

The Valley Evangel

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

March 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)

Newsletter Staff

Editor: Pastor David Jay Webber

Contributor: Jennifer Price

From the Pastor's Desk

The season of Lent will soon be upon us. A well-known custom of Lent is for Christians to give up something that they enjoy, and to deprive themselves of that enjoyment for a time, as a reminder of what God's Son gave up in order to come into this sinful world and to suffer and die for our salvation. This is not a bad custom. But I would like to suggest to those who are reading this newsletter, that this year for Lent, instead of making a commitment to *give up* something – or in addition to such a seasonal commitment – you consider making a commitment to *take on* something.

The “Issues, Etc.” radio program and webcast, based in the Saint Louis area, provides two hours of programming every weekday, on a range of subjects that are of interest to Confessional Lutherans. “Issues Etc.” is an independent non-profit entity, not owned or operated by any particular church body. It's host is a clergyman of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, and many of the guests are from the LCMS, although people from our Evangelical Lutheran Synod, from the Wisconsin Synod, and from other Lutheran and Christian churches also make regular appearances. The worldview within which “Issues, Etc.” operates is, however, clearly and squarely a Confessional Lutheran worldview.

The program is not broadcast over the air on any radio station in the Valley of the Sun, but its episodes are available to us through the Internet, either as a live feed (Monday through Friday from 3 to 5 p.m. Central Time), or through the extensive online archive of previous episodes that can be listened to at any time, and that are searchable according to speaker and subject. The “Issues, Etc.” website is easy to find: issuesetc.org Why don't we each commit ourselves to listening to at least an hour of this programming each day? We can listen to audio files from the archive while we exercise, while we drive, while we do housework, while we shower or bathe, pretty much while we are doing anything that does not require a lot of conscious thought otherwise.

The topics are wide-ranging, and so there will inevitably be material about things you are particularly interested in, whatever that might be, especially if you take into account the fact that many years worth of broadcasts are available to you in the archive. Examples of subjects that have been addressed just within the past week or so include an interview with Chris Rosebrough on the 25th anniversary of the so-called “Toronto Blessing,” a discussion with William Weinrich of the life and faith of the early church martyr St. Polycarp, a discussion of Lutheran ethics and a Lutheran way of living with Joel Biermann, an interview with Barbara Helmkamp on creation and education textbooks, a discussion with Terry Mattingly of the media coverage of the Vatican conference on sexual abuse by clergy in the Catholic Church, an interview with Robert Zagore on the church's humanitarian work and “finding our neighbor,” an interview with Jonathan Fisk about the Book of Proverbs, an interview with John Maxfield on Luther's Lectures on the Book of Genesis, a review of an upcoming Sunday School lesson about the calling of Philip and Nathanael by Tom Baker (based on the CPH curriculum we



use at Redeemer), and a review of the lessons for the upcoming Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany by Carl Fickenscher (based on the lesson series we use at Redeemer). (As an aside, I personally know five of these speakers!)

St. Paul encourages us in his Epistle to the Philippians: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (2:8-9, ESV). A discipline of listening to the doctrinally-sound and informative programs produced by “Issues, Etc.” will help us comply with, and fulfill, the apostle’s request. I know that several of the members and friends of the congregation already listen to these broadcasts, and have learned a lot from them. During the season of Lent – and beyond the season of Lent – join their ranks!

– Pastor Webber

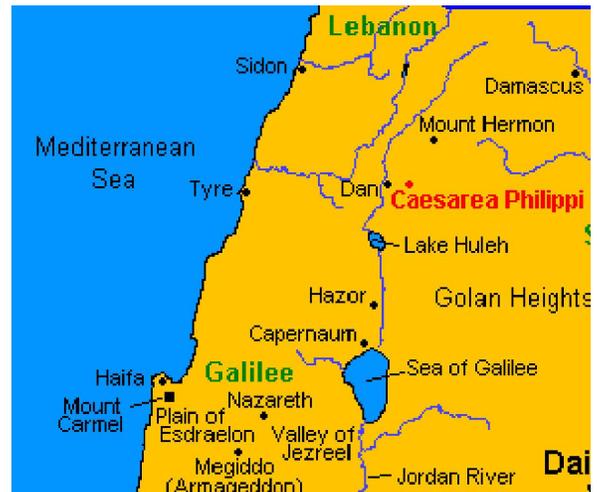
Journey with Jennifer

Ninth of a Series Exploring the Holy Land

Caesarea Philippi

“The most important thought you will have today is what you think about Jesus.” This oft-quoted statement by Professor Bingham during my seminary education still echoes daily in my mind. The answer to the question determines whether one is eternally lost or saved. It divides orthodox Christians from Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others, on the subject of the nature of Christ and whether Jesus has the power to save. Professor Bingham was not the originator of this question. He was simply paraphrasing the words of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago at a site called Caesarea Philippi.

Towards the end of Jesus’ three-year public ministry (33 AD), Jesus and the disciples were in northern Galilee on the slopes of Mt. Hermon, where one of the springs of the Jordan River originate. The location had multiple names in its history, many associated with pagan worship. By the time of the Herodian dynasty it was known as Paneas, in honor of the Greek god Pan. When Philip the Tetrarch, one of Herod the Great’s sons, made improvements to the city in the first century, he renamed it Caesarea Philippi to distinguish it from his father Herod’s Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast. The name Caesarea refers to the Roman Caesar, so the name literally means Philip’s city in honor to the Roman Caesar, who at the time was Augustus. Today the city is known as Banias, a restoration to its original name Paneas, but transliterated from Arabic.



The site’s connection to pagan worship is due to the massive cavern, also called Pan’s Grotto, from which a spring of water originates. How interesting (and sad) that a desire to thank the divine for water, a critical component for life in all forms, was associated with beliefs that condemn one to eternal death! The remains that give evidence of pagan worship at this site are numerous: from the niches carved in the cliff face walls around the cavern to the temple ruins that date to Herod the Great. The niches held statues and had names carved into them as a testament to those who paid their “indulgence” to honor the Greek gods.

The Synoptic Gospels each record the pivotal conversation that took place near, if not in, Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13-20; see also Mark 8, Luke 9):

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

How ironic it is that Jesus should elicit this statement of faith in the vicinity of a site that had been a spiritual stumbling block for ancient Israel and the first century population to which He ministered in Galilee – his home for most of his earthly life. Furthermore, the name of the city represented the praise of mortal men, not of the immortal. It was named for both the governor of the region, Philip, and the Roman Emperor, who himself sought to be the peoples’ object of adoration, praise and worship. Unlike these mortal men, Jesus was, and is, fully God and fully man, the only one worthy of men’s praise, and who alone could pay the penalty for sin and make possible the eternal life that all men crave yet seek vainly with works.

No wonder Jesus chose this place to elicit a statement of faith from His disciples, and contrast His being the Son of the Living God with the dead stone and man-made statues and temples frequented by many. The cavern was also believed to be an entry to Hell, which seems at odds with the life-giving water that inspired pagan worship, but may also be the reason Jesus uses the term “gates of Hell” in verse 18, to highlight the power of Christ’s church (the called-out ones) in this world. Also in contrast to the earthly water from the Grotto of Pan that leads only to death for its worshippers, earlier in his ministry Jesus offered the Samaritan woman at the well living water from the spring that wells up into eternal life (John 4).

The discourse between Jesus and his disciples near Caesarea Philippi highlights another critical element of salvation in addition to the nature of Christ. It is the Father who saves and calls His children to Him. When Jesus indicated that Peter – Simon Bar-Jonah (Simon son of Jonah) – had answered correctly that Jesus is the Son of the living God, He indicated this confession had been made possible by Jesus’s own Father: not by Peter’s own ability to reason, or with help from men, but as a spiritual work accomplished by God. In Dr. Martin Luther’s seminal tome, *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther argued the same exclusive saving power of God against the Pelagian/semi-Pelagian theology of Erasmus of Rotterdam, who argued that humanity plays an active role in obtaining its salvation. Sadly, this theological error of works-based salvation is as rampant in the church today as it was in the 16th century. Christians would be wise to guard against it and instead cling to the grace that God has made possible through faith in Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. Through no one else can one come to the Father (John 14:6).

The discourse near Caesarea Philippi marked a turning point in Jesus’ ministry with His disciples – a fitting observation at this point in the church calendar year as we are about to enter Lent. Matthew (16:21-28) goes on to record that

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Matthew 17 goes on to record that six days later on a “high mountain” – believed to be nearby Mt. Hermon – Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James and John, accompanied also by Moses and Elijah. Note that some of the people during Jesus’ ministry thought that Jesus was himself Elijah come back to earth. I’m certain it is not coincidental that Peter, who made the statement of faith at Caesarea Philippi, and Elijah – the real Elijah – are



witnesses to the transfigured Christ: an anticipatory glimpse of Jesus' post-resurrection glorified condition.

Those to whom God has revealed that Jesus is the Son of the living God, both then and now, are warned that there is a cost to standing against the idols and false religion of this world. Then it was springs of water, stone temples, statues and incense. Today it's the altar of "tolerance" and pantheism. John recorded in the 15th chapter of his Gospel that Jesus warned His disciples that the world will hate them as it hated him. Satan is out to destroy and twist God's good gifts to mankind, like water, to the destruction of many. May we humbly seek His guidance, perseverance, and endurance, in a world that grows ever more hostile to the truth of God's Word and of His Son, Jesus Christ.

www.bibleplaces.com/banias (Caesarea Philippi, a.k.a. Banias)

www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2012/04/17/The-Temple-of-Caesar-Augustus-at-Caesarea-Philippi.aspx

www.monergism.com/blog/key-quotes-luthers-bondage-will

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesarea_Philippi

– Jennifer Price

Library News

Donations to the church library from Parker Fox:

Lutheran Worship Little Agenda 1985

Lutheran Worship Little Agenda has proven to be an effective resource for pastors and other professional church workers over the years. This is an excellent tool for ministering to the sick, hospitalized, or shut in members of your church and community. (Concordia)

Luther's Small Catechism, with Explanation (2005 edition) Martin Luther

Written by Martin Luther in 1529, the Small Catechism provides a brief, clear summary of God's Word on the essentials of the Christian faith. In question-and-answer format, it explores the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine and includes daily prayers, a table of duties for Christians in their various callings, and a guide for Christians as they prepare to receive Holy Communion. An explanation designed to help readers understand and apply Luther's Small Catechism has accompanied editions of the catechism since the early days of Lutheranism. (Concordia)

Faith Active in Love; An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther's Social Ethics George W. Forell

This study, the product of ten years of research, is one of the more significant works on Luther's thought, indeed, on Christian social ethics in general, to be published in recent years. Traditionally, the study of Martin Luther has centered in Germany and later in Scandinavia, with the United States lagging behind. Dr. Forell's book helps shift this center to America. (Amazon)

Luther's Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church Daniel Olivier

Luther's Faith presents a compelling assessment of Luther's theology from an ecumenical perspective. The author (a French Roman Catholic) explores the various nuances of the Reformer's thought from the vantage point of the central evangelical affirmation of justification by grace. In so doing, he wrestles with such pressing and difficult issues as the contemporary role of the papacy, the Roman sacramental system in the light of Luther's strictures, and the prospects for meaningful Roman Catholic-Protestant dialog. The major thesis of this book is that Luther's chief contribution to the religious life of the Reformation was his rediscovery of the Gospel with its liberating message that faith or trust in Jesus Christ as Savior is the all-sufficient means for salvation. (Concordia)

Donations to the church library from Donna Lee:

Devotional Thoughts on Favorite Hymns James H. Robinson
Experience popular hymns from new and eye-opening perspectives with *Devotional Thoughts on Favorite Hymns*. (Amazon)

Cling to the Cross: A Devotional Book for Teenagers Mark A. Bartels, editor
Short devotions for teens, published by the ELS Youth Board

Martin Luther's Little Instruction Book: A Classic Treasury of Timeless Wisdom and Reflection
This treasury of the Great Reformer's life and writings will encourage you to understand all that you possess in Christ. (Amazon)

Donations to the church library from Brenda Eldred:

Has American Christianity Failed? C. Bryan Wolfmueller
Wolfmueller sounds the alarm against the false teaching and dangerous practices of Christianity in America. He offers a beautiful alternative: the sweet savor of the Gospel, which brings us to the real comfort, joy, peace, freedom, and sure hope of Christ. (Concordia)

Man Up!: The Quest for Masculinity Jeffrey Hemmer
In the person of Jesus Christ, God became man. What Adam lost in his rebellion, Jesus restored in His Incarnation. Jesus is the perfect man. His example sets the paradigm for perfect masculinity. But more importantly, His sacrifice obtains forgiveness and mercy for the rest of us. Men in all stages of life will appreciate this refreshing perspective – whether you're searching for footing in this crazy culture, seeking a godly relationship with your wife, or looking for guidance on raising children. (Concordia)

Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: 12 False Christs Matthew Richard
When's the last time you took a hammer and a chisel to the Jesus of the Bible and formed Him into your own personal Jesus? *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* not only reminds us who the real Jesus of the Bible is, but it also reveals to us twelve false christs who are embraced, loved, promoted, and revered – even by well-meaning Christians. (Concordia)

Another new book in the church library:

People's Bible Commentary: Job Rudolph Honsey
Christ-centered Bible truths unfold as you read this volume, in a series of commentaries designed for spiritual growth and reading enjoyment. These trustworthy commentaries help you comprehend what you've read in Scripture as well as apply it to your life. (Concordia)

The Vera Heminger Collection

Vera Heminger was a very active member of Redeemer. She was also an avid reader, and an assiduous student of theology, history, apologetics, and other subjects that pertained to her Christian faith. She passed away after a brief illness on January 1, and we will all miss her greatly. In her memory, and in honor of her love for our congregation, over 80 books from her personal library were donated to the Redeemer library by her husband David. Other books were donated to the libraries of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota, and of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Nyamira, Kenya. In the next few issues of the *Valley Evangel*, our parish librarian Susan Muth will include descriptions of the books that have been added to our parish library from Vera's library. Many of them are on the subject of apologetics, and can be useful to us as we prepare ourselves to defend and explain the Christian faith to an increasingly secular and materialist society – something in which Vera, as an adult convert to the faith, took a great interest. Blessed be her memory among us, and her legacy to us.



Ladies Guild News

Have you noticed two new sign-up sheets located on one of the snack tables in the Fellowship Hall? The Season of Lent is fast approaching... Ash Wednesday is March 6, and Wednesday Evening Vespers – preceded by a soup supper – will start on March 13 and continue through April 10. The Ladies Guild is looking for ten volunteers to bring their favorite soup for the congregants to enjoy at the these weekly soup suppers. Volunteers can deliver their soup at the Fellowship Hall by 5:45 p.m. on the Wednesday for which they have volunteered, or store their soup in the kitchen refrigerator on the preceding Sunday. Besides soup we have been blessed with a variety of chilies, chowders, gumbos and thick-as-stew soups at our past meals. Please see Sue Muth, our Fellowship Chairperson, to discuss details concerning the delivery and serving of your soup. Soups containing seafood, e.g. clam chowders and gumbos, should be cooked on the Wednesday they are served and not stored in the Fellowship refrigerator. Volunteers are not restricted to the ladies of the congregation; we have enjoyed excellent dishes brought by the men of congregation for prior Lenten Season suppers. Please sign our sheet and share the enjoyment of your favorite soup!

Easter lilies are an important decoration in the chancel for our Lord's Resurrection Day. Please sign our sheet if you would like to purchase Easter lilies to decorate the Altar on Easter Sunday. All lilies are \$10 each and will be available for pick up after the Easter Sunday Service for you to enjoy at home. You can attach your payment to the sign-up clip board on the snack table, or give your payment to Carole Clingan or Marilyn Bonnell.

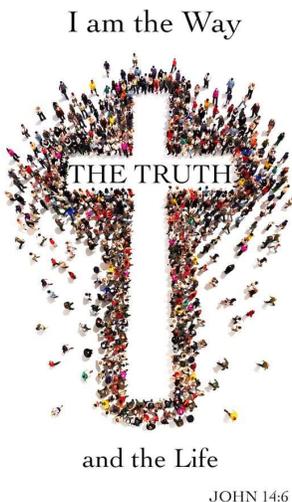
Have you noticed a large "Diaper Drive" sign and a vehicle, masterfully constructed from baby supplies, placed on a table in the Fellowship Hall? On Sunday, March 24, our congregation will be honored with a presentation from Kay Retberg, Director of the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center. Kay has inaugurated many new programs at Alpha, and will discuss expanded opportunities for congregants to become Alpha volunteers. Every year our congregation sponsors a diaper drive to help restock this much needed commodity for Alpha's clients. However, diapers and layette items are needed throughout the year. If you can donate things that would be useful to new mothers during the remainder of the year, just drop off your item at our Alpha Center table located in the Fellowship Hall. If you have a larger item to donate, speak with Jennifer Price about the best way to get your gift to her. Jennifer is our Alpha Ambassador – and is also the master vehicle designer! – and will be happy to deliver your donations to the Alpha Center.

Thank you!

– Carole Clingan, Ladies Guild President

Christianity Is Radically Different

Why should a person be a Christian and not a Muslim, Buddhist, or a follower of another religion? The answer: Because Christianity is true. Our society today struggles with this answer. It views all religions as basically the same and therefore as different perspectives of the truth. This view of world religions cannot be true. Most world religions teach that a person reaches heaven by doing something, such as gaining certain knowledge, leading a good life, atoning for your wrongs, etc. The chief thought is that you have to save yourself.



Christianity is radically different. It is not like other religions. It does not teach what the other world religions teach. Christianity teaches that you can't save yourself. Because of your sins and failure to lead a good life, you should be punished. However, God intervened to save you. In Jesus, the Son of God became a man to live and die in your place. He lived the good life that God desires, as your substitute. Through his death on the cross, He suffered the punishment that your sins deserve, as your substitute. God has forgiven all of your sins, no matter how great they may be, through Jesus' perfect life and innocent death. God loves you and gives you salvation as a free gift. You don't earn it. God gives it.

How can you know that this is true? Jesus' life and death are not the whole story. Three days after he was killed he rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection proves that Christianity is true, and much more. It proves that Jesus is your Savior from sin. It proves that God the Father has accepted his perfect life and innocent death as your substitute. It is just as Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6).

Gather with us this Sunday to learn more about Jesus and what he has done to be your Savior.

– from the ELS Board for Home Outreach

Redeemer Lutheran Church

March 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Catechism Class 4pm
3 Transfiguration Divine Service 9am; Sunday School & Adult Class 10:30am	4	5	6 Ash Wednesday Divine Service w/ imposition of ashes 7pm	7 Internet Study Group 7pm	8	9 Catechism Class 4pm
10 Lent 1 Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sunday School & Adult Class 10:30am	11 Church Council 7pm at church	12	13 Soup Supper serving from 6 to 6:30pm; Vespers w/ spoken Communion 7pm	14 Internet Study Group 7pm	15	16 Catechism Class 4pm
17 Lent 2 / St. Patrick Divine Service 9am; Ladies Guild meeting; Sunday School & Stewardship Presentation by Pr. Dan Basel 10:30am	18 <i>Pr. Webber in MN</i>	19 <i>for DC meeting</i>	20 Soup Supper serving from 6 to 6:30pm; Vespers w/ spoken Communion 7pm (Pr. Dan Basel)	21 Internet Study Group 7pm	22	23 Catechism Class 4pm
24 Lent 3 Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sunday School & Presentation on the Alpha Center by Kay Retberg	25	26	27 Soup Supper serving from 6 to 6:30pm; Vespers w/ spoken Communion 7pm	28 Internet Study Group 7pm	29	30 Catechism Class 4pm
31 Lent 4 Divine Service 9am; Sunday School & Adult Class 10:30am						

“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.

March 2019

The Valley Evangel

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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.