

THE ST. JOHN NEWS

January 2024

The Sword of the Spirit The New Year and Your Study of the Sacred Scriptures

Are you or have you ever been angry with God? Your whole world got turned upside down. The death of a husband or wife. A job lost. A child you have not heard from in years. What went wrong? Where was God through all of it? If God is such a good God, then why does it always seem that evil wins? Why do bad things happen to God's chosen people? This article will not be a study of the problem of evil, but it will address the solution, God's answer to all of our heartache and pain. For those who are hurting, who are angry with God, or confused with what he allows to happen, please know that you are not alone. While no one has gone through exactly what you are going through, you have brothers and sisters in Christ who have faced similar dilemmas. This is how life is in this broken and sinful world, even though Jesus has already come and won our salvation. In addition to the family of Christ here on earth, you have those from the pages of Holy Scripture who have carried heavy loads allowed by God.

The guilt and shame felt by Adam for introducing sin and death to the perfect creation would have plagued him for the remainder of his 900 years of life (Genesis 5:1–5). Noah's son Ham was cursed because he did not properly cover Noah's nakedness following Noah's indulgence in wine that led to him being drunk and passing out (Genesis 9:20–25). Abraham failed to trust in God's promise that the world would be blessed through him when he lied to the king of Egypt in not admitting that Sarah was his wife (Genesis 12:10–20). Moses would have to live with the regret of murdering an Egyptian out of anger (Exodus 2:11–15). David grieved the death of his son with Bathsheba, even though David had committed adultery and had Bathsheba's husband killed (2 Samuel 12:15–23). Peter denied his association with Jesus completely and disgracefully (Matthew 26:69–75). Thomas could not believe Jesus was risen from the dead and demanded concrete proof (John 20:24–29).

Job's ten children were tragically killed in a building collapse. All of Job's wealth and possessions dissolved overnight. His body was racked with pain and agitation (Job 1–2). His laments toward God are well-known. "Let the day perish on which I was born...let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it...Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?...Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not" (Job 3:3, 4, 11, 20–21).

David offered up great laments to God in many of his psalms. Psalm 22 is written by David and quoted by Jesus as he suffered in excruciating agony on the cross. In those words, David said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest...But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people...For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me" (Psalm 22:1–2, 6, 16–17).

When Job and David and the other faithful were faced with monumental heartache and pain, they cried out against the Lord. They let him have it. Jeremiah is known as the lamenting prophet. Moses complained to God about dealing with the grumbling Israelites. After their laments, they always returned to the Lord and recalled his wondrous deeds. They trusted in the God who is good and has given them all good things. And the beauty of all of this is that this is all the Word of God. It is as though God himself is complaining against God. His Word is what he calls us to use for our benefit. Do not be afraid to cry out to God. He can handle whatever you throw at him. He knows the curse he has placed upon us because of sin. God knows the depths and depravity of our ruin, and he is with us through it all with his grace and mercy.

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Job, and all the rest never lost faith in God. The almighty One held on to them and they recalled his blessings and salvation. They trusted in the Holy Word of God for they knew what Paul knew, that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). The Word of God is our greatest tool and weapon in this life. It is to be cherished above all else. As the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39).

The Scriptures testify concerning Jesus. The Scriptures are Jesus. Christians are called the people of the Book. We are to be the people of the Book. Studying Scripture is like training with the sword of the Spirit. God equips you for this life through his Word. When the devil attacks you and this world fails you, the Word of God that you have studied comes to your rescue. The Spirit given to you in Baptism calls to your mind those sacred words of God (Acts 2:38). You are baptized. You are redeemed (Galatians 3:13). No one can snatch you out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38–39). Your eternal life is safe and secure in the hands of Jesus, for he is where all your treasures are stored (Matthew 6:20–21).

Christians have always understood the great value of hearing the Word of God, and we are blessed to be able to read the Word of God wherever and whenever we like. Computer programs, phone apps, and study Bibles all include reading plans for studying the Scriptures. Whatever media you choose, reading the Bible is of utmost value to you. There is no greater resource available to you in this life of sin and death that has been redeemed and conquered by our Lord Jesus Christ. As you begin another new year, you leave the past behind you, but the memories continue along with you. Even more so does the Word of God. As you start this new year, you may resolve to be a better student of God's Word. I cannot encourage more strongly to do this! God's Word is his great gift to you and he wants you to use it, to know it better than anything else. If there is a book of the Bible that you have never read, read it! Commit yourself to doing so. Study the Scriptures. Yes, this is a bit of law, but it is truly good for us all, as God's law always is.

As you are considering some changes in this new year, I invite you to attend our midweek Bible study that meets on Tuesdays in the fellowship hall. We take a verse-by-verse approach to studying a specific book of the Bible. I am open to requests and I always welcome questions about the texts or anything else Biblically and theologically related. Our next book of study is the Book of Exodus. This is the great story of God's rescue of his enslaved people from Egypt through the prophet Moses. God is at work in this powerful event foreshadowing what he is going to do for all mankind through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. If you miss a class or this time does not work out for you, you can access recordings of these Bible classes through our church website at www.stjohn-lcms.church/BibleStudy.html.

I pray the Lord's blessings and joy be with you in this new year of his grace as you dig into his Word and reap the benefits of being a child of God!

In Christ's service,
Pastor Caithamer

Let Us Pray

For Peace and Comfort: Nancy and family at the death of her mother Wanda Simpson, Esther at the death of husband Keith

For Healing and Recovery: Merv, Dan, Joan, Judy, Jim - brother of Karla, Kaylianna -great granddaughter of Bob & Joan, Robin, Karla, Charlene, Brian, Teresa -godchild of Bob & Joan, Barbara -family friend of Bob & Joan, John Lynch, Hendricks -grandson of Dan & Joanie, Maria, Merv, Rebecca -daughter of Marvin & Esther, Roy Johson -father of Anne, Todd -grandson of Harold, Brett -cousin of the Kindts'

For Successful Treatments: Kevin, Susan, Dan, Nancy, Barb, Luke, Earl, Linda, Joan, Jeanette, Nancy

For our Military: Nick D, Nick F, Andy, Brandon, Zachary, David

For our Missionaries: Pastor Randrianasolo Dembiniana Havanjanakary and the Madagascar Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Magnus Bengston and Lielsalaca Lutheran Church in Latvia, Pastor Obot Ite and the Lutheran Mission in Kingston, Jamaica Lielsalaca Lutheran Church in Latvia, Pastor Obot Ite and the Lutheran Mission in Kingston, Jamaica



LIFELIGHT is back! Join us as we study the Gospel of Mark, a 9-week Bible study that take us into Lent. You can join us Wednesday evenings at 5:45 or Thursday mornings at 10:00. Classes start January 17 and 18. To sign up, look for our table in the overflow or contact Matt, Donna or Bill.

Advent Dinners
Thank you to all who enjoyed the Advent dinners and donated items. The money raised will go toward the St. John 6th and 7th grade class trip! We really appreciate your support and generosity!

LWML will be holding their annual Soup Supper on Tuesday, January 16th, 2024 in the Fellowship Hall, 6:30 p.m. You are invited to join us for a devotion, short business meeting, plus food, fun, and fellowship. Mark your calendars now and do plan to attend. For further information, please contact Donna E or Linda. Looking forward to seeing you at this event!

Offering Envelopes for 2024 are in the hallway leading to the Fellowship Hall. Please come and collect yours. If you do not see your offering envelopes on the table, please contact the church office and we can get them for you.
Thank you!

Church Undecorating
Please consider helping us undecorate the church. We will meet Saturday, January 6th, at 9am in the overflow. Many hands makes the work go quickly. Thank you.

2024 Flower Chart
is available in the overflow. Please leave your name and a phone number so that the Altar Guild ladies can contact you. Thank you!



January Music Notes



From Advent through Christmas to Epiphany

Much good music was played, rung, and sung at St. John for Advent and Christmas. Thanks to all who helped with music at the worship services. It was a joy to have so many youngsters singing and playing as part of the Sunday School Christmas Program!

As we commence another calendar year I repeat my earnest plea/prayer/hope that there are some of you who can be encouraged to join our ensembles. We are in need of at least one more additional handbell ringer. Our singing choirs are absolutely in need of both men and women. I can assure you of good fellowship, fun, comfortable chairs, and a very warm welcome!

Rehearsals for the Alleluia Ringers continue on Wednesdays at 6:00 pm, and our Adult Choirs rehearse at the same hour on Thursdays.

On Sunday, January 7th we begin the season of Epiphany (transferring the Feast Day from the 6th.)

It was on this day that Christ was first manifested to the Gentiles – The Magi. The season continues on the 14th with the commemoration of the manifestation of Christ's divinity as it occurred at his baptism. The season also includes the remembrance of Christ's first miracle at the wedding at Cana. This year's Epiphanytide is relatively brief, lasting until the Feast of the Transfiguration on Sunday, February 11 which precedes the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 14.

Our liturgical calendar is reflected in the hymns in our Lutheran Service Book, which includes hymn texts that reflect upon all these events in the life of Christ. So many of these hymns have inspired great composers to write organ pieces based on these chorales, which I often select and include as a part of our weekly music. I hope that when you listen to these seasonal Preludes, Offertories, and Postludes throughout the year you reflect on the texts upon which they are based, and that listening to these pieces is as worshipful for you as is singing the hymns themselves.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Keith



The January E.A.T. Night will be at Panera
Monday, January 8, 4-8pm!

Panera is giving back 20% of our purchases. Bring in the flyer or show it on your phone to make sure that the proceeds will be donated to St. John Lutheran School.

Don't forget to get your \$25 Panera Gift Card from Ram Rebate in the school office.

Ice Skating Party

Friday, February 2, 5-7pm

UI Ice Arena - Free Event -

Everyone is welcome!

Whether you are a skating pro or a beginner,

come out for a great night of fun and fellowship!

Admission and skate rental included.



National Lutheran Schools Week, January 21-28 provides our network of more than 1,800 LCMS preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in Lutheran schools. We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children we serve. We are most grateful for the opportunity to share Jesus' amazing love with children and their families. National Lutheran Schools Week gives us an opportunity to proclaim these great blessings within the communities we serve. Our schools are amazing



incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

St. John Athletics

BOYS BASKETBALL HOME GAMES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23 - UNI HIGH, 6P

*LAST HOME GAME OF THE SEASON

VOLLEYBALL HOME GAMES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19 - DELAND-WELDON, 6P

*FIRST HOME GAME OF THE SEASON

GO RAMS!

Stewardship Corner—Isaiah 60: 6 – "They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD." Faith in God moves the heart toward thanksgiving, which moves us toward making offerings to the Lord in His house. It's simply what Christians do: Our thanksgiving to our Lord for all His benefits to us simply must overflow into sacrificial giving to the Lord. What Isaiah prophesied, the Wise Men did, and we still do today: we give with a thankful heart.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Sina , Carson , Sherryl , Miranda
 2 Chris , Katie , Edna , Maria
 3 Sarah , Sherrie , Linda
 4 Stephen , Major , Kody , T.J.
 5 Jennifer , Jeanette
 6 Bennett , Donaven , Brad
 7 Ali , Mia , Brynn , Abby
 8 James , Hendricks
 9 Olivia , Dylan , Ken , Lou Ann , Donna ,
 Kamryn
 10 Judah , George
 12 Meaghan , Jim
 13 Karen , Ryan , Allison
 14 Tamara , Kaleb
 15 Carrie , Doug
 16 Dennis , Zoe
 17 Reagan
 18 Jill Shore, Christian Williams
 19 Van Gharst, Bret Johnson, Steve Ruhlig
 20 Tryston Beyrer, Gary Gula, Karen Kresca, Barb
 Marcellus, Michael Martin

21 Mike , Larry, Kaitlin, Richele, Taylor
 22 John, B.J., Jacelyn
 23 Donna, Juleigh, Lorraine
 24 Mila, Morgan, Mikayla
 25 Charlene
 26 Dawn
 27 Dick
 28 Joshua, Robin, Erin
 29 Kevin , Jennifer , Laura , Joseph
 30 Tom , Daryl , Linda
 31 Myla , Christian , Sierra , Aiden

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

8 Eric & Kristina (19)
 12 Matt & Kylene (23)
 13 Daniel & Linda (34)
 15 Jonathan & Amanda (13)
 18 Bill & Phyllis (55)
 19 David & Donna (61)

PLEASE notify the church office
 (churchoffice—at -stjohn-lcms.church or
 359-1123) if your birthday or anniversary
 is missing or incorrect.



St. John Lutheran School & Little Lamb Preschool Open House

Tuesday, January 30, 5-7pm
 Invite friends, neighbors, family
 members, and anyone else to come
 meet our teachers, see our classrooms and ask
 questions about our school. Applications for
 2024-2025 are accepted beginning March 1st.

Pasta Dinner Fundraiser & PTF Talent Show

The Pasta Dinner will be held on Friday, January 26, 5:30-7pm.
 Tickets will available later this month. There will be a Dessert
 Auction. Please consider donating a dessert. A sign-up sheet will
 be posted by the fellowship hall.

This is a fundraiser for Middle School class trip in April 2024.

Talent Show

Immediately following the Pasta Dinner
 Do you have a special skill or talent? Want to perform a silly skit
 with your friends? This is your opportunity! The possibilities are
 endless! Gather your friends, step out of your comfort zone and
 hit the stage!

Acts should be no longer than 3-4 minutes.
 Registration forms are available in the school office.

Mission Statement:

United in faith, we serve the
 Kingdom of God by building lives
 that are rooted in the Word,
 centered on Christ, and motivated
 by Grace; to reflect Christ's love
 and share His Gospel with all.



So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11

2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat																																																																																																									
Church Office 359-1123 School Office 359-1714	1 <i>New Year's Day</i> <i>Church and School Closed</i>	2 6:00 Trustees	3 7:15 Holy Communion	4 <i>School Resumes</i>	5	6 <i>Epiphany</i> 9:00 Church Undecorating																																																																																																									
7 <i>Epiphany Obs.</i> 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion	8 4:00 E.A.T. Night @ Panera	9 6:00 Elders	10 8:10 Chapel 10:00 Adult Bible Class 5:45 Midweek School 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	11 7:00 Men's Prayer Breakfast @ Sammy's 6:00 Mixed Choir & Men's Choir	12 <i>No School</i>	13																																																																																																									
14 <i>Baptism of Our Lord</i> 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion	15 <i>Martin Luther King Day</i> <i>No School</i>	16 10:00 Adult Bible Class 6:00 Council 6:30 LWML Soup Supper	17 8:10 Chapel 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	18 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Mixed Choir & Men's Choir	19	20																																																																																																									
21 <i>3rd Sun after Epiphany</i> <i>National Lutheran Schools Week</i> <i>(January 21-28)</i> 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion	22 <i>Newsletter Deadline</i>	23 6:00 Parish Ed	24 8:10 Chapel 10:00 Adult Bible Class 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells	25 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Mixed Choir & Men's Choir	26 5:30 Pasta Dinner 7:00 School Talent Show	27																																																																																																									
28 <i>4th Sun after Epiphany</i> 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion	29	30 10:00 Adult Bible Class 5:00 School Open House	31 8:10 Chapel 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells	<i>Pastor's Day off:</i> <i>Fridays</i>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">December 2023</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	December 2023							S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31							<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">February 2024</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	February 2024							S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
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