



Zion Lutheran Church NEWSLETTER

WELCOME TO THE ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER
Zion is a member congregation of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)

JULY 2019 5831 GRUNDY ROAD, HUDSON, IA 50643

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

John 11:35 (“Jesus wept.”) is the shortest verse in the Bible. Most Sunday School students can quote that verse. But do we consider the question, “Why did Jesus weep?” Maybe Jesus’ tears at Bethany come from more than grief. I suspect that most Christians, taking a quiz, could manage to summon “Jesus wept” as evidence of his humanity. It’s comforting to realize the man cried. He’s one of us. I recall citing the verse in a seminary paper describing the improbably balanced dual natures of Jesus: fully divine and fully human. Facing personal disappointment, grief, or setback, it’s nice to know that the Son of God has emotions, just like us. When my children were young, sometimes they were embarrassed by their tears. I’m sure they tired of hearing their pastor/father say how Jesus cried when he was sad.

In John 11, when Jesus arrives in Bethany after the death of Lazarus, he famously weeps. Some neighbors say, “See how he loved him!” (11:36). I’ve no doubt that Jesus loved his friend. He seems to have spent time dining in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, maybe just hanging out for a while in a setting where he could let his hair down. He knows them better than many other characters in the Gospels.

Because Jesus was fully human, then some deaths must have affected him more than others. I was a pastor for over three decades and presided over hundreds of funerals. None of them was easy. But the death of some have left me weeping at traffic lights and breaking into tears at unpredictable moments. Later, in worship, I have trouble even mustering the words “body of Christ” for grieving communicants as they make their way forward. I’ve just handed these people the bread, crying, wordlessly.

Some deaths affect us more than others. See

how he loved him. Bethany literally means “house of affliction.” Jesus was constantly walking into various states of affliction. That he was emotionally moved by some more than others only underscores his full humanity. This is one reason why he wept.

But it’s the critical reaction of a Lazarus’ neighbors that causes me to reassess the nature of Jesus’ tears in this old story. They ask, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” (11:37). It’s a fair question that we ask ourselves, too. We hear it on the lips of our own agnostic friends. If Jesus has it in him to still wind and wave, why does he allow earthquakes and tsunamis? If he fed 5,000 with a few fish and loaves, why does anyone anywhere go to bed hungry at night? If he healed that blind guy in the town down the road, why doesn’t he show up here and work his magic? The neighborly chorus reflects questions as old as those of Job. They voice objections already aired by the grieving sisters, repeated word-for-word by each: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (11:21, 32).

No explanation is ever offered for Jesus’ tardiness after he learns of his friend’s illness. He lingers “two days longer in the place where he was” after hearing the news (11:6) and finally shows up four days after the funeral (11:17). (Most pastors would, of course, be in trouble if they remained on vacation after receiving word of a parishioner’s dire illness and then returned home to discover a dead body.) Jesus says something odd to his disciples: “This illness does not lead to death” (11:4). Either this statement is a bad misdiagnosis—like the tears, a missed social cue perhaps strengthens Jesus’ humanity—or something else is going on below the surface. In John’s Gospel, something else is always going on below the surface

If you'd been here, ask the sisters, and what person of faith hasn't at least thought this while living with tragedy? We Lutherans like to talk about Jesus' real presence in Holy Communion; we are less vocal about his seeming real absence in the agonies of life. But note that Jesus does more than simply receive the sisterly anger and neighborly skepticism with patience lacking apology. He curtly questions Martha on the road, countering with a lecture about the resurrection and questioning whether she really believes it (11:25–26, and again at the tomb in 11:40).

Jesus' words offered to God at Lazarus's tomb remind me of pastors who, after the sermon concludes, use a pastoral prayer to continue to take aim at the congregation: "I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here." He seems to be saying, thanks for listening to me, Lord, but I'm praying mostly on behalf of these thickheaded fools standing behind me just now.

These details—the tardiness, the terse response to a sister, and the cheeky prayer aimed at impertinent neighbors—all lead me to question whether Jesus' famous tears are often misinterpreted. Notice how Jesus is "greatly disturbed" on either side of his weeping (11:33, 38). The verb in both instances, means "to snort with anger." You might imagine a horse pawing the earth and snorting before busting loose in irritation.

I've been angry at death before, tearfully angry at the injustice of it all. But the details in this old story suggest that Jesus' tears are more than just tears of human grief for an old family friend who died prematurely. Jesus seems to be weeping on the way to Lazarus's tomb not only from sorrow but also because he himself is largely misunderstood, and he is not all that happy about it.

We all live in towns called "house of affliction," filled with innocents who die unfairly. And you probably have friends like one of my close pals who once said, "If your God has the power to change things and can't or won't, then I choose not to respect him." The neighborly chorus still calls out on every street corner of every town and asks why he who once upon a time opened a man's eyes could not be bothered to prevent this particular tragedy. This question is a small step away from another: If not, then what's he good for, anyway?

The hopelessly tardy Jesus walks straight to the tomb of Lazarus. Both his absence (perceived by the sisters) and his confounding uselessness (by the neighbors) are given fresh perspective with the words: "Unbind him, and let him go" (11:44).

Tears that won't seem to stop often accompany crippling sorrow for those we especially love. Inevitable questions about Jesus and his purpose stir into the messy mix of conflicting emotions.

This story offers another perspective. Jesus weeps, but he refuses to be jerked around by death's timetable. He talks back to death and boldly walks right toward it—and not only to the tomb of Lazarus. Bethany is just two miles from Jerusalem (11:18). By our following where Jesus leads the way, we, as his disciples are slowly liberated from death's great and paralyzing fear. As we face the tombs of others, not to mention our own, this is exactly what Jesus is good for—going beyond the expectation of a possible miracle. We are beginning a new study. "Jesus Wept – Why?" a Bible Study Monday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. starting on Monday, July 22

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Mark Decker

Prayers

Each Sunday in worship, we publish a list of people who have requested prayers. To help you remember them in your regular prayer time: Dianne Bascom, Sean Love, Eileen McKenna, Eunice Neil, Dale Neuhaus, Holly Paar Harlan Selken, Wanda (Cindy Young's friend). If you would like another name added to the list, please let Pastor know.

Hospital Visits

If you or a family member are in the hospital, please let Pastor Mark know so he can visit and pray with you during your time there. Unlike in years past, hospital staff does not call the pastor to notify him when a church member has been hospitalized.

Women's Bible Study

We are continuing our course of. "It's Not Supposed to Be This Way" a Bible Study by Lisa Terkeust that will focus on finding unexpected strength when disappointments leave you shattered. The study will be at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. If you are interested please contact Cindy Appleton at 319-988-9309. The study will be held weekly for 6 weeks.

Adult Bible Study

We are beginning a new study. "Jesus Wept – Why?" a Bible Study of John chapter 11 on Monday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. starting on Monday, July 22. This study will focus on our expectations, disappointments and surprising grace of following Jesus.

Faith. Food. Fellowship.

Great news! Our Zion Cookbook is complete and has arrived! The cookbook will be revealed on Sunday, July 7 and will be for sale during fellowship time. The price is \$20 and contains 615 recipes. Cookbooks make great gifts!

It was August 2018 when we started our project. Our last cookbook was printed in 1987. Thank you to all that submitted recipes and asked others for recipes. Each recipe makes our book special. Our cookbook also contains many recipes from those we hold in our memory. Thank you to everyone for your support and encouragement. We have a great cookbook and we hope you enjoy it!

Vacation Bible School

Zion's annual VBS program was held Sunday, June 9,10,11. Vacation Bible School touched the lives of many of the young people of our Zion community. Thank you to the parents and grandparents who brought their children over for the evening activities last Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Thanks to Sherrie Decker for playing the keyboard and Cristiana Decker for running the PowerPoint during the opening and closing music sessions. Thanks to Mollie Volding and Cindy Appleton who make a great team leading their classes of youngsters. Thanks to Pastor Mark for leading the older youth and adult Bible Study. Cindy Appleton again went above and beyond with the overall planning of the program. Thank you! The Music, Classes for all ages, Crafts and Games all combined for a fun and faith-filled program.

July Anniversaries

- 7 Russ & Sandy Pedersen
- 21 Dan & Tammy Bern
- 24 Pr. Mark Ordination (1988)

July Birthdays

- 1 Pastor Mark
- 7 Dylan Garbes
- 11 Tara Seible
- 21 Tammy Bergman
- 23 Mitch Juhl
- 25 Lyle Wulf

- 25 Dan Bern
- 26 Steve Wright

Acolytes

- 7 June Volding
- 14 Zander Young
- 21 Tanner Laube
- 28 Hayden Gutknecht

Ushers

- July 7 Bob & Shirley Petersen
- July 14 Bob & Shirley Petersen
- July 21 Langley Jensen & Lyle Wulf
- July 28 Langley Jensen & Lyle Wulf

Communion Servers

- July 7 Harold & Julie Sorensen
- July 14 Harold & Julie Sorensen
- July 21 Aaron & Tara Seible
- July 28 Aaron & Tara Seible

Communion Clean-up

- July 7 Donna Dufel & Janet Dufel
- July 14 Donna Dufel & Janet Dufel
- July 21 Jane Miller & Julie Sorensen
- July 28 Jane Miller & Julie Sorensen

The color of the paraments for all the Sundays in July is green for the season of Pentecost.

Our lectionary readings for the Sundays are:

July 7: Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:1-16; Luke 10:1-20

July 14: Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Psalm 25:1-10; Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

July 21: Genesis 18:1-10; Psalm 15; Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42

July 28: Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:6-19; Luke 11:1-13

The **WEB SITE for LCMC** – Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, is www.lcmc.net

If you have an announcement, message, quote, picture, or prayer, that you would like to share in the newsletter, contact Pastor Mark, (515-538-2200) by the 25th of the previous month.

Minutes of council meetings which will be included in the newsletters will be from 2 months earlier as they have to be approved at the next monthly meeting before they can be published.