repeats itself, we'll even toss in a lunch to really make a day of it! Watch for the well-placed job lists to start showing up. Your name next to a job gives you first crack at completing it; and for those jobs not on our list but on yours, well the Trustees' Suggestion Box would be a great place.

WILL THE TAX BREAK FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES COST THE CHURCH? Experts say it will. Researchers speculate that taxpayers won't donate what they can't itemize. They estimate that the recent doubling of the standard deduction for joint filers from \$12,000 to \$24,000 will reduce the number of those who itemize those charitable deductions from the current 30% of filers to a mere 5%. And that, they conjecture, could cause a drop of anywhere between \$5 and \$15 billion in charitable giving.

LADIES, MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT IN GREER: Wednesday evening, April 11th and Thursday morning, April 12th. Lunch after regular Wednesday Ladies' Bible Study until . . . well, you'll be back home by dinner on Thursday (if anyone at your house has made it, that is). This is a fun time in the Lord, ladies. We sing, we devote, we eat, we study, we share, we laugh; we celebrate what it means to be sisters in Christ. Mimi is taking names. Get yours in now, before anything else comes up. It'll be the best just-over-24-hours ever!

AND, MEN, MARK *YOUR* CALENDAR, TOO - FOR WEDNESDAY NIGHT AT LEAST. For we'll be doing "Men's Night" right here at the church. Yes, while the cats are away, we mice will play . . . a film that *isn't* a "chick flick." If you've a favorite that your wife doesn't like to watch with you because nobody falls in love in it or dies of a broken heart, bring it along; we'll vote on the manliest one in the bunch and watch it together. Come for dinner. We'll have meat like real men, and possibly even something else to go with it - like dessert. (This way, the kitchen doesn't get messed up and you have that much less to clean up before your sweetheart gets home again on Saturday.) Pastor will coordinate the food, so let him know you'll be coming.

IT'S TIME TO MAKE A CHOICE® AGAIN. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans members only have this month and next to direct all the Thrivent Choice® dollars they have accrued - from 2017 and from 2018 already. This is the time of year when almost all TFFL members will find dollars just waiting to be designated. So, go online at www.Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 1-800-847-4836, and say "Thrivent Choice" at the prompt (any time between before 6:00 p.m. CST, M-F). Any dollars not designated by March 31st will go into a hole in the bottom of the ocean or to the IRS or North Korea or someplace where you'll never see them again - rather than to your favorite ministry. (Remember if you do go online, a little clue when you're looking for SOTMLC. Just put in Pinetop, AZ at first - nothing else. SOTMLC will pop right up for you.) This has been a great program for Shepherd of the Mountains. Thank you all for your support. And make it a regular habit to be checking, for you never know when your investments and insurance products will generate you Thrivent Choice® dollars to be designated.