



Epistle



S T . J O H N L U T H E R A N C H U R C H

Jesus' Love: Our Greatest Joy and Greatest Opportunity

(Read *John 15:1-17*)

In English we use just one word for "love." The context then determines what type of love it is; brotherly, friendly, romantic, etc. Greek, the language in which the *New Testament* was written, communicates more clearly the type of love being expressed as it uses several words to indicate specific types of love. The word for love used by Jesus in the 15th chapter of John's gospel is *agape* (Ἀγάπη).

What type of love is this? Well, here is how one might paraphrase using various Greek dictionaries and the early church's understanding and teaching of this word:

Agape: Love given regardless of whether or not the one to whom it is given is deserving of receiving it; Self-sacrifice for the sake of another; giving up one's own interest for the sake of another with no expectation or need of reciprocation.

This is the love of which Jesus speaks in *John 15*. Jesus abides in His Father's love. We abide in Jesus' love.

Jesus teaches this love in word and deed. His most explicit manifestation of this love for us is on display as He suffers on the cross. We are sinners, undeserving of anything good from God. We are unlovable. Yet, Jesus suffers and dies to save us from the eternal punishment we deserve.

He conveys this same love as He teaches us. In *John 3:16-17*, for example, Jesus teaches us the love He, His Heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit have for us:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

Believing in Jesus, we have forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. In faith in Jesus, in the gifts He continually gives His Church in Word and Sacrament, we abide in His saving love for us.

Jesus teaches a two-fold purpose for this great, saving love, and our continual abiding in Him. "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (*John 15:11*) Instead of despairing impending judgment, we can live in the joy of Jesus' sacrificial love for us. It forgives. It gives eternal life. What joy! The greatest joy!

Second, Jesus teaches us of His love so that abiding in Him we also love one another. "These things I command you, so that you will love one another." (*John 15:17*) We, branches, are to bear the fruit of *sacrificial—agape—love* toward one another. When we "love" those who reciprocate, this is not agape love. When we "love" the person with whom we get along and with whom we agree, this is not agape love.

What about loving the brother or sister in Christ who annoys us to tears? What about loving the person with whom we disagree? Agape means loving the unlovable people who don't deserve to be loved. Even in Christ's Church, loving difficult—unlovable—people proves to be most difficult! Yet, this is our calling as branches bearing fruit in Christ's love.

As you receive Jesus' undeserved love, I encourage you to see your relationships and dealings with unlovable people in a new perspective: Jesus is giving you an opportunity to love the way He loves! Pray in thanksgiving for Jesus' undeserved love that forgives and saves you. Pray that Jesus will move you to love the unlovable people in your life. Since you are already praying, pray for the very person you find so difficult to love.

Living in joy as branches on the vine, difficult people and difficult situations are a God-given opportunity for you to bear the fruit of Jesus' agape love. Thank you, Jesus!

Pastor Tim A. Sims

Please Order a Birthday Calendar!

A committee of volunteers is again working on the "Community Birthday Calendar" project. This will be the **70th year** the Birthday Calendar has been produced by a St. John group.

The Birthday Calendar features a center photo of a community site surrounded by ads from generous local businesses. Names of individuals celebrating a birthday or anniversary are listed on each date, and birthdays of deceased loved ones are marked with a cross.

Volunteers will be making contacts to take orders for calendars and to confirm names previously listed on the Birthday Calendar. Please remember to include any new family members, anniversaries for recently married couples or birthdays for additional friends or family. Consider ordering Birthday Calendars for Christmas gifts this year!

The calendars are still only \$5.00 each. Each birthday, anniversary or memorial listed costs only \$.25. Please encourage any of your friends, neighbors or co-workers to add their names to this calendar of cheer. A daily glance will help you remember someone's special day with a card or phone call.

If you are not familiar with the Birthday Calendar, please stop by the display in the back of church. Colorful calendars from previous years are on display and ordering information is available. We hope some of the younger members and families will choose to order and be listed on the 2019 Community Birthday Calendar. Please encourage young members and families to participate so this project can continue for another **70 years!** The \$5.00 purchase really benefits the fundraiser and can bring cheer every day of 2019.

To place an order for calendars or names to be listed, please contact Sandy Colvis (618-615-5556), Carolyn Schwent (618-826-2557), the church office (618-826-3545) or secretary@stjohnchester.com. The profits from this project will again remain with St. John LWML to support their many church projects.

**O U R 2 0 1 7 - 2 0 1 8 Y E A R - T O - D A T E
F I N A N C I A L S T A T U S**

Cash Flow from 7/31/2017 to 5/24/18

Year-to-date Income \$899,830.75
 Year-to-date Expense \$1,544,465.79
 Difference (Income - Expense) (\$644,635.04)

Money owed on Line of Credit

Beginning Balance 7/31/17 \$214,603.08
 Paid on Debt year-to-date (\$539,153.83)
 Borrowed year-to-date \$423,740.00
 LOC Renewal Fee \$80.00
 Current Balance as of 5/24/18 \$ 99,269.25

Average 2018 Attendance per Week 244

Hear ye, hear ye!



Last week in Chapel, Keri Sims challenged the students to learn to be disciples by attending Vacation Bible School in July. Students were selected to knock down a castle wall with bean bags and an edible palm tree was shown.

A Mighty Fortress will again be our VBS theme where the students will learn New Testament stories and how they can be disciples in their everyday lives. There will be rotations of cooking, games, crafts, and music with a short closing devotion each day.

We encouraged the students that even if they have sports or other commitments that week, they are welcome to attend any portion of the fun. Preschoolers through those finishing 6th grade are invited to attend and **bring a friend!** Seventh and 8th graders are welcome to be helpers. There is no charge for VBS. Registration isn't required but helps us prepare. If you don't have a form, call the church office at 826-3545.

VBS will be July 11-13 from 6-8:30 p.m. The students will sing some songs at the worship service at 5:00 the evening of July 14. A reception will follow with a light meal and attendance prizes.

S U N D A Y S C H O O L

The following students attended Sunday School at least half of the Sundays this past school year: Duncan Bargman, Evan Bargman, Levi Caldwell, Colton Coffey, Peyton Coffey, Gage Durham, Logan Durham, Hannah Kaempfe, Isaac Sims, Josh Sims, Reagan Sims, Jackson Welge, and Will Welge.

Congratulation to these students and their parents. Their faithfulness is a testimony of the importance of learning more about the Good News of Jesus.

We would like to thank all the Sunday School volunteers from this school year: Collette Powley, Rose Oetting, Carol Kaempfe, Meg Knop, Charlie Bargman, Carolyn Gray, Shawnell Madison, Jill Arbeiter, and Barb Bierman. Mrs. Powley has been generous for many generations, teaching and demonstrating to our youngest students the love of Jesus.

The Sunday School students reached their goal of buying a goat through Lutheran World Relief. They also bought a piglet and some medical supplies to help families where food and many basic needs are scarce.

Sunday School needs a volunteer twice a month to show a movie to the students. Even if you can't commit to every month, this may be the job you are looking for. Contact the church office if you are interested.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

“There are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart, and the purse.” Attributed to Luther, though yet to be located in his vast writings, this statement echoes what Jesus taught about hearts and treasures. He said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

But which conversion comes first? I submit that the order is this: first the head, then the purse, then the heart. Let me explain.

Our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt among us to save us. He took on our flesh, fulfilled the demands of the law in our place, became sin for us, and suffered torture and death on our behalf, in order that we would be free from sin, death, and hell. He gives us what He accomplished through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper.

And so, He doesn’t just do it for us but gives it to us, makes what He did ours by making us His. Thus, we are called by His name: Christians. We have a new life in Him.

Through the preaching of Law and Gospel, God grants us repentance, a changing of our minds. It is a conversion of the mind. We are called to turn away from our sins and turn toward Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. For when God calls us away from something, He is, at the same time, calling us to something.

And thus, He calls us to a new life, with new deeds. This is the conversion of the purse. Jesus said that “it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Notice that our hearts follow our treasures, not the other way around. As Christians, God calls us to invest our treasures in His Kingdom to ensure that the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. He calls us to share all good things with the one who teaches us the doctrines of Christ. He calls us to be generous in giving to the church, for it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So where is your treasure? If it is not invested in the kingdom of God, then the only response is repentance—a conversion of the heart—and to begin doing just that. And as our Lord promised, where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

This is not to say that you earn your way into heaven. It is simply to say that as Christians, those who have been made to be temples of the Holy Spirit, who have been given a new life in Christ, who are dead to sin and now alive in Him, we are, actually, to live — think (conversion of the mind), do (conversion of the purse), and be (conversion of the heart) — a new life in Him.

And when you fail, know that God in Christ loves and forgives you and still calls you away from that and to Himself.

*By Rev. Jason Braaten
Immanuel Lutheran Church – Tuscola, Ill.*

Taken from lcms.org/stewardship

KEY CHECK

During the month of June the church checks the keys that are signed out. If you have a key to the church, school or parish hall please stop by the office to have your key checked. Thank You

ACOLYTES



Sat June 2 5:00 pm Kinsi McCartney
 Sun June 3 7:45 am Joshua Sims
 10:00 am Connor Mott
 Sat June 9 5:00 pm Gabriel Steele
 Sun June 10 7:45 am Clayton Kothe
 10:00 am Joshua Sims
 Sat June 16 5:00 pm Ashlynn Lemanski
 Sun June 17 7:45 am Aden Runge
 10:00 am Landon Hornbostel
 Sat June 23 5:00 pm Matt James
 Sun June 24 7:45 am Jordan Buskohl
 10:00 am Landon Welge
 Sat June 30 5:00 pm Gavin Schroeder
 Sun July 1 7:45 am Max Blechle
 10:00 am Nick Collins

USHER TEAMS

Sat June 2 5:00 pm Volunteer
 Sun June 3 7:45 am Gary Duensing
 10:00 am Don Stallman
 Sat June 9 5:00 pm Volunteer
 Sun June 10 7:45 am Dennis Kontz
 10:00 am Gary Eggemeyer
 Sat June 16 5:00 pm Volunteer
 Sun June 17 7:45 am Ron Rathert
 10:00 am Rick Casten
 Sat June 23 5:00 pm Volunteer
 Sun June 24 7:45 am Gary Duensing
 10:00 am Don Stallman
 Sat June 30 5:00 pm Volunteer
 Sun July 1 7:45 am Dennis Kontz
 10:00 am Gary Eggemeyer

ALTAR GUILD

June 2 & 16 Dr. Allan & Louise Liefer, Ken and Virginia Rowold
 June 3 & 17 Janet Bargman, Karen Hecht
 June 10 & 24 Richard & Brenda Pautler, Nancy Urquhart and Pam Johnston
 June 30 Larry & Sharon Congleton, Sherry Bohnert, Melvin & Edna Neislein

WORSHIP SERVICES

Saturday 5:00 p.m., Sunday 7:45 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.
 Sunday School and Bible Class at 9:00 a.m.
 Sunday Worship Broadcast on KSGM 980 AM
 online at ksgm980.com

GREETERS

Sat June 2 5:00 pm Doris Knoke
 Sun June 3 7:45 am Dorothy Rinne
 10:00 am Pam Johnson
 Sat June 9 5:00 pm Janice Dettmer
 Sun June 10 7:45 am Mary Alice Welge
 10:00 am Norma Vieregge
 Sat June 16 5:00 pm Virginia Rowold
 Sun June 17 7:45 am Mary Lee Gross
 10:00 am Rebecca Hillerman
 Sat June 23 5:00 pm Carolyn Colvis
 Sun June 24 7:45 am Sandy Colvis
 10:00 am Susan McClure
 Sat June 30 5:00 pm Shirley Hartmann
 Sun July 1 7:45 am Deb Caraway
 10:00 am Nancy Urquhart

RADIO ANNOUNCER & TECHNICIANS

June 3 Amanda Middendorf / Lynn Rickenberg
 June 10 Mardell Granger / Bob Platt
 June 17 Chris Urquhart / Tony Young
 June 24 Chris Colvis / Charlie Bargman



WEEKEND JANITORS

June 2/3 Dennis Mott
 June 9/10 / Ryan Petrowske
 June 16/17 Ron Cushman / Chris Urquhart
 June 23/24 / Gary Kelkhoff
 June 30 / July 1 / Larry McDonough

ALUMINUM CANS



May 28-June 2 Gary Knop
 June 4-9 Mike Welge
 June 11-16 Brett Klindworth
 June 18-23 Fred Fricke
 June 25-30 Larry McDonough



CHURCH E-MAIL

Rev. Timothy Sims- timoteosims@hotmail.com
 Rev. Justin Massey- Justin.Massey@ctsfw.edu
 Kelly Walls— secretary@stjohnchester.com
 Tammy Crawford— nurse@stjohnchester.com

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B I B L E T R E A S U R E H U N T :



Bible Incomplete: Fill in the missing letters to complete the passage.

Sub_ it_ y_ urs_ l_ ve_ the_ e_ fo_ e_ to_ o_ d_ . R_ sis_ the_ e_ vi_ , and_ e_ wi_ l_ fl_ e_ fr_ m_ yo_ . Dra_ nig_ to
G_ d_ , an_ he_ w_ ll_ d_ aw_ n_ gh_ t_ you_ . _lea_ se_ y_ ur_ h_ nds_ , _e_ si_ ner_ ; and_ _uri_ y_ yo_ r_ he_ rts_ ,
e do_ ble_ ind_ d_ .

A N S W E R T O L A S T M O N T H ' S B I B L E T R E A S U R E H U N T :

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Galatians 3:21

C A P P E R S

CAPPERS will meet on Sunday, June 10 at 1:00 p.m. to play cards and have a light meal in the Parish Hall.

N E W F A C I L I T Y

St. John Lutheran School draws students of many Christian faiths as well as several unchurched students. This golden opportunity to teach children about Jesus is St. John's most visible evangelism tool. Just think how effective we would be with a new facility! The New Facility Fund was established in May 2007 with the goal of saving \$2,000,000 before initiating construction. With the contributions of dedicated donors, we are moving forward, our current total is \$548,286.10. Contributions are tax-deductible and can be given at any time. Set aside a steady amount to give each month or each pay day. Be a part of the future of Christian education in Chester.





St. John Lutheran Vacation Bible School

Mark your calendars for our 2018 Vacation Bible School program, *"Mighty Fortress: In Jesus, the Victory is Won!"* July 11-13, 2017 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. These special days filled with Bible stories, songs, games, snacks, activities, and crafts is open to girls and boys finishing Pre3-6th grade classes.

(Please return form below to the church or school office)
(tear here and keep for your records)

Name _____ Age (on July 11, 2018) _____

Child must have been 3 years old by September 1, 2017. Child must be potty trained to attend VBS.

What grade are you in **now** (2017-2018 school year?) (Circle one)

Pre-3 Pre-4 Kindergarten 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th

Do you have any food allergies or other medical concerns? _____

If Yes, please explain: _____

Parents' Names _____

Phone # _____ Alternate # _____

Address _____

Emergency contact person (s) _____

Relationship to student _____ Emergency # _____

Other siblings also attending: _____ Grade _____

_____ Grade _____

Adult/ Older Sibling Helpers (s): _____

I hereby grant the VSB leaders permission to photograph/film the minor designated above for any lawful purpose associated with this VBS program.

Parent's Signature: _____