



In Memoriam
Nancy Kruse

Worship
Sunday Morning 9:30 am
at VOA Gathering Room

*Holy Communion on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of
the month*

Sunday Morning Forums
10:45 am
at VOA Gathering Room

During our forum time after Sunday morning worship, we've been through a long series of sessions filled with discussion and education on the Acts of the Apostles (beginning in May), then followed up with the beginnings of a series on "Why we are Lutherans?" (starting in November). In a way, we've traveled through the beginnings of the Christian church in the first century, then moved on to the reformation period in the 16th century, what one might call a return to the principles and doctrines of the early church of Acts.

We began the Lutheran studies with a look at the Augsburg Confession of 1530, drilling down into specific articles out of that document: Article IV on "justification"; Article VI on "new obedience"; and Article XVIII on "free will." Still today the most controversial of articles is Article IV, which is the foundation upon which most of the twenty-one articles depend. If one can't agree on God's justifying work through Christ in the world, one can't agree on those articles that

have dependencies upon it. We'll continue in January looking at portions of Luther's Large Catechism and a couple of Martin Luther's other writings, including "Freedom of a Christian."

Prayer Requests

Please include in your prayers these folks:

- Gary Damott;
- Bob Gjengdahl and family and friends;
- the Kruse family and circle of friends, upon the loss of Nancy;
- Florence and Merton Gustad;
- this country—the USA;
- Cliff's sister and her family;
- all those serving in the military (especially Karl, Eric, and Ralph);
- Annette (Bea Hauge's nephew's wife), suffering with cancer;
- the Smeby family;
- Dan and Sherry and Dan's mother;
- Greg and Frank;
- the McDermid family, upon the loss of Esther;
- Kenneth and Comfort;
- all veterans and their loved ones;
- all those families traveling to and fro during these holidays (like Christmas, for instance);
- the care-givers at Elder Homestead, especially Diane;
- the residents of Elder Homestead;
- Kirsten and Craig and family, still grieving;
- Lynn, suffering with cancer;
- celebration in the baptism of Adelle Mae;
- veterans on Veterans' Day—and every day;
- all those strangers in our midst who don't know Christ—we pray for opening of their hearts and minds;
- the congregation of Lutheran Community of Grace and its mission in the area;

those Christians in India being persecuted for simply being Christian

(Send your prayer requests to info@LutheranCommunityGrace.org)

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray!”

So spoke the disciples to Jesus and so writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer as he begins the introduction to his little volume, “***Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible***.” He goes on:

In making this request, they [the disciples] confessed that they were not able to pray on their own, that they had to learn to pray. The phrase “learning to pray” sounds strange to us. If the heart does not overflow and begin to pray by itself, we say, it will never “learn” to pray. But it is a dangerous error, surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. For then we confuse wishes, hopes, sighs, laments, rejoicings—all of which the heart can do by itself—with prayer. And we confuse earth and heaven, man and God. Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one’s heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty. No man can do that by himself. For that he needs Jesus Christ.

The disciples want to pray, but they do not know how to do it. That can be very painful, to want to speak with God and not to be able to, to have to be speechless before God, to discover that every call to him dies within itself, that heart and mouth speak an absurd language which God does not want to hear. In this need we seek out men who are able to help us, who know something about prayer. If one among us who is able to pray would only take the other along in his prayer, if we could pray along with him, then we could be helped! Certainly experienced Christians can help us in this way a great deal. But they can do it only through him who must himself help them, and to whom they direct us if they are true teachers in prayer, namely through Jesus Christ...He wants to pray with us and to have us pray with him, so that we may be confident and glad that God hears us. When our will wholeheartedly enters into the prayer of Christ,

then we pray correctly. Only in Jesus Christ are we able to pray, and with him we also know that we shall be heard.

And so we must learn to pray. The child learns to speak because his father speaks to him. He learns the speech of his father. So we learn to speak to God because God has spoken to us and speaks to us. By means of the speech of the Father in heaven his children learn to speak with him. Repeating God’s own words after him, we begin to pray to him. We ought to speak to God and he wants to hear us, not in the false and confused speech of our heart, but in the clear and pure speech which God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ.

*God’s speech in Jesus Christ meets us in the Holy Scriptures. If we wish to pray with confidence and gladness, then the words of Holy Scripture will have to be the solid basis of our prayer. For here we know that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, teaches us to pray. The words which come from God become, then, the steps on which we find our way to God. (from ***Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible***, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1970)*

Psalms for December

Join us for prayer sessions in December, Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm in the Shady Oak outreach center. We’ll be using the following Psalms as springboards into our own discussions and prayers: Psalms 72, 146, 80, and 148. You can, of course, also participate on-line. See our “Prayer in Downtown” blog at the following location: www.LutheranCommunityGrace.net/wordpress

More about Prayer

Pastor Karl Kruse will be mentoring a course on prayer, entitled “***The Exciting World of Prayer***.” It explores such topics as: “What is Prayer?” and “The Power of Prayer.” The cost is minimal and it will be held in both morning and evening sessions. No background or previous experience is needed, which means that anyone who is interested in learning more about prayer and *growing deeper* in relationship with God can participate.

This course will begin on **Monday, January 3, 2011** and will be held at the Shady Oak outreach center. Stay tuned for more details as to times of the day.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

An old-time hymn or spiritual, most likely first published in musical notation, after probably many years of song, in 1873. It is credited to Wallis Willis, a Choctaw in the Indian Territory (what is today roughly the state of Oklahoma), who was heard singing the song by a headmaster/minister of the boarding school that Wallis was attending.

Chorus: *Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!*

¹*I looked over Jordan and what did I see,
Comin' for to carry me home!
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home!*

²*If you get there before I do,
Comin' for to carry me home!
Tell all my friends that I'm comin' too,
Comin' for to carry me home!*

³*I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,
Comin' for to carry me home!
But still my soul feels heavenly bound,
Comin' for to carry me home!*

Curiously, the hymn recently has been adopted by English rugby fans. The reference to one of Psalms is difficult to avoid, however, with its vision of God who “makes the clouds thy chariot,” and who “rides on the wings of the wind.” (Psalm 104:3).

It's also an appropriate and timely song for this congregation, whose friends and neighbors have witnessed this chariot “swinging down low” with its “band of angels” to gather up recently several near and dear to us: Carla Gjengdahl, Signe Smeby, Esther McDermid, and Nancy Kruse. *[is contributing]*

Hebrew ↔ Greek thinking

Who can read and interpret a particular author without knowing the context in which the writing took place—that context including the time and place of the author, the audience, the genre of the composition, the Zeitgeist or worldview of the times, the language used, etc., to say nothing of the reader and his/her context as well. All of these contextual issues shed light upon the meaning.

Dan Ronning brought up this topic recently in conjunction with a morning Bible study on Acts. Is the appropriate mindset to approach a particular passage that of the Hebrew or that of the Greek. In describing the difference, Dan points to the following little example: When asked how to define a juvenile delinquent, the Greek thinker would likely launch into a lengthy lecture (perhaps a mere overview of several volumes of material) that would contain a descriptive analysis of the delinquent. The Hebrew thinker, on the other hand, would paint a scenario something like: “If the mother indulges in garlic and the father relished onions, it's not likely the child would not come out smelling like a rose.”

Thorleif Boman writes in his book, *“Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek”*, that Hebrew thinking is more organic while Greek thinking is more static. Hebrew thinking is “dynamic, vigorous, passionate, and sometimes quite explosive in kind; correspondingly Greek thinking is static [harmonic or resting], peaceful, moderate....” The Hebrew mind sees things that are “changeable and in motion” whereas the Greek mind sees things with “immovable fixity and inflexibility.”

Look at Psalm 46 with its earth giving way and the mountains falling into the heart of the sea (v. 2). Verbs, more important than descriptors, are brought to the attention of the reader, and they are verbs which describe not only action or “being” or “becoming”, but “effecting” something, as in light coming forth to illuminate. Being motionless or fixed in position is not in the mindset of the Hebrew; at the very least a thing is actively “being” in relation to something.

So the Hebrew *pursues* life and *pursues* a relationship with a God who they see as “open and expansive” and dynamic. The Greek (including us Western folks) is more prone to passive thought, descriptive analysis, and observation of life and of God, rather than ongoing and active participation in either.

Perhaps a little too much “Greek thinking” going into this all too brief and passive Greek analysis? Think about it (*actively*) as you read the next Psalm you read, as we go through a sermon series on Genesis, as we read the letters of Paul (a Jew proclaiming to the Greek-thinking Gentiles), as we approach Western civilization 14-year old (or 76-year old) intellectuals in their consumption of the latest gnostic spiritual program. (from *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, Thorleif Boman, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1960; *dr and js contributing*)

Mary and Joseph keeping watch over Shady Oak Road

We appreciate the contributions of those who have donated goods and services to our little outreach center on Shady Oak Road. We now have a nativity scene illuminating (in the Hebrew sense) the landscape of the commuters going north and south along Shady Oak road. We’ve also been given, through the generosity of many, file cabinets, a desk and an office chair, a couch, coffee machines, tables, area rugs, books, toys and games, and much more. Thanks to all who have helped furnish the space at the outreach center.

Where’s your church?

Where’s the church? “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” says Jesus, as recorded in Matthew’s gospel (18:20). Sunday morning worship perhaps isn’t the only place where “church is” (assuming it, at least, has “gathered in the name of Jesus”), but simply one of many places that two or three or more have gathered “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Of course, as we read about in so many of the stories in Acts during our recent Bible study

sessions, church *is* where the gathering is.

Today, the gathering is in many and varied places: coffee shops, automobiles, picnic benches in the park, someone’s home, a telephone call, a Skype session, or ? A “priest” or pastor or minister isn’t a requirement (look back there at Matthew), nor is an altar, a pew, a hymnal or even a Bible (but don’t go long without this!). A gathering in His name is where “church” is.

“How *many* do you worship?” or “What *is* your budget?” or “*Where* is your church?” are Greek-thinking questions. The Hebrew-thinking person instead would say, “Where are the two or three or more *gathering in His name* tonight?”

Contributing

dan ronning, joel smeby

Your ideas and contributions to this newsletter are always welcome.

Locate Us



Volunteers of America (VOA) building

11400 4th Street North

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(Traveling west on Hwy 7, make a U-turn at Shady Oak Road and take the first right exit)

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