

The Valley Evangel

Serving the Members and Friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona

January 2019

Worship and Study

Sunday Divine Service: 9 am (refreshments after the service)

Sunday School/Adult Bible Class: 10:30 am

Thursday Internet Study Group: 7 pm (ask Pastor Webber for log-in information)

Friday Bible Study: 10 am at the Muth residence

Newsletter Staff

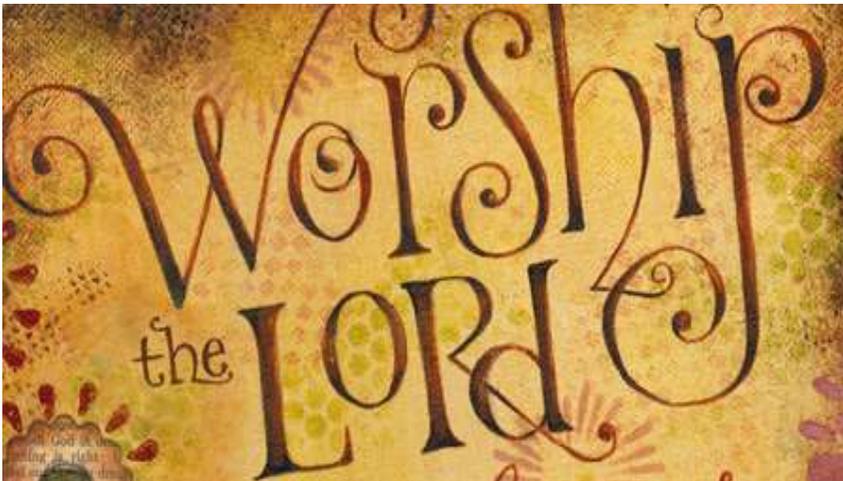
Editor: Pastor David Jay Webber

Contributor: Jennifer Price

Distribution: Lexie Morehouse

From the Pastor's Desk

The new year is upon us. And that means that the time for new year's *resolutions* is upon us. Usually a new year's resolution pertains to some improvement in a person's life or lifestyle. Few people resolve that on the first day of the year they will start smoking, but many people resolve that they will quit smoking. Few people resolve that, beginning January 1, they will start eating fatty foods and spending all their spare time on the sofa in front of the TV, but many people resolve that they will begin following a



healthy diet and start an exercise routine. Resolutions like this are a good thing. And what would be ever better than a *resolution* like this, would be a *fulfillment* of a resolution like this – for a whole year and beyond. But human weakness being what it is, people seldom stick with such resolutions. Their willpower wanes, their commitment slackens, and their unhealthy habits return.

Have you even thought about making a new year's resolution about your *spiritual* health? It might seem a

bit disrespectful to God, and perhaps a bit irreverent, to make a new year's resolution to attend church every Sunday, or to begin staying regularly for the Adult Bible Class after the service. But such resolutions are certainly not more disrespectful to God than skipping church for no good reason, and they are not more irreverent than skipping out on the education hour that your congregation makes available for your growth in faith and spiritual understanding, for no good reason. So why *not* make a resolution? Can it hurt?

It was not a new year's resolution, but on one occasion St. Paul made a resolution about a certain focus and emphasis that he intended to follow in his ministry, and about not allowing himself to be distracted from that focus and emphasis. He wrote in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2, NIV). If Paul can make

such a resolution – in keeping with his discernment of God’s will for him – then we can do likewise. We might not have the certainty of an apostle regarding the *details* of God’s plan for us, but *all* Christians can know that what St. Paul writes in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he writes also to us: “we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. *For this is the will of God, your sanctification...*” (4:1-3a, ESV). And in God’s name St. Peter writes in his First Epistle: “rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, *desire the pure milk of the word*, so that you may grow up into your salvation...” (2:1-2, CSB).

Anything that helps you in your relationship with Christ and in your Christian life – and that would certainly include attentive and regular participation in worship and in religious education – is a worthy matter for a new year’s resolution. And when you resolve in faith to desire for yourself the things that *God* desires for you, you can be assured that God will help you to stick to that resolution; and you can be assured that, through his gospel in Word and Sacrament, God will strengthen the faith that prompted the resolution.

The working of God’s Spirit within you will counteract and overcome the influence of your sinful flesh and of your human weakness, so that in your

commitment to fulfilling your resolution, and to growing in your knowledge of God and of his love and grace, you will be able to say what St. Paul said: “straining forward to what lies ahead, *I press on toward the goal* for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way...” (Philippians 3:13c-15a, ESV). The prayer that St. Paul offers to God the Father for the Ephesians, he offers also for you and for all Christians, as we yearn to be drawn ever closer to Christ, and to be filled ever more with his wisdom: “I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, *to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit*, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (3:16-17a, CSB).

How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither. (Psalm 1:1-3b, CSB)

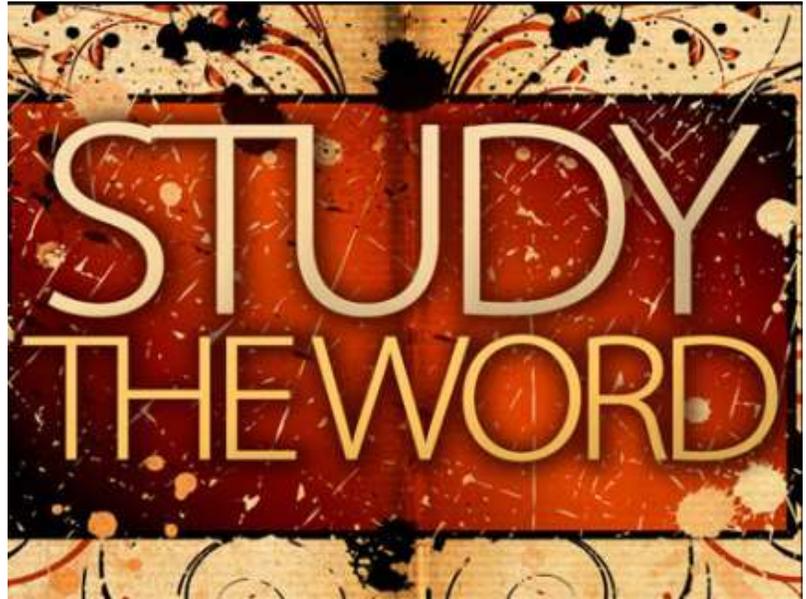
– Pastor Webber

Journey with Jennifer

Seventh of a Series Exploring the Holy Land

Bethesda ~ John 5

Scholars often mock Christians who set off to the Holy Land using the Bible as a kind of literal treasure map to find sites and buildings as described by the Biblical writers. However, it’s been Christians





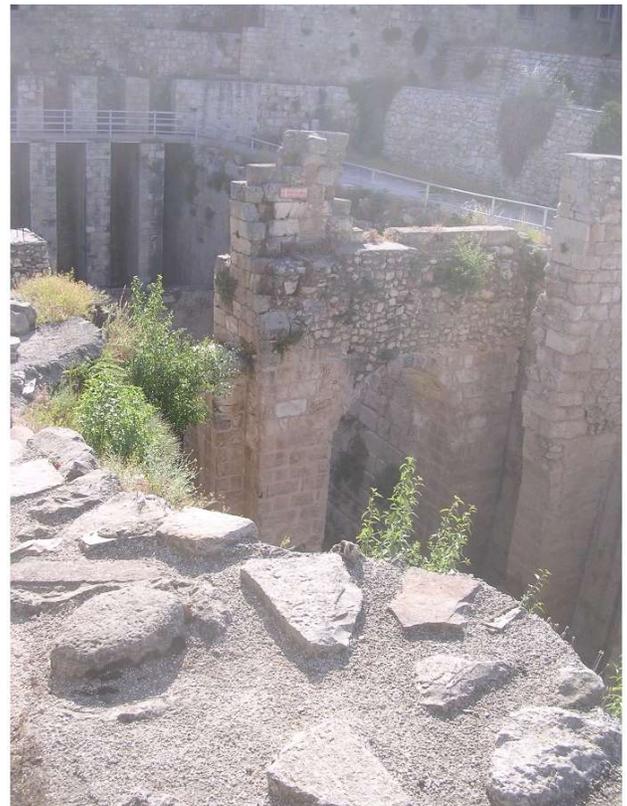
who often have had the last laugh. Consider the Hittite Empire (Uriah the Hittite, 2nd Samuel) that scholars said did not exist, until archaeological finds and writings were discovered in Turkey in the 1800s; or Luke’s exhaustive account of Paul’s sea travels in the book of Acts, that were later confirmed by nautical research of the currents and first century sunken ships in the Mediterranean. Over and over again, initial doubts or discrepancies about Biblical accounts prove to be unfounded.

In the 5th chapter of John, the Apostle John gave a very detailed description of the scene of one of Jesus’ miracles:

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. (vv. 2-9)

For nearly two thousand years it was believed by many that this passage was at best erroneous, or at worst false, because there was no pool in Jerusalem matching such a specific description. That is, until a German missionary, architect and amateur archaeologist, Conrad Schick, arrived in Jerusalem. He had a particular interest in the water systems of ancient Jerusalem, and in 1888 he found a massive retaining water basin. Most interestingly, the water basin was divided into two separate pools separated by a wall. The southern basin, featuring a set of broad steps, very likely served as a mikveh (a bath used for ritual immersions in Judaism), while the northern basin, which was larger in size, served as a reservoir to replenish continually the water of the lower pool. The four surrounding walls and a wall dividing the two pools matched the five porches description of John 5!

The Crusaders had previously identified this pool and built a church over it, covering the water basins—a church-building practice long established in the Holy Land when significant sites were identified (e.g. the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem). The photo showing a reconstruction of the pools and the porches indicates what it would have looked like in Jesus’ day. Comparing the reconstruction to my picture from 2007 you can see



one of the curved arches and the stately square columns on the perimeter.

The name *Bethesda* in Hebrew is “House of Mercy” or “House of Grace.” John 5 records the mystical and superstitious activity associated with the pool in first-century Jerusalem. It is possible that the pool was utilized by adherents of the cult of Asclepius, the Roman god of healing. If this is the case, I need not point out the irony that the one true God who *can* heal visited this very pool, yet did NOT use water from the pool to heal the paralytic! Jesus, the Word made flesh, through whom all things came into being (John 1:1-4), healed in the same way that God spoke creation into existence in Genesis 1. He used His voice to command the paralytic to rise, and he was healed. For this merciful infraction on the Sabbath, and for equating himself with God, John records the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Jesus (John 5:18).

John recorded only one miraculous healing at the pool of Bethesda. Yet he records that multitudes of invalids languished there. One might assume that there would be a clamoring for Jesus to heal them too, when word got around. But the Gospel writer is silent on whether any others from this pool sought healing in body and/or soul from Jesus. We see in the account both God’s grace and God’s sovereignty, in that He healed anyone at all, and yet only one, and recorded it for our edification.

Jesus, and later the Apostles, performed miracles, signs and wonders to confirm that Jesus was and is the Son of God, and that all who repent and trust in Him will have eternal life (Acts 2:38, Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 15). We today do not need miracles, signs or wonders, because we have the written Word of God. We look forward to an eternity of healed bodies and souls cleansed by Christ and the waters of Baptism.

For more photos and information see the following links:

- www.bibleplaces.com/john5/
- conradschick.wordpress.com
- aleteia.org/2018/10/12/the-biblical-bethesda-pool-myth-or-reality/
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittites
- paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH18881208.2.64.21 (the announcement of Schick’s finding of Bethesda in the New Zealand Herald, Volume XXV, Issue 9232, 8 December 1888)

– Jennifer Price

Ladies Guild News

Have you noticed our beautiful new Christmas trees? Both trees were purchased with funds that our congregation donated to support Ladies Guild activities. Now we have to find a home for our old trees. If you know of an organization that would like two nine foot tall trees please email Carole Clingan at cfc85213@gmail.com If no one responds by Sunday, January 6, these trees will be donated to a local thrift store.

De-decorating our sanctuary will commence on Sunday, January 6, following the Adult Bible Class and Sunday School. This event marks the end of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Epiphany. Please consider staying and donating your packing skills to this cause.

Our annual ELS Southwest Circuit Women's Mission Rally will be held at St Paul Lutheran Church in Escondido, California, on Saturday, January 19. Registration forms are posted on our mission bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. Pastor Webber will be one of the speakers. If anyone would like to attend this Rally, we can make arrangements for carpooling, discounting lodging costs and supplementing registration fees. Please email Carole Clingan if you are interested. As always, men are welcome and encouraged to attend. As in the past few years, the Ladies Guild will be collecting a congregational donation for this Mission Rally. This donation supports our 2019 Cross-stitch mission projects at home and abroad. If you would like to donate please make checks payable to Redeemer Lutheran Church, and designate the funds for “Mission Rally.” The deadline to donate will be Sunday, January 13.

Looking further ahead, the Ladies Guild will sponsor a “Diaper Drive” for the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center during the month of February. We plan to invite a speaker from Alpha to make a presentation on their many accomplishments in saving the lives of numerous unborn babies, and bringing the message of Christ to their mothers. Throughout the year, the Ladies Guild collects diapers and all layette items for Alpha. Just drop them next to our special Alpha Resource Center table in the Fellowship Hall and our dedicated Alpha Ambassador, Jennifer Price, will deliver the items to the Center.

– Carole Clingan

Alpha Update

Thanks to Redeemer Lutheran’s continuing support, the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center distributed 89 diapers and 39 blankets, among other supplies, during the month of December. They report that it seems when they are low on something, someone drops off just what they need. What a testament to God’s provision and blessing of this ministry.

By the numbers, Alpha saw a total of 62 clients, with 6 being new. Thanks to donations, they were able to share a special Christmas blanket or book with their clients. Alpha is most pleased to report two Baptisms!

Lastly, Alpha would like to offer “English as a Second Language” classes to some of their clients so that they can better understand the advocates and the “good news” of Jesus. Alpha is asking for our help. They are thinking of a small class size, a six-week Saturday morning course, for two hours. If you or someone you know is interested and can teach, please let me know and I will connect you with the Alpha team.

– Jennifer Price

Slavery and Freedom

This January marks the 156th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. It changed the federal legal status of more than 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the designated areas of the South from slave to free.

However, what few people know is that when this document was taken to the president for his signature, Mr. Lincoln took a pen, dipped it in the ink, moved his hand to the place for the signature, held it for a moment, then removed his hand and dropped the pen. After a little while, he tried again, but couldn’t.

Lincoln turned to his secretary and said: *“I have been shaking hands since nine o’clock this morning, and my right arm is almost paralyzed. If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. But if my hand trembles when I sign the Proclamation, all who examine the document hereafter will say, ‘He hesitated.’”* He then turned to the table, took up the pen again, and slowly, but firmly wrote *“Abraham Lincoln.”* He then looked up, smiled and said, *“That will do.”* –And with a stroke of a pen, millions went from slave to free.



Although human slavery will always be a dark moment in our nation's history, the truth is, an even darker moment remains over mankind's history.

It began when the very first man, Adam, willfully disobeyed his heavenly Father, ate from the forbidden tree and brought sin and death to all mankind of every generation.

From that time on, every single human being would be enslaved by sin and condemned to eternal death! And no amount of human effort or presidential proclamations would ever be able to break the slavery of sin and set mankind free.

Left to ourselves, all people were lost and condemned creatures, with only death and hell awaiting their eternal futures.

But our Creator-God had such an incredible love for mankind, that He immediately put into place a rescue plan in which He would send a Savior! He would send His one and only Son, Jesus!

Jesus is exactly what you and I, and everyone else – born in sin and condemned to die – needed the most!

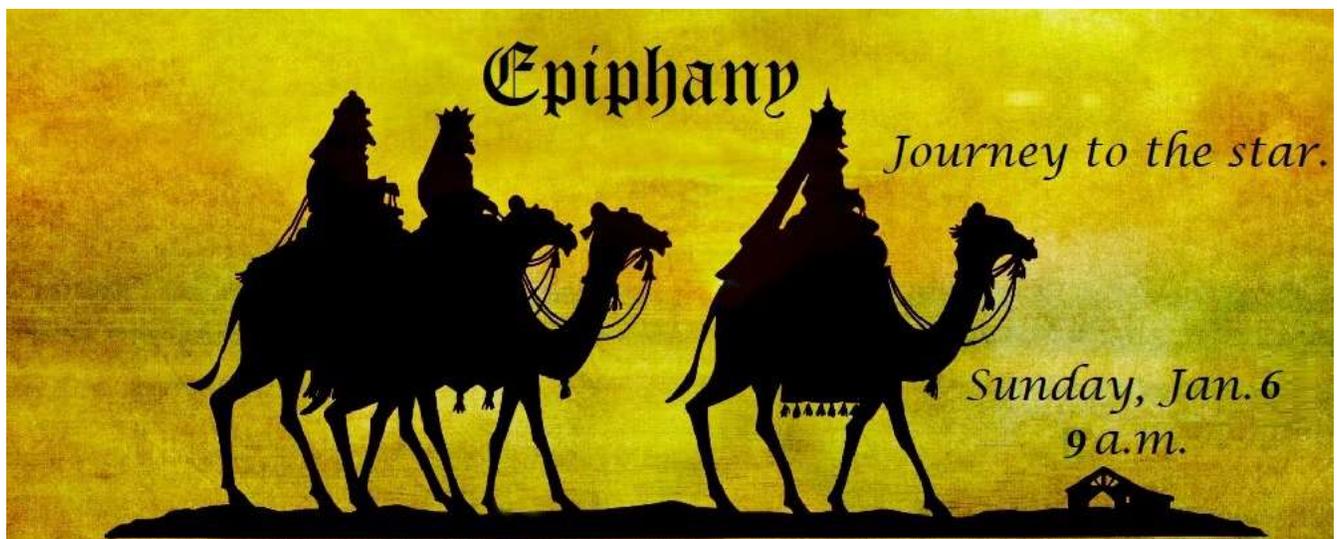
Jesus is the Promised Savior, who took our place, in life and death...absorbed God's wrath against our sins, into Himself...and then, by way of His death and resurrection, paid our debt and took away our sins. He washed us clean and robed us in His own righteousness!

As Paul declared, in Romans 5: "...through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One Man the many will be made righteous."

We've been set free, with our sins fully forgiven! We've been gifted new life for now, and the sure and certain hope of everlasting life that is to come!

You now have an amazing story to tell! Resolve, in this New Year, to tell **His story** to all who will listen!

– from the ELS Board for Home Outreach



Redeemer Lutheran Church

January 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 Internet Study Group 7pm	4 Bible Study at Muth residence 10am	5 Catechism class 4pm
6 Epiphany Divine Service 9am; Sunday School/Adult Class 10:30am; church de-decorating	7	8	9	10 Internet Study Group 7pm	11 Bible Study at Muth residence 10am	12 Catechism class 4pm
13 Baptism of Our Lord Divine Service 9am; Sunday School/ Congregational Forum 10:30am	14 Voters meeting at church 7pm	15 <u>Pastor</u>	16 <u>Webber in</u>	17 <u>California</u> Internet Study Group canceled	18 Circuit Pastors Winkel in Escondido CA	19 Circuit Mission Rally in Escondido CA; Catechism class canceled
20 Epiphany 2 Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am (Pastor Allen Schroeder); Ladies Guild; Sunday School/Adult Class 10:30am	21	22	23	24 Internet Study Group 7pm	25 morning Bible Study suspended	26 Catechism class 4pm
27 Epiphany 3 Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sunday School/Adult Class 10:30am	28	29	30	31 Internet Study Group 7pm		

“Divine Service”: Full Word and Sacrament Service with Communion, usually on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays of the month, and on major festivals.

“Service of the Word”: A brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public Service of the Word, usually on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.

Refreshments are served after the Sunday morning services.

January 2019

The Valley Evangel

Redeemer Lutheran Church
7670 East Jomax Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85266

Pastor David Jay Webber

Phone: 480-585-7002

or: 480-621-7394

Email: jaywebber@yahoo.com

First Class Mail

About Redeemer Lutheran Church

Our mission is faithfully to preach the Word of God, both Law and Gospel, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; correctly 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.



We're on the Internet!

redeemerscottsdale.org

Audio recordings of Pastor Webber's sermons, and of entire services, are posted each week on the church website.