

From the Desk of Pastor Jim

The Customs of Lent and Easter

Still for many people today, it is their custom to think about “giving up” something for Lent. This may be certain foods or some kind of indulgence, i.e. chocolate, that is abstained from during Lent. But more and more, Lent ought to be thought of a time of “taking up” something. If people want to discipline themselves and make sacrifices for the right reasons, that is good indeed. If it is our response to God’s goodness and flows naturally from the Gospel, then it is even better.

So rather than “give up” something for Lent, maybe “take up” something that will connect you to your Savior and help you grow in faith would be even better. Lent’s challenge is to “take up” our cross daily and to follow Jesus. Maybe “take up” committing to memory the explanation to the second article of the Apostle’s Creed, to identify with the suffering and death and resurrection of our Savior for us.

The word “Lent” comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, “Lencten.” It refers to the lengthening of days in the spring in the northern hemisphere. Similarly, the word “Easter” had no Christian significance at first, being derived from the name of the pagan goddess of spring, Eostre. However, the Church was always willing to “baptize” pagan names and customs and put them to work for Jesus Christ.

Lent is meant to be a time of hope, knowing of the great gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ has indeed been won for us. The Season of Lent began, although not commanded nor found in the Bible, as a pre-Easter fast of 40 hours. Over time, the season of Lent stretched into a week before Easter, then two weeks, beginning with Passion Sunday, and eventually, around the 7th Century, it was extended to the present length of 40 days. It reminds us of the 40 days that it rained during the Flood; the 40 days that Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments; Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness; and Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The beginning of those 40 days is determined by the date of Easter, which is the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 21st, the calendar’s date for the beginning of spring. If one counts the Sundays, the 40 days include all days between Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday. Most times though, the Sundays are excluded, because they are always mini celebrations of Christ’s resurrection. Each Sunday is considered a little Easter, and therefore, strictly speaking, is not part of Lent.

The beginning of the Lenten seasons usually had the Imposition of Ashes placed on the brows of the worshippers, as the Pastor quotes the words from Genesis 3:19, “Dust you are and to dust you will return,” this being where Ash Wednesday gets its name. The origin of this custom is not Roman, but seems to have originated in Gaul in the 6th Century and was first used to comfort public penitents of their grave or notorious sin. From France, the custom spread to England and then to Rome in the 9th or 10th Century and from there to Germany, Southern Italy and Spain. It was a sign to those to be Baptized or Confirmed and reminded them of Jesus’ death and resurrection for their forgiveness.

While in most customs, fasting was also added to the Lenten Season, fasting was not something Lutherans much picked up on. Luther constantly reminded his hearers that outward actions do not necessarily imply one is truly sorry for sin. Luther says, “the person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”

Many countries observe a festival on the day before Lent begins, called Shrove Tuesday. It is called Shrove Tuesday, taking the name from an old English word “shriving” meaning to confess and be absolved of ones sin. In France, it is known as “Mardi Gras,” and in Germany it is called “Fastnacht,” meaning night of fasting. In some parts of the country, pancakes are traditionally eaten on Shrove Tuesday. In Europe and South America, this is a Carnival time, much like the whole Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans is today. Few would see any useful Christian significance in this.

Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin word “Mandatum,” meaning command. On this day, Jesus gave His disciples a new mandate with the Lord’s Supper, “to love one another as I have loved you.” Another explanation says that the word comes from the Latin word “Mundo,” meaning to wash, since on this day Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. Some denominations still practice foot washing before Communion on Maundy Thursday. A third explanation for the name comes from the old English word “Maund,” meaning basket. It refers to the practice of giving baskets of food and or clothing to the poor on this day. In England there is a still a special service at Westminster Abbey, which dates back to the 5th Century, where Queen Elizabeth II gives special minted “Maundy Money” to a representative group of the poor.

Good Friday was originally called “God’s Friday.” The pronunciation changed over time, just as the words “God be with you” became simply “Goodbye.” Two services that are popular on Good Friday are “Tre Ore,” usually a three hour long service, spanning the time from 12 Noon till 3 P.M., paralleling the three hours Christ spent on the cross. The other service is called “Tenebrae,” and was originally held on Maundy Thursday, but now is quite common on Good Friday. The word “Tenebrae” means darkness, gloom and shades of death and hell, all reminiscent of what Christ faced for us on Good Friday.

Finally we come to Easter. The “sun-god” that was worshipped by the pagans during this time of the year, was simply Christianized by the Church and now we celebrate the rising of the eternal Son of God from His dark grave. The chorus of “He is Risen” and “He is Risen Indeed” identifies the wonderful climax to the message of Lent. It is a message of hope that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of His Father, so all believers in Christ will also rise. Since Christ did not stay dead, neither will you or I, who hope in Him. That is the message of Easter!

Your Pastor Jim

Easter Services

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – APRIL 6TH, 2014

Sermon: Matthew 27:35–44 *“The King on the Cross”*

PALM SUNDAY – APRIL 13TH, 2014

Sermon: Matthew 21:1-11 *“The King’s Praise”*

MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 17TH, 2014

SERVICE TIME 7 P.M. WITH HOLY COMMUNION

Sermon: Matthew 26:17–30 *“The King’s Feast”*

GOOD FRIDAY – APRIL 18TH, 2014

SERVICE TIME 7 P.M.

Sermon: Matthew 27:45–50 “*The King Forsaken*”

EASTER WEEKEND – APRIL 19TH & 20TH, 2014

EASTER SATURDAY VIGIL AT 5 P.M. WITH HOLY COMMUNION

EASTER SUNDAY EARLY AT 7 A.M. WITH HOLY COMMUNION

EASTER SUNDAY BREAKFAST AT 8:30 A.M.

EASTER SUNDAY LATE AT 10 A.M. WITH HOLY COMMUNION

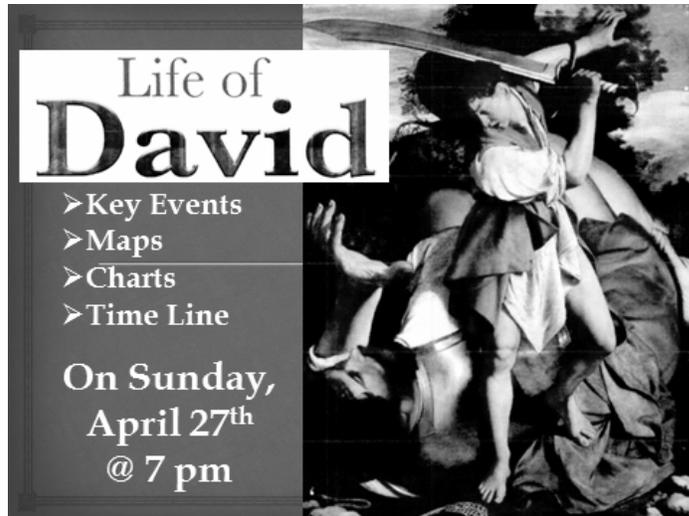
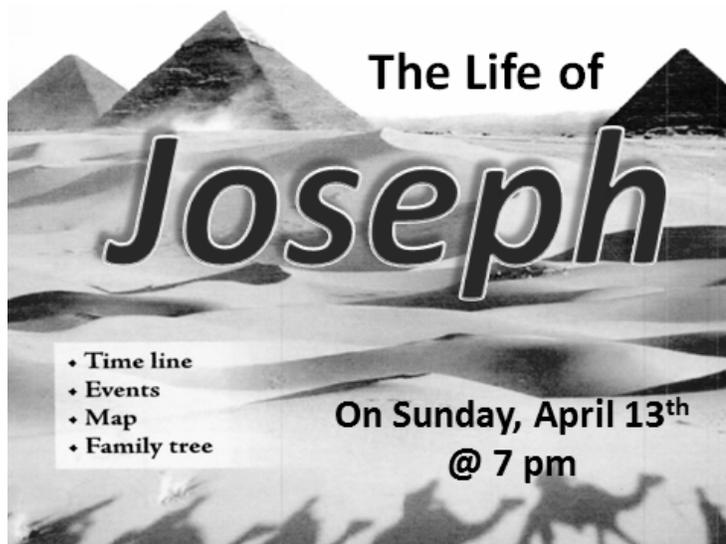
Sermon: Matthew 28:1–30 “*The King Raised*”

Walk through the Bible Class

In April, Pastor Jim will hold two classes, one on April 8th and the other on April 22nd. Classes are in the afternoon at 1 pm or the evening at 7 pm. We will probably study the Book of Job.

Teaching Events in April

Pastor Jim will offer two Teaching Events in April, the “Life of **Joseph**,” on April 13th and the “**Life of David**” on April 27th.



Servant Event in Caldwell, Ohio – August 3-8, 2014

Pastor Jim will be heading up a building project and joining the group from Hosanna Lutheran Church of Columbia Station and the H.A.R.P. Mission and traveling to Southern Ohio. If you would like to participate the cost is \$150/person plus a \$50 gift card from either Lowe’s, Home Depot or Wal-Mart, which will be used to purchase the necessary supplies for the service project.

The event begins on Sunday, August 3rd at 3 pm and will end on Friday, August 8th at noon. Room and

Board is provided for each volunteer. If interested, please speak to Pastor Jim to get the necessary application and medical forms which will need to be filled out. We will car pool down to the site.

Can't participate but still want to help? You can donate gift cards and/or cash to be used to purchase the needed supplies for the projects. Gift cards in any denomination from Lowe's, Home Depot and Wal-Mart will be accepted. Simply drop them off in the Church Lobby in the box provided. The display and box will not be up until April 1st. For more information or questions you can talk with Pastor Jim or contact Pastor Gary Richard at 440-309-8252 or email him at revgrichard@gmail.com.



The H.A.R.P. Mission

Servant Event

“Blessed to Be a Blessing!”

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35

**Coordinated by: The H.A.R.P. Mission
810 Main Street, Caldwell, OH. 43724**

Church groups and individuals will provide home maintenance, repair, wheelchair ramps and other help for families in crisis, disabled, widowed, elderly, and Veterans.

**Learn how to repair and rebuild homes for families destroyed by disasters.
Experience discipleship and share Jesus' love with others.**

**WHEN: Check-in Sunday, Aug. 3, 3:00 PM
WHERE: The warehouse in Caldwell.**

**Projects will be worked on each day - Monday, August 4 through Friday, August 8
COST: \$150 PER PERSON Plus \$50 Gift Card
Registration includes food and lodging**

Registration forms: Pastor Jim has all the registration forms. Just ask!

EASTER WAS A MIRACLE – WANT YOUR OWN??

A Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend is for couples of “all ages and stages” who want to never stop growing in their love and commitment. It provides a safe and focused opportunity for couples to reconnect—far from the usual “busies.” The next Encounter is planned for April 25-27 at the Fairfield Inn & Suites in Beachwood, OH. Make inquiries and/or reserve your place for \$45, (a freewill offering to cover program costs will be taken at the end, and some “scholarships” are available for this priceless event), by contacting Duffy & Nan Guthrie @ 440-599-9090 or nguthrie@suite224.net, or register on line at GodLovesMarriage.org.