

Alberton Lutheran Parish



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The Messenger Feb. 2005 - April. 2005, Issue 1.

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From Pastor's Pen

This year as I returned from a short break, I decided that I would take up the spiritual exercise of reading through the Bible from cover to cover. I'm reading at the rate of about five pages a day on average, sometimes stopping when the narrative comes to a natural break, and other times reading on a bit further. If I continue at this pace, I will finish the Bible from cover to cover in a year or so. You might want to try this for yourself if you've read parts of the Bible before. If not, why not read through the gospel according to Mark, or watch the video "Jesus" if reading's "not your thing." (I have copies of the latter available if you'd like one.)

The account of "Noah and the Flood" is one of the early sections of the Bible, Genesis 6 - 9, and comes for us all at a very poignant time in our modern world's history. The promise God makes to Noah and his family that he will "never again flood the whole world" gives little comfort to those who have been effected by the Tsunami Crisis that faces so many nations of the world at this time. Many will be tempted to bring out the age-old questions on suffering and I propose to let them lie unattended at this time.

Rather, I am captivated by the response of Noah as he disembarks the ark. His approach to this disaster of world proportions is thanksgiving - for deliverance, and remembrance of God's faithfulness in rescuing even a remnant of imperfect humanity. He builds an altar and all on

the face of the earth worship God - the reason for which humanity was created - to be in a worshipful relationship with the Creator, rather than making our own egos or possessions the objects of our devotion.

The act of worship is amazing too in terms of how Noah shows the worth God has in Noah's life. He takes some of the precious few animals left to replenish the earth and he sacrifices them to God. These animals are to be a food source for future use, yet Noah burns them up for the glory of God. Some would suggest that giving to the church for its work or to charity at one's own expense is a waste as this sacrifice seems to be. Yet Noah receives benefit first in recognising that all things come from God. They and we are His. Secondly, in the Genesis text we learn that even before Noah has taken this action, God has blessed and continues to bless in ways both practical and spiritual.

Let us see the blessing of Noah and his family in the fact that God has preserved the world to us. Let's not squander the gifts we have received; but let us make a fitting sacrifice of the good gifts God has provided us for the needs of the world, at local, national and international levels. Let us, with Noah, and all people of the faith, serve as we have been served by the God in Christ, who fulfils His promises with joy and for the glory of our God and Father.

*Yours in Christ,
Pastor Greg.*

Pastor Greg Vangness

Tsunami...

Comments given by Pastor Dahlenburg at services held to commemorate the Tsunami Tragedy in South East Asia.

The area where we lived in Sumatera was not effected by the tsunami. We did not visit Aceh as foreigners were not allowed in the area. We did, however, visit several areas on the west coast of Sumatera and remember one particular town where hundreds of homes were built on stilts over the water and can imagine the destruction if the tsunami hit there. We have not heard, and there will be many areas that we probably never will hear about.

The secretary of the L.C.A. (Lutheran Church of Australia) - Pastor Wayne Zweck and the director of A.L.W.S. (Australian Lutheran World Service) Peter Schirmer have visited the churches involved and will report on the needs.

I believe our support should go to the A.L.W.S., which will be channelled to the places in need. These donations are tax deductible. If you do not have to pay tax it would be good to donate to the Board for Church Cooperation in World Mission. This would enable our church to directly assist our sister churches, which may not have the funds to assist those effected or rebuild destroyed churches, schools and manses etc.

I would also like to make the comment that, for millions of people all over the world it is normal for them to experience ongoing tragedy, poverty, starvation, sickness, oppression and death. Much of this is brought about by man's inhumanity to man. We need only think of 7 million Jews murdered by the Nazis or thousands of rebels killed in Aceh in the past three years - and the story is endless. In the centre of all this is the Cross and Christ in the flesh, sharing the suffering and death of humankind.

Many of these millions of people have no hope of relief and most do not know the deliverance purchased by Christ. All these people can do is bear their suffering; and their fatalistic attitude to life and death cannot be grasped by our Western mind. We have no idea of how these people exist.

In Indonesia, Betty (Ed. - Gerald's wife), had two teenage sisters who came to her each Sunday to practise English. For two weeks the girls did not come. Then the next week only one sister turned up. - "Where's your sister?" -- "She died."

-- "What from?" -- "Fever." That was it... "She died." Death was so common. In many places people only wanted to be fed and clothed and perhaps educated. For many \$10(AU) would feed a family for a month.

So, as horrible as the tsunami was, and as great as the relief effort is, we need to realise that our responsibility to bring relief and to proclaim the Gospel of hope in Christ, is an ongoing task.

Our record has not been great. Through the budget of the church, Australia-wide, we average about 7 cents per member per week for overseas mission, and about 20 cents per week for Australian World Service.

Nothing I can say can add anything to what you have seen and heard in the media about the tsunami, but we need to let events like this speak to us in every aspect of our existence.

I would suggest that as a minimum we could start taking a packet of church envelopes; or starting to use R.E.G. (Regular Electronic Giving) to make our weekly offering so that we can at least fulfil our contribution to the L.C.A. to help the church function as it should in its God-given mission.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We mourn for those lost and those who suffer. We mourn for our own failure; that it so often needs tragedy to remind us of the blessings we receive each day.

We mourn over our own hypocrisy in lamenting our poverty in the midst of our affluence, and yet You forgive us and continue to shower us with blessings and bless the crumbs that fall from our table in feeding the poor of the world. And just when we think You can't be there, Your Cross is raised in the middle of it all. Thank You, Lord Jesus. AMEN.

Australian Lutheran World Service Snippet- was host to a group of 8 students in Cambodia for 16 days in early December. Kirsty Rossmann can tell you of her experiences in helping new mums with hygiene, the education of children in schools, the implementation of clean water sources and helping with the clearing of land and farming. Ask her about her experiences travelling their unique road system and about riding an elephant. The students covered many rural project areas as well as the temples and towns.

L.O.R.D.S. - is now less than one year Hawaii from having children in classrooms. The Master Plan is nearing completion and all committees are busy. The undergrowth on the land is being cleared. There are many opportunities for you to be involved in this exciting, vibrant project of our church and community. Please let pastor Grade know in which direction you would like to volunteer your time and service in working for the Lord at L.O.R.D.S.

BIBLE READING AND PRAYER CALENDAR

Through 3 gospels in 3 months

Date	Bible Reading	Prayer Thoughts	Date	Bible Reading	Prayer Thoughts
Feb-01	Matthew 1	Our families,church family	Mar-18	Mark 3	those in authority
2	Matthew 2	Freedom to worship	19	Mark 4:1-20	uncertainty & grief
3	Matthew 3	Thanks for baptism	20	Mark 4:21-41	peace and calm
4	Matthew 4	Healing for the sick	21	Mark 5:1-20	companionship
5	Matthew 5	Reconciliation	22	Mark 5:21-43	children
6	Matthew 6	Poor and needy	23	Mark 6:1-29	kindness to others
7	Matthew 7	That we bear good fruit	24	Mark 6:30-56	courage
8	Matthew 8	Missionaries & Pastors	25	Mark 7	hearing and sight impaired
9	Matt.9:1-17	calling all people to Jesus	26	Mark 8	compassion and love
10	Matt 9:18-38	more workers for the church	27	Mark 9:1-32	those in suffering
11	Matt10	faithful followers of Jesus	28	Mark 9:33-50	equal sharing
12	Matt 11	wisdom and understanding	29	Mark 10:1-34	school teachers
13	Matt 12:1-21	forgiveness	30	Mark 10:35-52	communion with Jesus
14	Matt 12:22-50	brothers and sisters	31	Mark 11	church's everywhere
15	Matt 13:1-32	mothers and fathers	Apr-01	Mark 12:1-27	saints of all time
16	Matt 13:33-58	spreading of the gospel	2	Mark 12:28-44	life in abundance with Jesus
17	Matt 14:1-21	food and water for all	3	Mark 13	peaceful rest
18	Matt 14:22-36	Jesus is always with us	4	Mark 14:1-42	do that little bit extra
19	Matt 15:1-20	Listening	5	Mark 14:43-72	those with sadness
20	Matt 15:21-39	Faith	6	Mark 15 & 16	forgiveness of sins
21	Matt 16	confession	7	Luke 1	morals and ethics
22	Matthew 17	Don't be afraid	8	Luke 2	true meaning of christmas
23	Matt 18:1-20	The lost and lonely	9	Luke 3	all occupations
24	Matt 18:21-35	workers & unemployed	10	Luke 4	fair trading & business
25	Matt 19:1-15	divorced couples	11	Luke 5	our calling in life
26	Matt19:16-30	the rich and the poor	12	Luke 6	blessings and woes
27	Matt 20:1-16	generosity	13	Luke 7	guilt and grace
28	Matt 20:17-34	to be a servant to others	14	Luke 8	faith and vision
Mar-01	Matt 21:1-22	believe and ask in prayer	15	Luke 9	humility and worthiness
2	Matt 21:23-46	firm foundations	16	Luke 10	our homes
3	Matt 22:1-22	newly wed couples	17	Luke 11	let your light shine
4	Matt 22:23-46	marriage relationships	18	Luke 12	needs or greeds
5	Matt 23	obedience & faithfulness	19	Luke 13	encouragement
6	Matt 24:1-35	watch and pray	20	Luke 14	cost of being a disciple
7	Matt 24:36-51	christian heritage	21	Luke 15	calling the lost home
8	Matt 25:1-30	good use of our talents	22	Luke 16	honesty & integrity
9	Matt 25:31-46	helpfulness to others	23	Luke 17	sin,faith,duty
10	Matt 26:1-35	diligence to Christ	24	Luke 18	persistence
11	Matt 26:36-56	quietness of prayer	25	Luke 19	government
12	Matt 26:57-75	loyalty	26	Luke 20	acceptance
13	Matt 27:1-44	kind words and deeds	27	Luke 21	our offerings to the church
14	Matt 27:45-66	friends	28	Luke 22	testimony to Christ
15	Matt 28:	the great commission	29	Luke 23	those lonely or abused
16	Mark 1	to avert temptations	30	Luke 24	power to praise God
17	Mark 2	Healing for the sick			

Life is fragile - Handle with prayer! You are encouraged to take a few minutes each day to read God's word and pray together as a family. May your special times together bring many blessings.

Snippets of interest to YOUTH!

If you could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following:

- There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the western hemisphere and 8 Africans.
- 52 would be female, 48 would be male
- 30 would be white, 70 would be non-white
- 30 would be christian, 70 would not
- 6 people would possess 59% of the world's wealth AND all 6 would be from the USA.
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer malnutrition
- 1 would be near death, 1 would be near life
- 1 would have a college education
- 1 would own a computer

When one considers the world from such a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, understanding and education becomes glaringly apparent.



"A smile is a curve that sets many things straight!"

Children's BACK TO SCHOOL JOKES

Sam: How were your exam questions?

Bill: They were easy but I had trouble with the Answers.

Teacher: How do you spell wattlebark?

Ted: D O G

Salesman: Would you like to buy a pocket Calculator?

Sam: No thanks! I know how many pockets I Have.

Teacher: Tommy, your hands are very dirty. What would you say if I came to school with dirty hands?

Tommy: I'd be too polite to mention it.

BRAIN TEASER: Can you replant these 9 trees so that they form 3 lines with 4 trees a line?



Thoughts for MEN



Consider the hammer:

It keeps its head. It doesn't fly off the handle. It keeps pounding away.

It finds the point and then drives it home.

It looks at the other side too and thus often clinches the matter.

It makes mistakes but when it does, it starts all over again.

It is the only knocker in the world that does any good.

Adam and his son Abel were taking a walk, some years after being expelled from the garden of Eden: they passed by that lovely garden and Abel exclaimed: "Gosh, Dad, what a beautiful place! Wouldn't it be nice to live there?" Adam paused for a moment, then answered: "Well son, we did live there once, but your mother ate us out of house and home"

A father was describing how Lot's wife looked back and suddenly turned into a pillar of salt. His small son replied: "Mum looked back yesterday when she was driving – and she turned into a telephone pole."

Thoughts for WOMEN

I am thankful...

For the husband who complains when his dinner is not on time, because he is home with me

For the teenager who is complaining about doing dishes, because she is at home and not on the streets

For the taxes I pay because it means I am employed

For the mess to clean up after a party, because it means I have many friends

For the clothes that are a little too snug because it means I have enough to eat.

For everything that needs fixing because it means I have a home

For the pile of laundry and ironing because it means we have clothes to wear

For the alarm that goes off in the early morning because it means I am alive –

PRAISE GOD



Sustainable Giving in Uncertain Times

The tragedy arising from the Boxing Day Tsunamis has revealed a need for *continued* giving and reconstruction, which some have estimated to take anywhere from five to ten years. In light of this, it would be refreshing to examine two ancient principles:

1. **The Prosperity Principle:** God created enough for all peoples in the world; He gives us all the power and potential to become prosperous; poverty and need are inconsistent with God's will.
2. **The Tithing Principle:** we should give one tenth to God's work and the needy, and in so doing we will receive much in return.

Both of these principles date back many hundreds of years and are clearly evidenced in the Bible. For instance, in relation to the Prosperity Principle, in Deuteronomy 8, 16-18: "He [The Lord] sent hardships on you to test you, so that in the end he could bless you with good things. So then, you must never think that you have made yourselves wealthy by your own power and strength. Remember, that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant he made with your ancestors."

The Tithing Principle also has an ancient history. It's promise is explained by God in Malachi 3:10: "Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple, so that there will be plenty of food there. Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things."

The Australian response, and in fact the world response to the Tsunami victims have been exceptional. However, this is an exceptional event and these are exceptional times- what, if any, is our *continued* responsibility in the months and years ahead?

The world's poverty problems are not unsolvable, in fact they are *readily* solvable. We are reminded that even though some 1.2 billion people (20% of the world's population) live in extreme poverty- two thirds of these live in the Asia-Pacific Region, it would cost less than that which Australians spend on gambling in 12 weeks to feed every hungry person in the world for one year and to provide healthcare which would save millions of lives (source: *World Vision News*, Sept. 2001, p.15).

This raises difficult questions. Why is it that the wealth of the world is spread so unevenly? Do we

all believe, understand and practice these ancient principles of prosperity and giving? Do recent events, that happen to occur in some of the world's already poverty stricken areas in the Asia-Pacific Region, remind us of these ancient principles? If so, then what is the private and public challenge for us?

When one analyses and then combines these principles, we discover even greater things. There is indeed enough for all- there has and will always be. This is God's will, but humanity has prevented this. If all of us through God have the power and potential to create prosperity for ourselves, then we also have a duty, an *enduring responsibility* to give to God and give to the needy. In so doing, we receive a greater wealth in return, in so doing prosperity is received by all in more multiples than we can imagine.

These principles are powerful, powerful but ancient in origin- yet in 2005 poverty still abounds. Why? Critically, how can each of us we make practical changes that can make a difference?

Our challenge is in *sustainable* giving- creating sustainable and regular systems or methods for giving and receiving. The ancient principle of tithing is a practical way in which we can regularly give one tenth of our earnings, our time, our dedication, our service to God's work and to the needy, each day, each week, each month. In 2005, we have the technology, the acumen, the time and ability to give efficiently and flexibly like never before.

Only with such knowledge, dedication and practice over the coming months and years can reconstruction succeed. Simultaneously, perhaps real inroads into world poverty can be made. The responsibility is ours - the responsibility is ongoing and is to be shared.

Lee Milan Spano

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