

PASTOR'S PAGE for APRIL 2017

Dear Saints,

Our current Lenten midweek series "24 Hours that Changed the World" has got me thinking ... as any worship service should. First off, I'm grateful for the positive response of those who come; last week was 55 people. Pastor Sue Ellen and our musicians certainly add much dimension to the video presentations, and I hope the discussions and reflections are fruitful with insights on our shared Lenten journey. The Passion story grows darker with each passing week before Easter's arrival.

Secondly, I'm reminded what a difference any 24 hours can make in our lives and relationships ... for good or bad. It reminds us to be a good steward with the opportunities and challenges of each given day as a gift from God. So we are to reflect upon the 24 pivotal hours of the Passion story of Jesus, and how it informs and transforms our perspectives in praying "Thy Will be done" daily.

I'm trying to make myself set aside some time to cull through files, long overdue. There are some clippings which stand the test of timeliness, such as one by "Chicago Tribune" columnist Eric Zorn: "Real Priorities show when time is our own" from 12/25/97. He recounted a floundering college romance, when his girlfriend complained "I'm not a high priority in your life." Eric protested, saying he loved and needed her. She said the way he spent his non-study time proved his heart was elsewhere. Eric ultimately realized his schedule didn't lie, no matter what excuses he made. "Priorities reveal themselves. If you want to know what's really important to a person, you won't find the answer in what he says, proclaims or even believes, but in what he does; how he spends

his time. We're all transparent against the face of the clock. We reveal ourselves constantly, unavoidably, every day through the choices we make in our free hours. ... Sorrow is sincere. It's the recurrent ache that you are not the person you aspire to be or even imagine yourself to be – that you are more selfish and shallow and impulsive than you'd like; less loyal, less disciplined, less admirable. Being honest with yourself usually isn't much more difficult than taking inventory of the days and hours gone by. ... Your priorities are showing. ... You can't buy time or save it; you can only spend it. And the ledger of outlays reveals your true portrait ... that words and money and stacks of objects bought at retail cannot change." Eric quoted a song by Thom Bishop at the end of his article: "You'll win the world if love succeeds. Don't learn too late, what true love needs. True love needs the simple gift of time."

I venture all of us feel a bit guilty about our stewardship of time as days and months go by. Saint Paul described this in Romans 7:15-25, saying "I do not understand what I do... For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing." It is our human condition of sin, in realizing our need for Jesus Christ. Each new day, we are put to death our sinful selves and rise to a newness of life and faith, sharing forgiveness and love, giving thanks to the Lord.

Holy Week is the culmination of our Lenten journey, with its Maundy Thursday meal of Communion, the betrayal by those closest to Jesus and public condemnation, and crucifixion on Good Friday. These are the context of the incredible Easter message, highlighting the grace of God's purposes. Make the journey!

April opportunities include “Reveal the Beauty Within” on Saturday the 8th to clean and prepare our church for Holy Week and Easter. We gather the 9th for Palm Sunday in our Fellowship Hall to process into the Sanctuary. Maundy Thursday is the 13th, with Good Friday on the 19th. Those of you willing to assist in decorating for Easter should come Saturday morning, the 20th around 9 a.m.

New Member classes are scheduled for Mondays, April 17th & 24th and May 1st at 7 p.m. Please let me know of anyone interested in attending and encourage our visitors. Phill Donner and Roxanne Hopkins are hosting a Bible Study on the topic of love in its many forms, highlighting Greek-based words found in Scripture and relevance to daily life. These discussions will be offered at 9 a.m. at church and 7 p.m. at the Donner’s home starting April 19 and continue each Wednesday through May 10th. Plan to attend and let us know your interest. WELCA plans its rummage sale on April 28-29, and Drop Off is scheduled the 23rd-26th. Volunteer help is always appreciated, and speak to our leadership ladies regarding your availability.

Love in Christ, Pastor Nathan

