

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

In the historic church year, the four major festivals of Christ are Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Ascension. These observances commemorate events in the life of Jesus that are of fundamental importance for our salvation. Such festivals historically have served as teaching tools, as worshipers are "catechized" by the lessons, hymns, prayers, and sermon in the meaning of the events that are recalled on that day. Such festivals have served also as opportunities for special thanksgiving and devotion toward God, and for the renewal and strengthening of faith that takes place in the reception of the Lord's body and blood on those occasions.

In modern times, however, when these festivals happen to fall on a day other than Sunday, they are, sadly, usually neglected. Christmas is a lone



Pastor David Jay Webber

exception to this rule, because of the significant place that this celebration has assumed in the larger society. But in regard to Epiphany (which commemorates the visit of the wise men) and Ascension (which commemorates our Lord's session at the right hand of the Father), it is likely that few of us have ever attended a mid-week service dedicated to the remembrance of these events. Epiphany falls on a day other than Sunday about six-sevenths of the

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WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY TIMES

Scottsdale:

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

Queen Creek:

Sunday Divine Service: 4:00 p.m.
Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday "Bible & Theology" Study Group: 7:00 p.m.

Loughran home in Scottsdale

Friday Bible Study: 10:00 a.m.

Calvin home in Scottsdale

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The Hymns We Sing

By Carol Webber

This spring, I've had an opportunity to experience the hymns of our church the way a newcomer to our congregation might. I've been auditing a graduate level course on "Hymnology" at the university where I work, which has focused on early hymns translated from Syrian, Greek and Latin sources, and continuing through hymns from the Lutheran chorale tradition of the 16th and 17th centuries. The professor brings a unique perspective to this course. He was raised as a Lutheran, and has a greater than average familiarity with *The Lutheran Hymnal*, since it was the hymnal with which he grew up. But he is now a member of a Latin-Rite Roman Catholic congregation, and as such is passionate about hymns from pre-Reformation sources.

It has been interesting to learn how many hymns familiar to most English-speaking Christians are actually translations, based on texts from the earliest centuries of the Christian Church. Many were written in defense of key doctrines during times of theological controversy. Some were penned by authors who suffered greatly for their convictions. Though the writers' bodies have long crumbled back into the dust of the earth, their sacred poetry continues to live on in the church's song.

The class was small, consisting of only a dozen students, and scheduled to be held in one of the lower back classrooms of the Music Building. "They wanted to hide away the Christians," our professor joked with a twinkle in his eye. But there was truth in his jesting; most members of the class seemed to be active members of churches from a variety of backgrounds – Episcopalian, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic. "Do you know this one?" our professor would ask, after having given us the background on a particular hymn. "No? Let's sing it then!" Several class members are pianists or organists, so one of us would be asked to accompany. I found it delightful to think that even on one of the largest state university campuses in the nation, we were beginning the day by studying and singing hymns!

As our course "textbook" we used an Episcopal hymnal, which often presented a "plainsong" musical option for the more ancient texts. We would sing these with a certain amount of hesitation, unfamiliar with the modal scale intervals so different from our usual "Major key" or "Minor key" orientation.

At mid semester we transitioned into studying the great Lutheran chorales. I was interested to learn how many of the chorales were not completely new compositions, but re-workings of existing German or Latin melodies or liturgical texts. Luther, in particular, saw great benefit in retaining what was worthy in the musical tradition then familiar to Christians. Many of his hymns used as their starting point the basic text and melody of a medieval canticle or sequence. But he enlarged upon the original, adding verses which served as mini-catechism lessons, and always pointing to the person and works of Christ as the true hope of the Christian.

Our professor explained one day that "A Mighty Fortress" (TLH #262) is probably the most widely sung of all chorales, but perhaps the least understood. "How would you characterize this hymn?" he asked. "Triumphant," "militaristic," "a battle hymn against the Papacy," were some of the answers proposed. "Look at the words," he continued, "Have any of you thought about this primarily as a hymn about the devil?"

I remember excitedly raising my hand and answering, "Yes." I explained how many Lutheran churches historically sing "A Mighty Fortress" not only on Reformation Sunday, but also on the First Sunday in Lent, when the gospel text recounts the devil's temptation of Christ in the wilderness. (I noticed the professor jotting this down in his lecture notes.)

When discussing "From Depths of Woe" (TLH #329), Luther's hymn version of Psalm 130, the professor pointed out the centrality of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and read aloud verses 2 and 3:

Thy love and grace alone avail
To blot out my transgression;
The best and holiest deeds must fail
To break sin's dread oppression.
Before Thee none can boasting stand,
But all must fear Thy strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

Therefore my hope is in the Lord
And not in mine own merit;
It rests upon His faithful Word
To them of contrite spirit
That He is merciful and just;
This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

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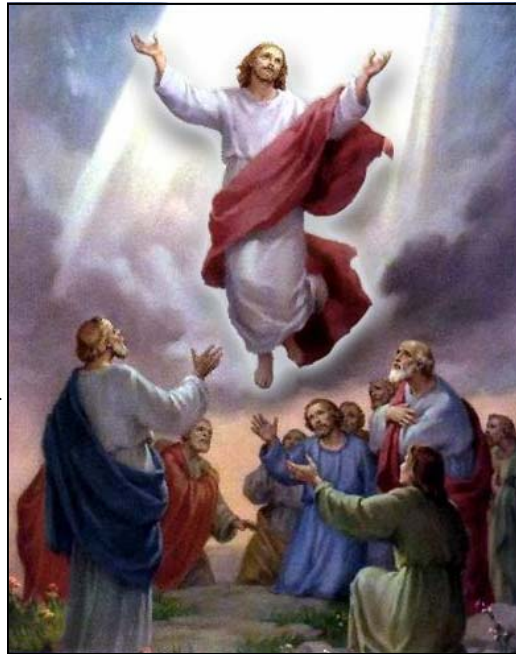
FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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time. Ascension always falls on a Thursday. In fact, we have probably not even had an *opportunity* to attend such a service, even if we might have been so inclined. Most Lutheran churches nowadays seldom schedule them. With all the busyness of our contemporary lives, such observances, in time, seem gradually to have just dropped off the calendar. Perhaps due to skepticism that anybody would come, mid-week services for Epiphany and Ascension have not been scheduled at Redeemer Lutheran Church either – until now!

On Thursday, May 1, at 7 p.m., a service of Word and Sacrament will be held at Redeemer to celebrate the Ascension of our Lord. We don't really need to let this day pass unnoticed. The occasion is important enough to mark with a worship service, to give the members and friends of the congregation a chance to do what their forebears in previous generations would have done as a matter of course: go to church on Ascension Day!

The Ascension of the Lord is indeed a very "Lutheran" festival to celebrate. It is not a celebration of the Lord's *absence* from us, but it is a celebration of his special and unique *presence* with us, and with all people. The Formula of Concord says this regarding Jesus: "...he grew in stature, wisdom, and grace before God and other people. There-



fore, he did not reveal his majesty at all times but only when it pleased him, until he completely laid aside the form of a servant...after his resurrection. Then he was again invested with the full use, revelation, and demonstration of his divine majesty and entered into his glory, in such a way that he

knows everything, is able to do everything, is present for all his creatures, and has under his feet and in his hands all that is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, not only as God but also as man, as he himself testifies, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' [Matt. 28:18], and St. Paul writes: He ascended 'above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things' [Eph. 4:10]. As present everywhere, he can exercise this power of his, he can do everything, and he knows all things. Therefore, he is able – it is very easy for him – to share his true body and blood, present in the Holy Supper, ...according to the manner and characteristic of God's right hand..."

So, I look forward to seeing all of you in church this year on Ascension Day! ☺

- Pastor Webber

The Hymns We Sing

(Continued from page 2)

Some of the chorales were more familiar to the music students in the class because they had also served as the basis for famous choral or organ works by composers like Bach, Pachelbel, or Brahms. Others are largely unknown today outside the Lutheran Church. "Do Lutheran churches still sing these hymns?", one woman asked. The professor glanced toward me and another class member, who serves as organist of a Lutheran congregation near the campus. "My church does", I enthusiastically responded. "We sing almost all of the chorales we've studied so far." The other class member answered that her church sings far fewer. The moment was sobering, because it showed that even in Lutheran circles our historic hymns are falling into disuse.

Certainly it is important to note that something is not good simply because it is old, and Lutherans in every generation have "grafted" into their repertoire of hymns the best of the new, from sources both Lutheran or otherwise. But this course has strengthened my conviction that there is a breadth and depth to the Reformation chorales which no other body of hymnody quite approaches. Though they take a bit more effort to sing, we are the richer when we sing them with regularity, regarding them as cherished friends who reappear in the annual cycle of lessons and themes. In a modern world which flits from fad to fad, our hymns can provide a foundation of stability, teaching us again important truths which we are prone to forget.

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

MAY 2008

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|------------------|--|--|---|---|------------------|
| <p><i>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. Acts 1:6-9</i></p> | | | | <p>1 7:00pm Ascension Day Divine Service (S)</p> | <p>2 Bible Study 10am at the Calvin residence</p> | <p>3</p> |
| <p>4 Divine Service 9:00am DS (S) 10:30am SS/AC (S) 4:00pm DS (Q) 5:15pm SS/AC (Q)</p> | <p>5</p> | <p>6</p> | <p>7 7:00 Bible and Theology Study Group at Loughran residence</p> | <p>8</p> | <p>9 Bible Study 10am at the Calvin residence</p> | <p>10</p> |
| <p>11 Service of the Word 9:00am SW (S) 10:30am Mother's Day Brunch (S)* 4:00pm SW (Q) 5:15pm SS/AC (Q)</p> | <p>12</p> | <p>13 7:00pm Church Council</p> | <p>14 7:00 Bible and Theology Study Group at Loughran residence</p> | <p>15</p> | <p>16 Bible Study 10am at the Calvin residence</p> | <p>17</p> |
| <p>18 Divine Service 9:00am DS (S) Ladies Guild after the service (S) 10:30am SS/AC (S) 4:00pm DS (Q) 5:15pm SS/AC (Q)</p> | <p>19</p> | <p>20</p> | <p>21 7:00 Bible and Theology Study Group at Loughran residence</p> | <p>22</p> | <p>23 Bible Study 10am at the Calvin residence</p> | <p>24</p> |
| <p>25 Service of the Word 9:00am SW (S) 10:30am SS/AC (S) Elders Meeting after Adult Class (S) 4:00pm SW (Q) 5:15pm SS/AC (Q)</p> | <p>26</p> | <p>27</p> | <p>28 7:00 Bible and Theology Study Group at Loughran residence</p> | <p>29</p> | <p>30 Bible Study 10am at the Calvin residence</p> | <p>31</p> |

Abbreviations:

DS—Divine Service (SW) Service of the Word SS/AC = Sunday School / Adult Bible Class

(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

* May 11th Mother's Day Brunch in Scottsdale, served by the men of the church, in lieu of the Sunday School /Adult Class

The Holy Spirit's "Foreign" Work

Every so often on the news, you will see stories about the President of the United States as he travels overseas. He will do this to improve relations with allies or maybe to attend import meetings with world leaders. While this is important and even necessary work, the President's main or real work is here at home – taking care of the United States.

The Scripture passage below describes some of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's real work is to comfort. But in this passage we learn of another work of the Holy Spirit. This has been called His "foreign" work.

Jesus said that, "He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin." Convicting is not the Holy Spirit's main work, but it is an important and necessary work.

Unless God convicts us of the truth about our sins, we will think that we are "just fine" and in good standing before God. This is due to the fact that we tolerate and excuse our own sins to justify ourselves. Our criteria for bad behavior is extremely lenient when compared to God's criteria, that is, His commandments and laws in the Bible. The Almighty God will one day Judge all humankind to heaven or hell according to HIS criteria.



And so the Holy Spirit needs to do His "foreign" work. Working through Scripture He convicts us of the guilt of our sins. He works contrition in our hearts so that we fall on our knees in repentance before God. Once He does this work, then He does His real work.

Working through Scripture He *comforts* us by pointing us to Christ. Only Christ met God's perfect criteria for righteousness. Jesus was sinless. Yet He took our sins and died on the cross with them. God forgives us through Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts and thereby gives us Christ's righteousness as our own. Be comforted knowing that on the Day of Judgment God will welcome all believers into His heavenly kingdom!

When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16:8-11

Produced by the ELS Board for Evangelism

Announcements

At the quarterly congregational meeting on April 8, we were pleased to receive seven new people into the membership of our parish. Rose Elton, who worships in Queen Creek, was received by transfer from Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington. Joe and Lisa Quint, who attend both Scottsdale and Queen Creek, were received by affirmation of faith, as were Michael and Sandra Farren, who worship in Scottsdale. Kim and Beri Carter, who worship in Scottsdale, were received by transfer from Emmaus

Lutheran Church in Phoenix. We are truly enriched by the gifts that these brothers and sisters in Christ bring to our growing congregation!

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

(Philip. 1:3-6, ESV)

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



First Class Mail
Return Service Requested

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 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.

