

The Valley Evangel

Serving the Members and Friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale and Sun of Righteousness Lutheran Mission in Queen Creek

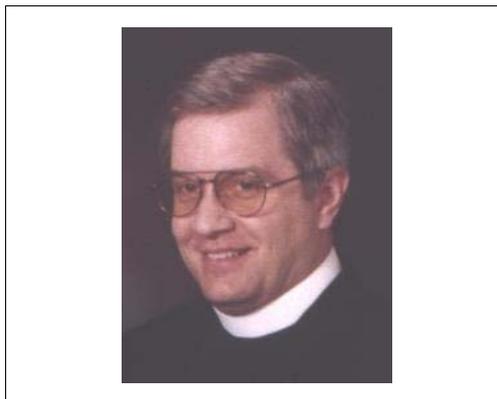


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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The season of Lent will once again be upon us as of February 21, which is Ash Wednesday. As has been the custom at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, a Service of Holy Communion, with the Imposition of Ashes, will be held that evening at 7 p.m. Also according to the custom at Redeemer, mid-week Vespers Services will be held on the other Wednesdays during the season of Lent, likewise at 7 p.m. A new addition this year will be the soup suppers to be put on by the Ladies' Guild, preceding the Vespers services at 6 p.m., beginning on February 28. The members and friends of Redeemer are, of course, encouraged to attend these services. The members and friends of Sun of Righteousness Lutheran Mission in Queen Creek are also cordially invited. (Unfortunately, we do not have the facilities in Queen Creek for parallel midweek services to be held there.)



Pastor David Jay Webber

Lent is a good time for us to consider our relationship with God. During Lent we reflect in a more intense way on our sinfulness, so that we will not take the Lord's goodness toward us for granted. And we reflect in a more intense way on God's mercy, and on the suffering of Christ by which our salvation from sin was accomplished. In humility and repentance we meditate on passages of Scripture like this one, from Romans 3:23-25: "...for all have

(Continued on page 3)

WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY TIMES

Scottsdale:

Sunday Divine Service: 9:00 a.m.
Refreshments after the Service
Sunday School & Bible Class: 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday "Bible & Theology"

Study Group: 7:00 p.m.
Loughran home in Scottsdale
(call or e-mail for directions)

Queen Creek:

Sunday Divine Service: 4:00pm
Sunday School & Bible Class: 5:15pm

Thursday Bible Study: 10:00 a.m.

Calvin home in Scottsdale
(Call or e-mail for directions)

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Psalm 51:4

From Martin Luther's Commentary on Psalm 51

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

This verse is differently expounded by different persons, and it has ever been considered, that this one little point is the greatest difficulty that is met with in the whole Psalm. Although, therefore, I leave it to others to go according to their own interpretations, yet I have a good hope that I shall be enabled to give the true and genuine meaning of the text.

This, then, I would first of all advise the reader to do—to bear in mind that which I observed at the beginning of the Psalm, that David is here speaking in the person of all the saints, and not in his own person only, not in his own person as an adulterer.

Although I do not say it might not be, that it was this fall which, as a medium, brought him under the knowledge of himself and of his whole human nature, and made him think thus: “Behold! I, so holy a king, who have with so much pious devotedness observed the law and the worship of God, have been so tempted and overcome by the inbred evil and sin of my flesh, that I have murdered an innocent man, and have for adulterous purposes taken away his wife! And is not this an evident proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than ever I thought it was? I who was yesterday chaste am today an adulterer! I who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, am today a man of blood guiltiness!”

And it might be that in this way he derived the sense of his entire sinfulness, from his fall into adultery and murder, and from thence drew his conclusion—that neither



Martin Luther—portrait by Cranach

the tree nor the fruit of human nature were good, but that the whole was so deformed and lost by sin, that there was nothing sound left in the whole of nature. This I would have the reader bear in mind, first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage.

In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained, which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the present: *Against thee only do I sin*; that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner; or, before thee I do nothing but evil continual; that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character—I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter.

Exposition of the Fifty-first Psalm, by MARTIN LUTHER, in "Select works of Martin Luther, translated by REV. HENRY COLE." Vol. I., pp. 51-197.

Psalm 51:1-13 (ESV)

To the Choirmaster, a Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

(Continued from page 1)

sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (ESV). One of the common ways in which Christians of various traditions remind themselves of the suffering of their Savior is to "give up something for Lent" – that is, to refrain from consuming a favorite food, or from engaging in a favorite activity. When we feel the desire to have or enjoy this favorite thing, and when we then follow through on our decision to deprive ourselves of it for a time, we are reminded – even if in a very small way – of all that Christ gave up for us, to redeem us.

But Lent is also a good time for us to consider our relationships with other people. Last year I became aware of a beautiful custom followed by many Christians, according to which, on the first day of Lent, they express repentance or apologies to each other for any offenses – known or

unknown – which may have been committed during the past year. And this mutual repentance is accompanied by mutual, fraternal forgiveness. In this way the Christians in a particular community or congregation can begin their observance of Lent together in a shared humility, and with a shared prayer that God in his grace will bless the season and all of them in the season. In my opinion this would be a great custom for us to follow, in our congregations and in the larger circle of our Christian friends.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us..." (ESV)

Pastor Webber

During Lent we reflect in a more intense way on our sinfulness, so that we will not take the Lord's goodness toward us for granted. And we reflect in a more intense way on God's mercy, and on the suffering of Christ by which our salvation from sin was accomplished.

Cross-Stitch Mission Rally this Month!

The annual Arizona-California Circuit "**Cross-Stitch**" mission rally will be held on Saturday, February 10, at Family of God Lutheran Church in Ft. Mohave, Arizona.

Members of the Ladies' Guild of Redeemer Lutheran Church, and other interested women from Redeemer and the Sun of Righteousness mission, are encouraged to participate. Details can be found on the ELS web site shown below.

On the following day, Sunday, February 11, the guest preacher at Redeemer and Sun of Righteousness will be the Rev. Steven P. Petersen, the Mission Counselor for our synod, who serves under the auspices of the ELS boards for home and world missions. After each service Pastor Petersen will also be meeting with the members and friends of each congregation, to discuss our present and future ministries, and possible ways in which the synod might be able to be of assistance or encouragement to us.

<http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/Members/swentzlaff/azrally>

Why I am a Christian

By Julie Martinez

For much of my young adult life, my early childhood religious training was essentially irrelevant to me. I remember going to Sunday School, hearing the stories about Avinu Avraham and the other heroes of the Bible, learning the Hebrew prayers, and going to services, but I was no longer involved in any way with my faith.

This changed when I got older, and I took my first trip to Eretz Israel. I went on an archaeological seminar, and discovered that those stories I had learned in childhood were not mere myth, but had actually happened, and in the places where the Bible said they had happened. When I returned home to Colorado, I discovered I had a new hunger to learn more about the God of my ancestors. I began by studying Hebrew again, and by studying the Bible again, seeing for myself all the delightful nuances of the Hebrew language that I had not seen as a child, and reading the rabbinic commentaries on the weekly parshot. I soon discovered that God was an awesome God, and that His word was clear. As such, I could no longer ignore Him!

I joined a fledgling Jewish congregation in the area, where we met on Friday nights to welcome the Sabbath. After services, we would sing the Kiddush, blessing the wine and bread, and I loved that feeling of community and closeness I shared with these other Jews. But spiritually there was still something missing. I thought that I just hadn't learned enough, and if I intensified my efforts to study and observe the law, that those things would bring me closer to God. So I just kept studying harder. The paradox slowly revealed itself that the more I learned about the law and its requirements, the harder it was becoming to observe it, and the further away from God I felt! I was still the same person with the same faults and no matter

how I tried, I couldn't seem to change that. At times, the law made me feel righteous, but deep down I knew that I really couldn't keep all these commandments all the time, or even come close, and I realized that my feelings of "righteousness" were actually pretty self-righteous.



Julie Martinez

My impressions of Christianity as a religion was much the same. I thought it was an ethical faith built upon the law and the prophets of Judaism, with some different teachings by it's founder, a first century rabbi with some radical ideas, Yeshua Ben-Yosef (aka Jesus). I read

some of his teachings as well, and I really liked some of them in Matthew about the law. In fact, I found them to be very Jewish!

About that time I met a Lutheran pastor, and we developed a friendship, spending many hours in his office discussing faith and practice of Judaism and Christianity. I learned from him that Christianity is not really about following the ethical teachings of Jesus as much as it was knowing him as God Himself. This was a new concept to me in many way, one that does not come intuitively!

I once asked what he thought Jesus' most important teaching was, expecting him to say, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength". After all, that was exactly Jesus' answer in Mark 12:29-30 when He was asked about the "most important commandment" in the law. Since Jews today still recite the V'ahavtah prayer every day, which begins with those words, I wanted to show him that Jesus was merely teaching traditional Judaism, and not a new religion at all! But Pastor Bolland surprised me with his answer. He simply quoted, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father

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Why I am a Christian

(Continued from page 4)

but through me.” (John 10:14) I remember sitting there for several moments in stunned silence, not knowing how to respond. Was this true? Was this why I had left the recent Yom Kippur services still wondering if I had really been forgiven? Was this why I often doubted that God heard my prayers?

On another occasion I asked him how Jesus could be the Messiah when He never stated that fact himself. He pointed me to John 8, where Jesus was speaking with some Pharisees and eventually stated “Before Abraham was, I am”, a curiously worded phrase in the English. He explained that the Greek verb parallels the Hebrew usage in the same way that God responded when Moses asked His name and was told, אֱהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֲהְיֶה (*Ehyeh asher Ehyeh* or, “I AM that I AM”) in Exodus 3:14. One of the first things I had learned in the Hebrew language was that the sacred name of God, יְהוָה is a derivative form of the Hebrew root verb “to be”. As such, it is much more than just a “name” of God, but it actually makes it very clear that God

“is” הוּיָה, *hoveh*

“was” הָיָה, *hayah*, and

“will be” יִהְיֶה, *yi-y’heb*,

all at the same time. Even without knowing any Hebrew, it is easy to see the structural similarity between these words. In fact, if one were to lay each form of the verb one above the other, you would see יְהוָה, the name of God! To hear that Jesus had used this same verb form in the local language of the time to describe himself rocked my soul. The meaning of Jesus’ comment would then have been very clear to the people of that time, who would have understood the full implications of this verb form. To them, He was claiming to be God! It certainly explained the violent response of the Pharisees in

this setting (they immediately picked up rocks to kill Him for the specific crime of blasphemy). Apparently the real point of Christianity was not that a first century Jewish rabbi claimed to be God and started his own religion, but that this Jewish rabbi, as God who became man while remaining God, did so in order to become the one final sacrifice for the sins of humanity, and that through his death and resurrection, men would finally have the full forgiveness of their sins.

These things helped me to realize that, as with Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures, there was more to Christianity than I had previously thought. I developed an interest in learning some Greek so that I could understand some of these subtleties as well. While these things in and of themselves did not “convince” me that Jesus was the Messiah or that He was God, I found that studying the Word and speaking about it with this pastor brought about an essential change in me, one in which I had no part other than to acknowledge it. It was a barely detectable change at first, but when I acknowledged it, I realized that I actually did believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God, and that through Him, my own sins (as well as all the personality faults I was trying so hard to correct through observance of the law) were forgiven in His sacrifice.

Since then, my faith in Jesus Christ has continued to grow, through the continued study and hearing of the Word of God. That faith was a gift from God, one that I did not choose myself, but was given to me by His Holy Spirit through His Word, which is powerful. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

(Isaiah 55:10-11 NASB)

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REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
FEBRUARY 2007

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><i>¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Psalm 51:10-13 (ESV)</i></p>				1 No Bible Class today	2	3
<p>4 Divine Service 9:00am Service (S) 10:30am Sunday School/ Congregational Forum (S) 4:00pm Service (Q) 5:15pm Bible Class (Q)</p>	<p>5 6:30pm Confirmation Class at Pastor's Residence</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 7:00pm Bible and Theology Study group Loughran home</p>	<p>8 10:00am Bible Study Calvin Home</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 CA/AZ Women's Mission Rally in Ft. Mohave, AZ (see page 2 of newsletter for more information)</p>
<p>11 Service of the Word * 9:00am Service (S) 10:30am Sunday School/ Congregational Forum(S) 4:00pm Service (Q) 5:15pm Congregational Forum (Q)</p>	<p>12 6:30pm Confirmation Class at Pastor's Residence</p>	<p>13 7:00pm Church Council</p>	<p>14 7:00pm Bible and Theology Study group Loughran home</p>	<p>15 10:00am Bible Study Calvin Home</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18 Divine Service 9:00am Service (S) 10:00am Ladies Guild 10:30am Sunday School/Adult Bible Class (S) 4:00pm Service (Q) 5:15pm Bible Class (Q)</p>	<p>19 6:30pm Confirmation Class at Pastor's Residence</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Divine Service with Imposition of Ashes (S)</p>	<p>22 10:00am Bible Study Calvin Home</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25 Service of the Word 9:00am Service (S) 10:30am Sunday School/Adult Bible Class (S) 4:00pm Service (Q) 5:15pm Bible Class (Q)</p>	<p>26 6:30pm Confirmation Class at Pastor's Residence</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 6:00pm Soup Supper by the Ladies Guild (S) 7:00pm Lenten Vespers Service (S)</p>			

(S) = Scottsdale (Refreshments in Scottsdale immediately follow the morning Service) (Q) = Queen Creek

Divine Service—Full Word and Sacrament Service with Communion on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Service of the Word—a brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public service on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

* On February 11, the Rev. Steven Petersen will be the preacher and will lead a congregational forum in lieu of Bible class in both Scottsdale and Queen Creek.

Christ Shines in Our Hearts by Faith!

Throughout the Bible, the Lord uses contrasts to teach us truth about ourselves and about Him. Love verses hate. Good verses evil. Light verses darkness. What do we learn about ourselves and about the Lord in the contrast of *"light verses darkness"*?

Darkness is the absence of light, but Scripture also defines darkness as an absence of good. In other words, darkness is everything purely evil.

Question: Is "evil" a "who" or a "what"? Evil is a "who" AND a "what." Evil beings do evil things. The devil is evil. Murderers, liars, thieves, and adulterers are evil, evidenced by their sins.

Since our finger is busy pointing right now, can we point out anyone else who is evil...?

Let's do the hard thing and point the finger at *ourselves*. That's right. Each of us is evil, full of darkness. How do we know this? We do evil things. We commit acts of darkness that come from our dark hearts of sin. We may not murder, but we hate, which is the sin of murder in the heart. We may or may not have committed adultery, but we have lusted, the sin of adultery in the heart. Gulp.



We evil people need pure light if we are going to see the light of heaven. We need the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, Jesus Christ! Jesus, the world's light, is not evil in the slightest way. Jesus, holy God himself, shrouded his glory in sinless human flesh and went to the cross, and died for sins. For three days He allowed His life to be extinguished so that evil people like us could see the light of heaven. But now He is arisen! His light will never go out!

Today His light shines out in the world through the Bible! Through the Bible, Jesus THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD seeks to shine in our hearts by bringing us to faith! He is the light of holiness and forgiveness which saves us from our dark sins! Whoever believes in him shall see the light of his glory in heaven!

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Produced by the ELS Board of Evangelism

A Reading From The Lectionary Joel 2:12-17 (ESV)

¹²"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing

infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" ¹⁸Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ¹⁹The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.

Redeemer Lutheran Church

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Sun of Righteousness Mission
Meeting in the "Multi-Purpose"
Room at Frances Brandon-Pickett
Elementary School
22076 E. Village Loop Road South
Queen Creek, AZ



We're on the internet!
redeemer.vze.com
sunofrighteousness.vze.com

Notice!

Audio recordings of
Pastor Webber's sermons
are posted on the internet
weekly and are available
through both church
websites above, and
published courtesy of
lutheransource.net



ABOUT REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

***Our mission is to
preach the Word of
God, both Law and
Gospel, faithfully in
accordance with the
Holy Scriptures and
the Confessions of
the Evangelical Lu-
theran Church; cor-
rectly to administer
the Holy Sacraments
for the forgiveness of
sins; and to reach out
to those who have not
yet come to faith in
Christ Jesus.***



Redeemer Lutheran Church