

Pastor's Thoughts

APRIL 2024



To all the saints at Holmes Lutheran Church, grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Lord was raised from the grave and is alive. We of all people are most blessed by that truth. In that truth, with faith in Christ, we receive the promise of life everlasting with our Savior. What a blessed thought!

The month of March literally blew by us. Today we look forward to the hope offered to us as the fresh smell of spring fills the air. The soil will soon be turned, and the seeds will be planted thus begins the season of waiting with contentment and humility. Trust our Father to bless us and our land with His providential care.

Waiting with contentment and humility is not something we are good at.

If you like the movie "Casablanca," you might appreciate this, if not maybe the mention will entice you to watch one of the all-time movie classics that is set in the backdrop of World War II. The movie begins with the following lines.

"With the coming of the second world war many eyes of imprisoned Europe turned hopefully, or desperately, toward the freedom of the Americas. Lisbon became the great embarkation point. But not everybody was able to get to Lisbon directly, and so a tortuous, roundabout refugee trail sprang up – Paris to Marseilles ...across the Mediterranean to Oran...then by train, or auto, or foot across the rim of Africa, to Casablanca in French Morocco. Here, the fortunate ones through money, or influence, or luck, might obtain exit visas and scurry up to Lisbon, and from Lisbon to the new world. But the others wait in Casablanca ...and wait...and wait...and wait..."

The act of waiting often is the breeding ground for anxiety. Anxiety in turn breeds frustration, frustration breeds impatience. One of the characters in Casablanca was waiting at Ricks Café. If you know the movie you know this was the place where all the drama unfolded. He said, *"Waiting, waiting, waiting. I'll never get out of here. I'll die in Casablanca."*

A good definition for contentment can be gleaned from the writings of puritan pastor Jeremiah Burroughs. In his book *"The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment"* he defines contentment as, *"That sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and finds delight in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."*

Scripture offers us many insights into God's character. One of His divine traits that is often overlooked is the truth that God rarely works in agreement with our timing. If I were to ask people, some might say, God is always late. The reasons for God's "lateness" can be numerous. Included in the reasons is that God wants to teach us the value of contentment and humility. Neither of those virtues come naturally to men and women whose lives are defined by human sin nature. Frustration builds inside of us when we cannot explain the reason why things take so long to get started or finish up.

Adam and Eve's sin boiled down to the strength of their pride. Discontentment with God's plan grew in the fertile soil of their sinful pride. The question to wonder about is since Adam and Eve were born without sin, and could not live with humility and contentment, how much more difficult is living with contentment and humility for us who have been born on this side of the fall?

Indeed, living with contentment and humility is difficult, very difficult. Yet by God's grace humility and contentment are possible. In the power of God nothing is impossible. How do we know that humility and contentment are possible? We know because St. Paul tells us,

Pastor's Thoughts Continued...

just that, as he writes to the Philippian church. Paul writes,

"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Philipians 4:11-13

Contentment and humility are not natural, contentment and humility are learned traits. Paul learned these traits as he was imprisoned for professing his faith.

This definition I mentioned earlier assists us as we search for wisdom for understanding why Paul was inspired by God to write about contentment. Paul learned contentment in every situation that he found himself in. The perfect example was him writing letters to churches from prison. Most of us find contentment in some situations but not in others. We know there are times we are called to suck it up, to grin and bear it. Sometimes that is a situation at work, a lot of times it is a situation that we experience within our own homes or churches. Maybe we are invited to attend a social gathering with people we don't see eye to eye with. Paul's situation was much worse than those I described, he was in prison, yet even there he found contentment.

Contentment must be learned; Contentment does not come naturally to people like us whose lives are defined by sin. Sinners inherit the trait of discontentment. Paul said it twice. Contentment must be learned. Each time he used a different Greek word for learned. One means "...to learn the secret, or, to learn the mystery of..." What is being taught is that contentment does not come naturally through normal sinful ways of thinking.

Contentment is God's gift given to sinful people like us, to learn contentment and humility means that we receive those gifts when we sit under the authority of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ***"We can do all things through God who strengthens us." Philipians 4:13***

I'll end the message by telling the story of Pastor Charles Simeon. He was the shepherd for the congregation at Trinity Church in Cambridge, England. He served the congregation for fifty-four years. At first the members of the church opposed him. For the first ten years of his ministry the members locked the pews. Anyone that came to worship was forced to stand or sit in the aisles along the back of the sanctuary. Pastor Simeon remained faithful to his call, he ministered to all that came. Simeon's biography written by H.C. G. Moule records these thoughts from Simeon recalling his ordeal with the church and the outcome that is credited to God.

"In this state I saw no remedy but faith and patience... It was most painful indeed to see the church with exception of the aisles, almost forsaken; but I thought if God would only give a double blessing to the congregation that did attend, there would on the whole be as much good done as if the congregation doubled and the blessing was limited to half the amount. This comforted me, many, many times. Without such reflection, I should have sunk under my burden."

Faith and patience prevailed. Simeon eventually saw the pews of the church emancipated and his pastorate at the church was blessed for forty-four more years. The passage from scripture that Pastor Simeon often fell back on was from ***Lamentations 3:25 "The Lord is good to those who wait on Him."***

It is good for us here at Holmes Evangelical Lutheran Church to wait on the Lord, in His time we will receive from Him a blessing that we humbly remain content waiting for.

Be blessed, be a blessing.

Pastor George

Home Circle

Wednesday, April 3

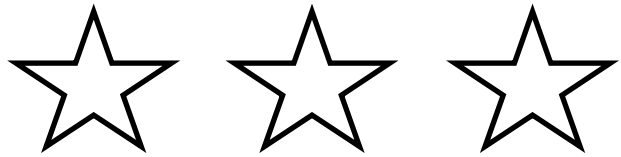
1:30pm

Devotion/Lesson: Naomi Lette

Hostess: Mary Jane Derscheid

Altar Flowers:

Jana Gangestad



Happy Birthday!!!

APRIL

1- Dean Larson

4- Logan Gangestad

11- Sarah Hill
David Wilson

13- Jim Gangestad

22- Barbara Jergenson

24- Duane Steffenson

30- Ryan Reed



MAY newsletter and calendar
items are due by
Thursday, April 18th.

Items can be emailed to:
holmeslutheran@gmail.com

Thanks!

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