

# The Valley Evangel

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

November 2018

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## **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 login information)*

*Friday Bible Study: 10 am at the Muth residence*

## **Newsletter Staff**

*Editor: Pastor David Jay Webber*

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## **From the Pastor's Desk**

As I write this column at my home office computer on Saturday morning, the news report on the television in the next room is telling me about a horrific mass shooting at a Synagogue in Pittsburgh, where people were gathered for a religious ceremony, by a gunman who was shouting: "All Jews must die." Yesterday, the news programs were filled with reports about the arrest of a man in Florida who had sent many bomb-like devices in the mail to high-profile Democrats. Within the past year and a half similar incidents have occurred, focused on other groups. A shooter killed 26 worshipers at a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, on November 5 of last year. On June 14 of last year, a politically-motivated assailant tried to assassinate the members of the Republican team as they were practicing in Alexandria, Virginia, for a Congressional baseball game.

The increase of such incidents of violence or the threat of violence, motivated by religious and political animus, is alarming indeed. Our society has always been characterized by a strong commitment to freedom of speech. When that freedom is exercised responsibly, it allows people with strongly-held religious or political views to express those views, and to spread their message, *with their words*, so that they will not be tempted to resort to violent acts. A vigorous and robust debate or discussion is America's alternative to the suppression of unpopular or critical speech, and to the imposition of a required belief system, that unfortunately characterize all too many other countries. On our National Day of Thanksgiving, coming up later this month, our freedom of speech is certainly one of the things for which we can be thankful. And on election day, which is also coming up, we can cast our votes for our chosen candidates on the basis of civic values and policy preferences that have been shaped within us through the free exchange of information and ideas in which we have participated, or to which we have listened.

As we are thankful for this freedom, and as we benefit from it in our informed participation in the democratic process, we must also dedicate ourselves as citizens of the United States to *preserving* this freedom, in opposition – *verbal* opposition! – to those with totalitarian impulses who want to silence or suppress free speech; and to those with moral or mental defects who want to replace speech with violence and intimidation. And especially as *Christian* citizens of the United States, we must not hesitate to use our freedom of speech in ways that are directly inspired and guided by our faith.

Christians *as Christians* are indeed a people of speech. This is fundamental to our belief system. Indeed, our Word-oriented faith thrives, and is most at home, in an environment where our right to proclaim our faith is guaranteed – and also where the right of others to disagree with us, and not to listen to us, is likewise guaranteed. In his Great Commission, Jesus tells his disciples to make disciples of all nations, not by forced conversions, but by baptizing them and "*teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). People are taught the faith through speech. They do not absorb the faith through some kind of mystical osmosis. St. Paul also writes that "faith comes from *hearing*, and hearing through *the word of Christ*" (Romans 10:17). And he put this conviction into practice in his own ministry, declaring: "...we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his *appeal*

through us. We *implore* you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). A coerced faith is no faith at all. God’s way of creating and sustaining faith is through the words that his people speak – to one another, and to the world.

And Christians are a people of speech also with respect to the prayers that we speak to our Father in heaven. St. Paul writes: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Timothy 2:1). And “all people” truly does mean *all people*. Jesus himself teaches us: “I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44). If Christians in general are to pray in love for their enemies and their persecutors, then Christians in America are certainly to pray for all of our fellow citizens, according to their circumstances and needs.

And so, we pray that God would bless and protect *the victims of violence*. If they are believers, we pray that God would also comfort them through their faith in Christ. If they are unbelievers, we pray that God would also graciously touch their hearts and reveal to them his plans for their eternal good through the gospel of his Son. We pray that God would change the hearts of *those who perpetrate violence*, and bring them to repentance.

We pray for *all with whom we disagree* about what is best for our country – even as we would hope that they would pray for us. Everyone can always benefit from an increase in wisdom, in sound judgment, and in empathy for our fellow man. And we pray for *ourselves*, that God would give us a more selfless love for others, a greater patience with others, and a deeper understanding of God’s Word and will – for us and for all men.

“...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (1 Timothy 4:2).

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

– Pastor Webber

## **Journey with Jennifer**

*Fifth of a Series Exploring the Holy Land*

### **Azekah & Lachish**

I introduced this series with a photo overlooking the Valley of Elah, the site of the famed battle between David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17), which took place in approximately 1050 BC. What is less known is the site from which the photo was taken. I am sitting atop the ruins of the ancient fortress city of Azekah. First Samuel 17 actually begins its account of the famous battle between David and Goliath with a description of the cartography (v1):

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and **Azekah**, in Ephes-dammim.

Thus the Biblical text leaves us in no doubt where the battle took place. But this is hardly Azekah’s only mention in the Bible. Furthermore, it shares a sad history and significant archaeological finds with its sister city Lachish to the south.

Today Azekah is a triangular mound approximately 1,000 ft by 500 ft and rises about 350 ft above the Valley of Elah, and is capped by an ancient wall and towers. The site was occupied by the Philistines from before 1300 BC. The first Biblical mention of Azekah is during Joshua’s conquest when he chased the army of the five Kings of the Amorites from Gibeon to Azekah (Josh. 10). Between Joshua’s conquest and David’s reign the city came under Israel’s control as part of the tribe of Judah. When King Solomon died and Rehoboam was made king of the southern kingdom of Judah (931 BC), he fortified Azekah and Lachish, among other cities. He probably did so in response to losing the 10 northern tribes to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat – now his political rival as king of the northern Kingdom of Israel. Second Chronicles 11:5-12 records:

Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and he built cities for defense in Judah. He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, **Lachish**, **Azekah**, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified cities that are in Judah and in Benjamin. He made the fortresses strong, and put commanders in

them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. And he put shields and spears in all the cities and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem undertook excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa (Azekah) between 2007 and 2013. As you may recall from a prior column, some claim that King David and the United Kingdom of Israel are a myth. But in addition to the Tel Dan findings, the early indications from their excavation of Azekah reveal more physical evidence of the accuracy of the Biblical record:



During the past 30 years, the biblical narrative relating to the establishment of a kingdom in Biblical Judah has been much debated. Were David and Solomon historical rulers of an urbanized state-level society in the early 10th century BC, or was this level of social development reached only at the end of the 8th century BC, 300 years later? Recent excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, the first early Judean city to be dated by 14C, clearly indicate a well-planned fortified city in Judah as early as the late 11th-early 10th centuries BC. This new data has far reaching implication for archaeology, history and biblical studies....The urban planning of Khirbet Qeiyafa includes the casemate city wall and a belt of houses abutting the casemates, incorporating them as part of the construction. Such urban planning has not been found at any Canaanite or Philistine city, nor in the northern Kingdom of Israel, but is a typical feature of city planning in Judean cities: Beersheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Nasbeh and Tell Beth-Shemesh. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the earliest known example of this city plan and indicates that this pattern had already been developed by the time of King David. (online source: [qeiyafa.huji.ac.il](http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il))

During the Assyrian invasion of the 700s BC, God spared Jerusalem but many of the surrounding Judean cities were destroyed. The Assyrian King Sennacharib recorded his destruction of Azekah:

- (3) [...Ashur, my lord, encourage]ed me and against the land of Ju[dah I marched. In] the course of my campaign, the tribute of the kings of Philistia? I received...
- (4) [...with the mig]ht of Ashur, my lord, the province of [Hezek]iah of Judah like [...
- (5) [...] **the city of Azekah**, his stronghold, which is between my [bo]rder and the land of Judah [...
- (6) [like the nest of the eagle? ] located on a mountain ridge, like pointed iron daggers without number reaching high to heaven [...
- (7) [Its walls] were strong and rivaled the highest mountains, to the (mere) sight, as if from the sky [appears its head? ...
- (8) [by means of beaten (earth) ra]mps, mighty? battering rams brought near, the work of [...], with the attack by foot soldiers, [my] wa[rriors...
- (9) [...] they had seen [the approach of my cav]alry and they had heard the roar of the mighty troops of the god Ashur and [their] he[arts] became afraid [...
- (10) [**The city Azekah** I besieged,] I captured, I carried off its spoil, I destroyed, I devastated, [I burned with fire....

Like Azekah, Lachish was occupied long before Joshua's conquest. Archaeological finds put the earliest occupied level at 1500 BC. It has some of the largest remains of a Bronze Age pagan Canaanite temple complex.

Lachish also enters the Biblical narrative in Joshua 10 and is part of Judah's tribal allotment. It is governed by one of the five Amorite kings that go up against Israel at Gibeon only to be beaten back and eventually killed by Joshua at Makkedah. Joshua subsequently leads Israel to take the now "king-less" Lachish along with many other cities in the region. Joshua 10:31-32 records:

Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. And the Lord gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, as he had done to Libnah.

Lachish was such an important Bronze and Iron age city that it is well-attested outside the Biblical account. Lachish is mentioned in the Egyptian Tell-el-Amarna correspondence (c. 1400 BC), on an Egyptian papyrus from the days of Thutmose III (c. 1490 BC), on an Egyptian pottery bowl and also on a wall relief from the Assyrian King Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. Like Azekah, Lachish was destroyed by the Assyrians. The inscription below the relief reads: "Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sitting on his throne, while the spoil from the city of Lachish passed before him." What makes the Lachish site particularly impressive are the remains of the massive Assyrian siege ramp, also depicted on the wall relief. My picture of the siege ramp does not do it justice so I encourage you to look at the web links provided for additional photos.



The Assyrian destruction of Lachish took place in 701 B.C. Second Chronicles 32:9 records: "...Sennacherib king of Assyria, who was besieging Lachish with all his forces, sent his servants to Jerusalem to Hezekiah king of Judah and to all the people of Judah who were in Jerusalem..." This is the same king who will later describe on an Assyrian limestone stele, also found in the royal palace of Nineveh, that he left King Hezekiah of Jerusalem as being "caged like a bird" after the Lord destroyed his army encamped around Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19).

Both Azekah and Lachish recover from the Assyrian invasion. By the time the Babylonians show up 125 years later (early 500s BC) they are the only fortified cities, besides Jerusalem, that were fending off the Babylonians. Jeremiah 34:1-7 records:

**The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion and all the peoples were fighting against Jerusalem and all of its cities:** "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. You shall not escape from his hand but shall surely be captured and delivered into his hand. You shall see the king of Babylon eye to eye and speak with him face to face. And you shall go to Babylon.' Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the Lord concerning you: 'You shall not die by the sword. You shall die in peace. And as spices were burned for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so people shall burn spices for you and lament for you, saying, "Alas, lord!"' For I have spoken the word, declares the Lord." **Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah, in Jerusalem, when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah, for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained.**

One of the most fascinating finds regarding the Babylonian destruction of Azekah and Lachish are a cache of pottery with inscriptions (also called ostraca), known as the Lachish Letters. In Lachish letter #4, Hoshaiiah, who commanded a garrison north of Lachish, wrote correspondence to inform his superior, Yoash, at Lachish, that he could no longer see the signals (fire or smoke) from Azekah, which was north of his post. This indicated Azekah had fallen to the Babylonians (586 BC). The actual text of letter #4 reads:

May YHW[H] cause my [lord] to hear, this very day, tidings of good. And now, according to everything which my lord has sent, this has your servant done. I wrote on the sheet according to everything which [you] sent [t]o me. And inasmuch as my lord sent to me concerning the matter of Bet Harapid, there is no one there. And as for Semakyahu, Semayahu took him and brought him up to the city. And your servant is not sending him there any[more ---], but when morning comes round [---]. **And may (my lord) be apprised that we are watching for the fire signals of Lachish according to all the signs which my lord has given, because we cannot see Azeqah.**

Jerusalem, Azekah and Lachish all ultimately fall to the Babylonians as Jeremiah prophesied. The leadership of Jerusalem were carried off to Babylon while the remnants of Judah remained in the land as a vassal state to Babylon (2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chron. 36).

Azekah and Lachish are not household names nor oft mentioned in scripture, yet they are the epitome of ruins that have quietly and miraculously survived 2,700 years and today scream to be heard above the noise of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. In God's mercy, the incredible evidence is there for anyone who wants to test God's Word. I had confidence in God's Word before I traveled to Israel but upon leaving it I was even more sure of that which God has revealed to us in His Word and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

References for additional reading; these links have much better pictures than I could provide this month. I highly recommend viewing.

- [www.bibleplaces.com/elahvalley/](http://www.bibleplaces.com/elahvalley/) (Azekah)
- [qeiya.huji.ac.il](http://qeiya.huji.ac.il) – The Hebrew University of Jerusalem's The Elah Valley Project (Azekah), 2007-2013
- Sennacherib Azekah Translation - Na'aman, N. Sennacherib's "Letter to God" on His Campaign to Judah. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 214:25-39. 1974. From Lipschitz, Tel Azekah 113.
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azekah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azekah)
- [www.bibleplaces.com/lachish/](http://www.bibleplaces.com/lachish/)
- Lachish Letter #4 Translation - Translation from A ituv, Shmuel, *Echoes from the Past*. Jerusalem: CARTA Jerusalem, 2008, p. 70.
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish\\_letters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_letters)
- [www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/search.aspx?searchText=Lachish+ostracon](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=Lachish+ostracon)
- *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, 1975. The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI.

– Jennifer Price

## Ladies Guild News

The Redeemer Ladies Guild would like to thank the members and friends of the congregation for their donations and support of the Cross-stitch challenge to purchase motor scooters for the travelling ministers of the Lutheran Mission of Salvation in India. We matched the generous \$1,000 anonymous donation, to buy a scooter for \$1,500, and to send a \$500 donation to help feed the Orphans of India.

Please notice a new poster on the Fellowship Hall bulletin board – which actually is a work in progress. Posted around a map of India are the pictures of 126 orphans, who reside in six of our sister church's orphanages. Throughout the remainder of 2018 and 2019, Cross-stitch will be sending pictures of the 300 orphans in these 16 orphan homes. Each month a new picture will be featured where you will be introduced to the "faces that you feed." The map also pinpoints the location of each orphanage. Currently the six orphan homes are located in the southeastern Indian states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Of particular interest is a picture of the orphans living at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Orphan Home in Telangana State. Behind the children you can view shelves stocked with small suitcases. These suitcases contain all the worldly possessions of each orphan. Imagine everything that they own – clothing, shoes, books, toiletries – compacted into one tiny suitcase!

Finally, please remember the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center's open house on Saturday, November 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Center is located at 1822 W. Indian School Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85015. You will be amazed at the abundance of services offered in this tiny cottage. Besides a pregnancy testing lab, the Alpha Center

houses a maternity clothing boutique, babies' and toddlers' clothing center, diaper and baby wipes dispensary, Christian literature library, and baby formula and toiletries distribution storeroom. All of these services are free to clients who chose alternatives to abortion and witnessed the mercy of Jesus Christ.

– Carole Clingan

## Thanksgiving Service



Our National day of Thanksgiving is coming up again, and Redeemer will once again mark the occasion with a worship service the evening before that day. So, please join us at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 21, for the Thanksgiving Eve Divine Service. As is also our custom, we will observe a “bread exchange” in conjunction with this service. Those families that wish to participate in the bread exchange are invited to bring a special loaf of bread, wrapped and tagged with their name, and place it on the table that will be in the front of the nave before the beginning of the service. At the conclusion of the service, each family that brought a loaf should go forward before leaving the sanctuary to pick up a loaf from the table (other than the one they brought themselves), so that they can use that bread as a part of their Thanksgiving meal the following day. And each participating family is encouraged to remember the family whose bread they took, in their Thanksgiving Day prayers. Participation in the bread exchange is voluntary. If you just want to attend the service, without bringing any bread, that is fine!

## Oh Give Thanks to the Lord

So often when life-changing incidents takes place – for example, when a family members is diagnosed with cancer – many times the patient, as well as other family members involved, become frustrated and begin to question God. “Why me?” “Why God, why my wife, why my son or daughter?” “What have I done to deserve this?”

Many time troubles seem to pile up, one upon another. They seem to numerous to overcome. Some-times it seems as if there isn't any reason to be thankful to God. On our own it is impossible to overcome the hardships of this life. On our own there is nowhere to turn for true comfort! There is only one place to find true comfort, in all aspects of life. And that is faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This faith is given to us freely out of God's great love for us, a love that God demonstrated when He sent His one and only Son into this world to die on the cross for our sins. Faith is a gift that comes to us only through the Word of God and the waters of baptism. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). With faith in our hearts all of God's promises are ours. When troubles and hardships enter into the life of a believer they turn to their Savior for comfort. Consider these promises: Shortly before Jesus ascended into heaven He told His disciples that He would never leave them. “Surely I am with you always, to the ends of the age” (Matthew 28:20). You can be rest assured that Jesus' promise to be with you always is just as valid today as when He spoke it 2000 years ago.

Please also consider that God's Word states very clearly, “In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Our greatest need is the forgiveness of sins. Jesus has taken care of that as well through His perfect life and His death upon the cross. It was on the cross that Jesus shed His lifeblood for your sins and mine. As we sit down for Thanksgiving dinner, we may be facing all kinds of problems and difficulties. But we can say with confidence, “We have Jesus. He is our one true friend. He is our Savior.”

If you would like to learn more about Jesus and His work to save the world from sin and eternal death please join us for worship or make an appointment with our pastor. Have a blessed Thanksgiving in Jesus!



*From the ELS Board for Home Outreach*

# Redeemer Lutheran Church

## November 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Internet Study Group Canceled  <i>Pastor Webber</i>	2 Bible Study canceled  <i>...on vacation in...</i>	3 Catechism canceled  <i>Minnesota</i>
<b>4 All Saints</b>  Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sun. School/Adult Class 10:30am	5	6	7	8  Internet Study Group 7pm	9  Bible Study at Muth residence 10am	10  Catechism 4:30pm
<b>11 Pentecost 25</b>  Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sun. School/Adult Class 10:30am	12  Church Council meeting 7pm at Muth residence	13	14	15  Internet Study Group 7pm	16  Bible Study at Muth residence 10am	17  Catechism 4:30pm
<b>18 Pentecost 26</b>  Divine Service 9am; Ladies Guild meeting; Sun. School/Adult Class 10:30am	19	20	21  Thanksgiving Eve Divine Service w/ bread exchange 7pm	22  Internet Study Group Canceled	23  Bible Study Canceled	24  Catechism 4:30pm
<b>25 Last Sunday</b>  Service of the Word w/ spoken Communion 9am; Sun. School/Adult Class 10:30am	26	27	28	29  Internet Study Group 7pm	30  Bible Study at Muth residence 10am	

*“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.*

November 2018

## **The Valley Evangel**

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## **First Class Mail**

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## **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](http://redeemerscottsdale.org)

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