Why did Jesus tell parables?

Jesus told parables, a lot of them (many of which we will read in worship this summer). He told the parable of the sower, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the hidden treasure, the mustard seed, the leaven, and the good Samaritan, to name but a few. But why? Why did Jesus tell parables?

First, what is a parable?

Before we answer why, let's first define what a parable is. At its most basic level, a parable, as used by Jesus, is a metaphor or simile that Jesus drew from everyday life to illustrate some truth about the Kingdom of God. But Jesus liked to add some unexpected element to His parables, something that seemed odd or surprising. He did that to get the parable stuck in people's head so that they would wrestle with the implications of the parable, its truths regarding the Kingdom, and its potential life-altering effect on them. Central to interpreting Jesus' parables, then, is an accurate understanding of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom is the active and ongoing redemptive reign of God in Christ among man.

So, what is the Kingdom of God?

When people hear "kingdom," they usually imagine a castle with a drawbridge and a moat. This is NOT what the Bible means. For the Bible, the "Kingdom of God" has nothing to do with a castle; it's about the reigning of God. In brief, the Kingdom is the active and ongoing redemptive reign of God in Christ among man. The Kingdom has two great moments: its coming through Christ in history and its consummation at the end of this age. The message of the Kingdom sounds throughout the Scriptures. If we wish to grasp the message Scripture shares, we must see the Kingdom's dynamic activity in Christ (blind see, deaf hear, lame walk, mute talk, sick heal, dead live, tempests calmed, sinners forgiven, and the coming reality of the cosmos' renewal).

But why didn't Jesus just speak plainly?

Jesus' parables hinted at the in-breaking of God's Kingdom in Him, alluded to it, and illustrated it, but they didn't come right out and say it. The parables required deep and prolonged reflection to discern their message about the Kingdom. So why would Jesus employ a teaching tool that required so much thought? The disciples wondered the same thing. Matthew tells us they asked Jesus,

> "Why do you speak to [the crowds] in parables?" Jesus answered, "This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.' For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them'" (Mt. 13:10-14).

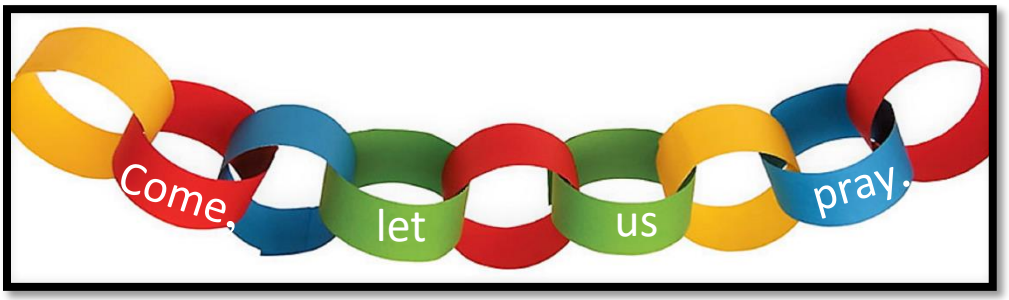
Jesus was saying, "They can't handle direct preaching. The Kingdom of God has come into their midst and they refuse to see it. They saw it with their eyes, but didn't really 'see' it. They heard it with their ears, but didn't really 'hear' it. They're blind and deaf to the Kingdom. So I teach them about the Kingdom through parables."

Through parables, then, Jesus acknowledged the people's failure to prepare themselves to receive the message of the Kingdom. In this way, Jesus' parables were a **judgment** on sinful man. It's why Jesus said in Mark 4, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you."

He was saying that the effort you put into your hearing now is 'the measure you use.' If you put forth a paltry measure, you will get back a paltry measure of the Kingdom. If you put forth a mighty measure, you will get back a mighty measure of God's Kingdom and even more will be given to you. In this way, Jesus invited His hearers to wrestle with His parables, to meditate on their meaning. If they would put forth the effort, they would find Christ the King's redemptive reign in the heart of the parables. In this way, then, the parables served as a **grace** to give people time to hear, to see, and to perceive the reality of God's Kingdom in their midst.

To the disciples, the ones chosen as spokesmen for the kingdom, however, Jesus spoke plainly and explained the parables. "To you," Jesus said, "has been given the secret of the kingdom of God…" This "secret" was that in Jesus, the Kingdom of God had begun to penetrate the experience of men. And through their continued preaching after Jesus' ascension, God would and will continue calling souls to hear and see the message of the Kingdom of God and to respond accordingly.

We have the distinct privilege of proclaiming that same message today. Jesus the King is reigning. He continues to forgive. He continues to invite. He continues to offer His Kingdom peace. And He will come again to reveal the fullness of His Kingdom to the world. As we await that day, Jesus says to us, "He who has ears, let him hear." May we hear well and may the measure we use (the effort we put forth) be mighty so that we may joyfully welcome Christ the King when He comes. –Pastor Conner



During the first three full weeks of July, Zion's Friendship Committee invited congregation members and community residents to join together in 15 days of focused prayer. The pictures on this page represent a small sampling of the ways people participated and the things for which / about which we prayed. The entire list is still available on Zion's webpage (www.zionmanning.com) and you can still see / participate in these prayers on our Facebook page (the 15 day emphasis began on July 6) and continue to join us each day live at 7:30 a.m. or recorded anytime. Thanks for joining us and thanks for praying!

It can really hurt when someone you love does not grasp the Christian faith. Spouse, parent, child, it doesn't matter…it hurts. So how can we productively engage those who are unconnected or disconnected from the faith? I'd encourage 3 things: 1) investigate; 2) intercede; 3) interact.

Investigate (Holy Scripture)

Believe it or not, Scripture does have something to say about this dilemma. Specifically, Paul addresses spouses who find themselves in a situation where only one spouse believes Jesus of Nazareth. So, let's *investigate* Holy Scripture.

St. Paul writes: **12** To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. **13** If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. **15** But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. **16** For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? [1 Corinthians 7:12-16]

While this is Paul's admonition, his advice is reflective of Christ; that is, Paul calls believing spouses to show radical faithfulness to their unbelieving spouse which is representative of the radical faithfulness Christ showed us on the cross before we were made to believe.

When we investigate Holy Scripture we see that we can glorify GOD by living for the sake of our spouse and our children, and, implicitly, that sacrificial living flows from the life of our Lord Jesus. The greatest opportunity we have is to demonstrate Christ in the context of our marriage – and of course, that sacrificial living can extend to children, parents, and friends too.

Intercede (for our spouse)

St. Augustine led Christians pastorally during the late 4th century into the 5th century. His works like his autobiographical *Confessions* encourages Christians to this day. But before Augustine pastored Christians in north Africa, his mother, Monica, prayed furiously for her adolescent son and unbelieving husband. As a result, Augustine warmly recalls his Mother's prayerfulness and presence even when Augustine had no time for her seeming nonsense. Point is, Monica's interceding or praying on Augustine's behalf was not a waste of time.

The reality is, you will not change your spouse or whoever. Just like the parable of the Sower illustrated last month in our weekly readings (Matthew 13), we are *all* at the mercy of the Sower and His seed. The point then of praying is for someone's eyes to be opened to the reality of who and what Jesus of Nazareth is – and that depends on GOD's intervention.

As people connected to Christ, we have the ability to verbalize our problems before GOD; we can identify people in our lives who need divine transformation. And we can pray our problems in confidence knowing they're received (Hebrews 4:16).

Really quick – you might say, why do I need to pray for someone if GOD's going to do what GOD's going to do? Well, sure, GOD is GOD, we're not. The GOD of history and the Holy Scriptures will do as He pleases. *However* – and it's a big however – prayer, according to Scripture is heard and GOD responds. It's not an "either-or" it's a "both-and." *BOTH* God will do as He pleases with or without us *AND* our intercessory prayers are heard and GOD responds to them (or at least that's the picture we have from the Scriptures).

So, maybe one of the greatest things you can do is pray. Probably not the answer you were searching for, but prayer puts you in the right position, because in prayer you acknowledge that the only way the situation will be resolved is by GOD (not me). But also, GOD listens and responds to His people when they pray – or He has in the past anyway. Lastly, Augustine appreciated (eventually) his Mother's care for him when she lifted him up in prayer. It was an act of love of which, Augustine had rarely experienced in his life.

So once a day, try on this prayer based on Ephesians 1:18: *Dear Father – thank you for opening my eyes to the truth of who and what Jesus is for me. Open [insert name]'s eyes, so that they would finally experience true hope in their life. Amen.*

Interact (with your spouse)

A way – not the only way – but a way of moving forward as you investigate the Bible and intercede in prayer is to interact; have a conversation. The point isn't manipulation or to say the right words which then makes all of Christianity *click*! The point is to walk with someone in order to see what they're seeing and, perhaps, share with them what you're seeing as you walk together.

Interact by asking *how's life going*? Are you happy – why or why not? Are you unhappy – why or why not?

You're allowing someone to share their view, and there may be things making that person happy – work, hobbies, family, income, so on. All good things from GOD. But what if you see that those things are playing god in their life. Work is all they can think about even when they're at home. Hobbies suck up all the income (fishing is expensive!). The kids get more attention than you do, the spouse. There's an opportunity to say what you see, which is *what if*. "What if, Honey, you lost your job? Would you remain happy?" If not, why not? Then that becomes a place where you explain where you see hope in spite of less than ideal circumstances where good things are taken out of our lives (maybe *for* good and maybe *for our* good). Point is, you can interact with the person you love and share that you're connected to Jesus of Nazareth – life can go down-the-tube fast especially for Christians – but down-the-tube moments are a momentary setback for Christians (see Romans 8).

And the same goes if the person you love is unhappy with where they are in life. Work stinks; there's nowhere to advance in what you're doing. Nobody seems to like me including the kids. There's no money. Again, here's an opportunity for you to interact and share what you see.

In Christ, you have supernaturally died and resurrected (Romans 6); you're a new person.

You're more than your pecking order at work; everyone else hates you but the Ultimate Person of the Universe, the Son of GOD thinks highly of you – that counts for everything; and money is nice, but when you're connected to the person Who has the whole wide world in His hands – then money becomes less of a Wolfman monster in your life and more like a Cookie monster.

You can interact with the people you love with meaningful questions that encourage Christ-filled conversation. Takes time and it hinges on Divine conversion, but you don't have to throw up your hands in despair. Rather, you can use one hand to open your Bible while you throw the other hand up in prayer. At least that's how Christians in the past have responded when the ones they loved disbelieved.
-Pastor Johnson

Running Commentary
2 John verse 4

4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

John rejoices over the fact that those who have received the truth respond in walking in that truth; which is to say, not straying from it – not taking an alternate route which leads to something less than Jesus as the way, the truth, the life.

The word "commanded" is a little misleading when you look at the original text. John says something to the effect that the children "received the command by the Father" or "from the Father." Point is, the children or even John for that matter did come upon this truth by themselves. It was received. You might remember that John along with the rest of the Disciples disbelieved Jesus' resurrection until they *received* Jesus' presence behind locked doors. Jesus (the Son of GOD) revealed Himself to the Disciples, not the other way around.

Which is an important lesson for us today, because we are just as dependent on GOD revealing Himself to us, and there are many people in our lives waiting for GOD to be revealed to them through us.

Above:
Feeding Manilla Firefighters and Saying Thank You.

Right:
Cleaning up and Caring for GOD's Creation after the 4th of July

Five Things You Should Not Say at Funerals[1]

by Dr. Jeff Gibbs, professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary St. Louis

As a young pastor in the early 1980s, I learned pretty quickly that you hear things said at funerals that (strictly speaking) were not true. The deceased was often described as the kind of person who "never turned away anyone in need" or who "would give anyone the shirt off his back" or who was "always a loving and patient husband." Recognizing quickly the need to "translate" comments made during times of intense emotional strain, I also learned that it was probably a grim thing when the best that was said about the dead person was "Oh, he was a real character all right!"

As a not-as-young pastor now in the early years of the twenty-first century, I still hear at funerals things said about the dead Christian that are not true. The problem is that I hear them said by the pastor, as part of his sermon. These are things which, strictly speaking, are not true. More importantly, these are things which, theologically speaking, are not true.

And so we ought not to say them. Because ultimately, statements such as the ones highlighted below downplay the real meaning of death, and they diminish the great hope of resurrection that is God's answer in Christ to the reality of death. The following are things that should not be said at funerals.

First: "Bob has received the crown of righteousness, and he has heard the Lord say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'." No, actually, he hasn't— not yet. The phrase "crown of righteousness" comes from 2 Timothy 4:8 where Paul confidently asserts as he looks forward to his own death, "Finally, the crown of righteousness is being stored up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing." The crown of righteousness is awarded on the Last Day, at the Final Judgment. Until that day— it is stored up and waiting to be awarded (see also 1 Peter 5:4). The Lord's commendation, "Well done," comes from the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), a parable that also refers to the Judgment Day. The final verdict on each Christian's service is not given until the final accounting takes place–when the Master returns after a long journey (Matt. 25:14, 19; see also 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Second: "Margaret has now entered into eternal life." There is no Biblical support for a statement like this–this is not, in fact, a Christian thing to say. Standing on its own, such an utterance can also have the double effect of both diminishing the

[1] This article was original published in *Concordia Journal,* Vol. 29, Num. 4, October 2003. I have reprinted it with permission.

significance of Holy Baptism and effectively eliminating the creedal hope of "the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come." As John 5:24ff. tells us, eternal life has already begun for all who hear Jesus' words and believe the Father who sent Him. Whatever else might be said about the condition of the believer's soul when death tears it away from the believer's body, this event cannot and must not be called "entrance into eternal life." To say such a thing is to imply that the body is not destined to participate in eternal life!

Third: "John has gone to his eternal home." This utterance contains an echo of a Biblical way of speaking, but it is terribly misleading. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Paul is dealing with the prospect of death, the hope of the resurrection body, and how these matters interrelate. His primary hope concerns the resurrection body that will be given to him and to all believers "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4; cf. 1 Cor. 15:53f.). Until he puts on that dwelling, Paul and all believers groan, along with the whole creation (2 Cor. 5:4; cf. Rom. 8:22-23). The gift of the Holy Spirit, however, is the "bridge" between this mortal existence and that immortal, resurrection life–the Spirit is the "guarantee" of final inheritance and life (2 Cor. 5:5).

So, life is lived in this tension. Until the gift of the resurrection body, one must be "home" somewhere and "away" from something. Currently, Paul is "home in the body" and "away from the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6). If he had to choose, he would rather be "away from the body" and "home with the Lord," something that he elsewhere describes as an existence that is "far better" (Phil. 1:23). But this does not mean that the bodiless existence of the soul is "our eternal home." If one were going to specify the location of our "eternal home," the closest approximation would be where we are now—in God's creation! As creatures, this creation is rightly our home.

Spoiled by sin, however, the creation awaits renewal—our eternal home is in need of renovation, purging, restoration. A Christian who dies most certainly is, in some important sense, "at home with the Lord." But at death, the believer does not go to his or her eternal home—not yet.

Fourth: "Julia is with the Lord now forever." This, too, implies that the resurrection of the body is an afterthought, an add-on, something that isn't very important. The blessed condition of the dead believers is rest, paradise, a being "with the Lord"—but it will not always be that way. Our dogmatic theologians have rightly called the condition of the soul apart from the body the "interim state." It is a "between" kind of existence. It is not the existence that will characterize eternal life. Things will change on the Last Day also for the dead–they will be raised and in that condition, "we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

Fifth: "This is not a funeral—it's Craig's victory celebration!" This is perhaps the most objectionable of all—and it is patently false, as even many unbelievers instinctively know. It is true, of course, that when a Christian dies, he is now "out of danger"—he can no longer be tempted. In addition, when tragic and prolonged physical or mental suffering precede the death of a Christian, there can be great relief and release for both the deceased and for those who loved him and have cared for him.

But who could even imagine saying that a funeral is a "victory" when it's the funeral of a child, or of a young mother, or of a colleague and friend struck down in the midst of a vigorous and productive life? As a matter of fact, the death even of a Christian is always and only a sign that sin has not

yet fully been abolished by the Lord Jesus Christ; the last enemy has not yet gone under His feet. As a matter of fact, death (which does not separate the deceased from the love of God in Christ) does separate the deceased from those who love him. Funerals are not victory celebrations. They are funerals. The grief is, in light of the Gospel, never grief without hope (1 Thess. 4:13). But it is still, ever and rightly—grief. For only on the Last Day will death be swallowed up in…victory (1 Cor. 15:54).

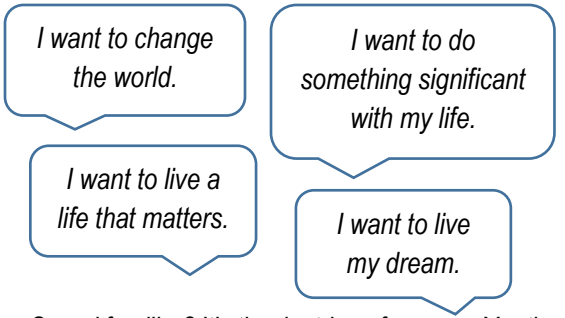
Why do we say things at funerals that we should not say? Perhaps it's the desire to bring "complete" comfort to those who mourn. I suspect that there is also at work a skewed anthropology that views a person as essentially a "soul." So, when we think of a person's future, we think only of the future of his soul, but not of the blessed future of his body.

But my real guess would be that such mis-speaking at funerals occurs because we have lost a real appreciation for the true and great Biblical hope of the parousia of Jesus at the consummation of the age (see my essay "Regaining Biblical Hope: Restoring the Prominence of the Parousia," Concordia Journal 27 [October 2001]: 310-322). When the second coming plays no functional role in one's working theology, it will not show up in funeral sermons. When the theological understanding of death as the enemy is hidden behind clichés that are not true, then there is less opportunity for speaking the Good News. When the pastor, even though he believes that it will happen, is not himself actually looking for and longing for the return of Christ—then he will say at funerals things that he should not say. And he will not deliver the fullness of the Gospel.

For that is what a pastor should say at a funeral—the Good News. The Law is there, staring everyone in the face—death. And the sermon should speak explicitly of sin and its effects and its manifestations—including the death of this Christian brother or sister. And one can also proclaim the Biblical message about the soul of the dead Christian—the soul is "with Christ," or "at rest," or "in Paradise." These are all Biblical ways of speaking, and they can offer true Christian comfort.

But in the face of death the pastor must proclaim the Good News of God's solution to sin and all its effects. And God's solution for bodily death is bodily resurrection! The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruits of the final resurrection on the Last Day—and this is very good news indeed for all who are in Christ Jesus. The redeeming act of Jesus of Nazareth encompasses and overcomes all guilt now, and His deeds for us will overturn the death of our bodies and restore us and all who trust Him to our rightful home in the new heavens and the new earth. This hope is realistic, in that it allows death in Christ to be death—no more, but certainly no less. And this hope is true, because it is centered in Christ Jesus and looks only to Him who is the same yesterday in our life, today in our death…and forever in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. This is what we should say at funerals. – Jeff Gibbs

The Beautiful ordinary Life



Sound familiar? It's the doctrine of our age. Youths and young adults are taught through music, movies, and social media to parrot this doctrine: lives that matter are edgy, radical, extreme, alternative, revolutionary, or world-changing. Few question this doctrine. Christians should (for an excellent book that addresses this, read Michael Horton's *Ordinary*).

Why?

It leaves youths vulnerable.

Adults who've watched their hair gray have seen dozens of "edgy, radical, extreme, alternative, revolutionary, and world-changing" causes come and go. Youths haven't. When they imbibe the doctrine of our age they make themselves vulnerable to the latest "radical" cause. They can be easily co-opted into causes they don't understand in the name of "edgy, extreme, alternative, world-changing" promises. Many are the youths who have been duped by savvy politicians or revolutionaries echoing the "world-changing" rhetoric of the age. Few realize it, but the doctrine of our age dulls discernment with the lure of significance. Non-discerning people are vulnerable people.

Vocation. Vocation. Vocation.

The problem with the doctrine of our age is that it attaches significance and meaning only to the extraordinary and rips it away from the ordinary. Distributing humanitarian aid in a war-torn African village is far more extreme than making breakfast for your crabby children. Being in the first wave of a new movement is far more exciting than being a member of a local church. Being on the cutting-edge of technology or style is far more significant than cutting coupons for your weekly grocery run.

The doctrine of our age belittles the ordinary and robs it of its beauty and significance. But in God's eyes ordinary vocations such as church member, spouse, parent, and neighbor are beautiful because through these vocations he channels His love to His creation. The father who play-wrestles with his children or leads family devotions before bed is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him. The mother who scrubs the grass stains out of her children's clothes or wipes her baby's nose for the hundredth time is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through her. The spouse who washes the dishes or mows the lawn is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him or her. The person who cries with a grieving neighbor or brings a meal to a new parent is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him.

Martin Luther wrote of a majesty that was concealed in these ordinary vocations, a majesty that God revealed to the eyes of faith that had been trained by God's Word to see vocations as God sees them. The doctrine of this age, however, misses this majesty and teaches people to look beyond the ordinary vocations for significance. This leaves them restless and discontent. It's not enough to be a faithful spouse, loving parent, and

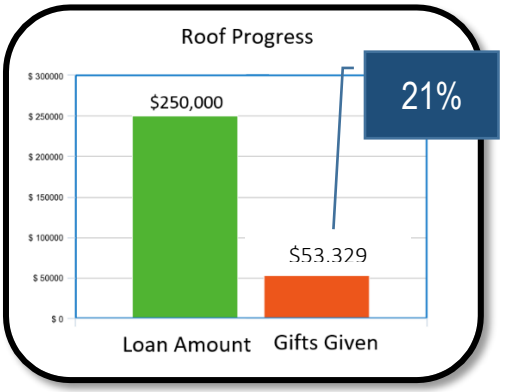
committed church member because these aren't edgy or extreme enough.

Further, it encourages people to neglect their primary vocations (church member, spouse, parent, child, neighbor) in the name of their personal dreams. As a result, friends, family, and neighbors are reduced to supporting cast members in the individual's personal movie. And if truth be told, it's far easier to chase your personal dreams than to sacrifice them for the well-being of another. It's easier to love a cause than to love your neighbor. Many of the significance-promising cutting-edge, radical, alternative, and innovative lifestyles require less of us than the ordinary vocations to which God calls us. Managing your elderly parent's medications, paying her bills, and cleaning her bathrooms demands more from you than managing a trend-setting blog. Feeding your family every day, balancing your children's schoolwork and extracurricular activities, and being consistently loving to your wife or respectful to your husband requires more from you than leading short term mission trips. Someone once put it this way: everyone wants a revolution; no one wants to do the dishes.

When people are indoctrinated in the mindset of the age they are led to resent the very people they're called to serve in their vocations because they stand in the way of their personal dreams and desire for significance. Their ordinary vocations call them to die to their dreams for the well-being of others.

As Christians, we need to remember that God works through the ordinary. God attaches His Word to ordinary water and forgives sins. God attaches His Word to ordinary bread and wine and gives salvation. Every week God gathers ordinary people around ordinary means to give His extraordinary gifts. God blesses the ordinary. In God's eyes the ordinary is beautiful. Baptism is beautiful. The Lord's Supper is beautiful. And the ordinary vocations are beautiful. Yes, God may call individuals to extraordinary endeavors, but that takes nothing away from the beauty found within ordinary vocations.

The doctrine of our age is a lie. It implies that the ordinary lacks significance and beauty. Scripture teaches otherwise. To save our youth and young adults from the disappointment and depression that the doctrine of our age will bring as the edgy dulls, the extreme fades, the revolutionary fizzles, and the demands of the ordinary impede the achievement of their dreams, we need to re-discover the beautiful, ordinary life. The ordinary is significant. The ordinary is beautiful. – Pastor Conner



The Sanctified Imagination

Apple, Hollywood, the NFL, Xbox, Bud Light, McDonald's, Acura, and Under Armour all have one thing in common. It's bigger than trying to sell a product or to gain a larger market share. What they're really after is your imagination. They know what too few of us have realized: whatever captures our imagination, captures us.

A brief look around our homes will reveal this truth. Their products line our shelves, their songs fill our playlists, their stories replay in our minds, their beverages are in our fridges, their games are on our screens, their wrappers are in our garbage, and their logos have branded our children.

None of them is necessarily bad, for God "richly provides us with everything to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). It's not wrong to own an iPad, rent a movie, watch a football game, drink Bud Light, or enjoy a Happy Meal, but it is dangerous. And that's not just because fallen man might find a way to use these products for ill. Remember, these companies aren't simply selling you a product; they're luring your imagination. And the thing that captures our imagination, captures us.

As Christians, we have been "captured" by another: Jesus Christ. Scripture describes us as "redeemed" (1 Pet. 1:18), "chosen" (1 Pet. 2:9), and "ransomed" (Rev. 5:9). We are called God's "possession" (1 Pet. 2:9), "people" (2 Cor. 6:16), and "sheep" (John 10:27). Our imaginations belong to Him. Scripture calls us to take our thoughts captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), to be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), and to "think about these things:" truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, goodness, excellence, and praiseworthy goods (Phil. 4:8). In other words, we are called to cultivate Christian imaginations.

Two questions immediately arise: *why* and *how*. Beyond the bare command of God, *why* should we cultivate Christian imaginations and *how* are we to do it?

Why should we cultivate a Christian imagination?

While God does claim sovereignty over our thoughts, the reason for aligning our imagination with Him is bigger than just obedience. In their recent book *Imagination Redeemed*, Gene Veith and Matthew Ristuccia point out the good that results from a sanctified imagination: "When God captures our imagination, he captures the rest of our mind, including our understanding and our will." As we observed before: whatever captures our imagination, captures us. We will give our time, our resources, and our thought life to the thing that captivates us. Who is more worthy of our captivated imagination than God Himself?

How do we cultivate a Christian imagination?

As with most things of great value, there's no shortcut. Veith and Ristuccia observe, "A Christian imagination comes, above all, from reading the Bible continually, studying it, meditating on it, and just saturating your mind and your imagination with the Word of God." There's simply no shortcut to this.

They add, "Hearing good preaching week in and week out can profoundly shape a Christian worldview and a Christian imagination." By "good preaching" they aren't referring to the preacher's speaking skill or to his ability to tell a good story; they're talking about good, solid, Biblical Law/Gospel preaching. They further observe, "Life in the church at every level will help you cultivate a Christian imagination." This includes faithfully hearing the Word read and preached, receiving the Sacrament of the Altar, singing the Church's hymnody, and learning the Church's liturgy. These rituals coupled with personal and corporate (group) study of Scripture will cultivate a Christian imagination and leave you captivated with Christ. – Pastor Conner

Zion Ladies Guild

Ladies Guild of Zion
August 2020

It is hard to believe that we have not had a meeting for 5 months. I appreciate the advice and encouragement I have received from guild members and Pastor Conner. It appears that most of you have been in agreement to not meet as a group until we need to meet for decisions.

The officers have decided a few issues and hope it meets with your approval.

1. Mary is sending in a minimum of $20 from our treasure to Mites each month. If you send her offerings, it will be included. We encourage continuous giving, if possible, as we must honor the grants chosen to support. $25.00 has been given to our library in memory of Charlene Hickman. $25.00 has been sent to Manilla Church for meals for the Heartland. Mary has $1,000 plus cents on balance as of this date. You may give an offering by using the drop box outside the church office or give an offering to Mary by mail or through Shannon.
2. We have received thank-you notes from families for providing refreshments following funeral services for their loved ones. Other correspondence has been appeals for funding. These are on file should we have funds to share.
3. The Fall Rally is to be September 27 at Zion, Arcadia. Speaker is Spencer Owen, DCE. Zion, Manning is the nominating committee to find a president-elect for our Zone. Sharon von Qualen is now our president as Carmen Thiedeman has a new position of Vice President of Organizational Recourses and Christian Life for our District. The candidates are to be presented at the Fall Rally. Any volunteers' or names to call is needed. Speaking of nominations, our guild will have president and vice-president election this fall.

The Orphan Grain Train is now open for contributions and volunteers. Sharon Irwin, manager, had asked to hold the contribution of clothing at this time so that they can catch up on sorting. Howard and I drove to Ida Grove two weeks ago with the quilts and the loom hats that we had for them and unable to deliver until now. We delivered 34 quilts, 13 baby quilts, 1 comforter, many pillow cases and 106 loom hats. Sharon asks for a call before coming to ensure they are available. Their policy is that new contributions are separated for a time period and masks are optional.

Guild serving funerals at this time is refreshments of coffee and bars or coffee if the family wishes. The refreshments are placed so that the family can self serve. If the family wishes a meal, they arrange the services of a caterer. Circle 1 and Circle 2 take turns serving.

The officers have agreed to continue to postpone meetings until further notice. Please call me at 712-210-2718 for any suggestions or comments.

Your sister in Christ, Audrey Roe, President

PTSD

What does it mean to you when you see the four letters P. T. S. D.? What image comes to mind? Is it of a homeless person sitting along the side of the street with all of his belongings in a backpack? Is it of a child in an orphanage? How about the person sitting next to you at a restaurant or church that you talk to every day?
In reality, it could be all of the above.

PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, is a clinical condition that affects a person's emotional, mental, and physical wellness for at least one month following a traumatic event and may present itself with symptoms until several months or even years later, according to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness).

PTSD is generally triggered by an extremely traumatic event. It is characterized by three main types of symptoms:

1. Avoidance and emotional numbness of activities, places and people that are reminders of the trauma.
2. Increased arousal such as being easily angered and irritated, difficulty concentrating or sleeping and feeling jumpy.
3. Re-experiencing the trauma through distressing recollections of the event, flashbacks and nightmares.

Seniors may be at a higher risk for developing PTSD following a traumatic event or having symptoms that may re-emerge later in life. When a person ages, the different role changes that a person experiences and the functional losses an older person goes through make coping with memories of earlier trauma more challenging. For instance, if a spouse passes away, the person may feel like they have less support and companionship and will then feel lonely and isolated, feeling they have no one to talk to. Other changes include: decreased sensory ability (hearing loss, vision loss), decreased social support, increased health problems, reduced income, and retirement.

Older adults have a higher risk of developing PTSD as a result of a fairly common occurrence that affects one out of three seniors over the age of 65 each year: Falls. Falls are the leading cause of hospitalization for seniors, with over 1.6 million older adults hospitalized each year as a result of a fall. Of the hospitalized older adults, 27% will experience PTSD symptoms.

Getting timely help and support may prevent normal stress reactions from getting worse and developing into PTSD. This may mean turning to family and friends who will listen and offer comfort. It may mean seeking out a mental health professional for a brief course of therapy. Some people may also find it helpful to turn to their faith community. Gentle support of someone with PTSD may make all the difference in the world.

Janet Brus, RN
Psychiatric Medical Care, Manning Regional Healthcare Center
Program Director

Amigos en Cristo

News from ***La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo:*** *Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church:* **Vacancy Pastor Daniel Vogel**, Denison, Iowa

August 2020

After months of worship on-line because of the COVID pandemic, we are back (as of June 28) to public worship and Bible study at Amigos en Cristo in Denison. It has been a long wait and yet we are thankful for our unique ability during these months to worship in a different way. With technology we have been able to broadcast our services live on Facebook to be seen by our Hispanic churches in Denison and Storm Lake. We thank Zion Lutheran in Manning for the use of their sanctuary and the technological help of Bob Genzen and Judy Jacobsen who helped me record our services each week. What a blessing!

As we worship we continue to live stream our service for our brethren in Storm Lake and beyond. While for many Jesus seems so far away with all the turmoil in the country, we praise the Lord that He has never left us or forsaken us. We pray that this crisis of health and the economy will be a call to come to the Lord of the Cross who offers the eternal help and hope for all people of every generation and every culture. We know that God is in control and will use this crisis to strengthen His Kingdom and each of us by faith.

We are thankful that we have been able to return to our Wednesday morning Bible Class at Zion, Denison. This is a portion of our faithful group of adults and children that gather each week to study God's Word in both English and Spanish.

Following a Zoom meeting with Assistant to the President, Rev. Keith Haney, Amigos en Cristo is beginning the process of calling a pastor. We have begun to organize a Call Committee to discuss our expectations for a permanent pastor and also our commitment to supporting him. We also need to consider whether the pastor will be traveling to Storm Lake to serve the Hispanic ministry at Grace as I have in the past and/or if he may even assist in the English ministry at Zion Denison. So we have many questions as we begin again to consider our congregational ministry and the District Hispanic ministry in western Iowa.

PLEASE PRAY: + For the Lord's special blessings during and after the Corona virus. + That the Lord will strengthen our churches during this time of uncertainty. + For those among us, the elderly and those who are still sick and troubled during this epidemic. + For the future partnership of Zion, Denison and Amigos as we work together this year. + For our plans and goals both in Denison and Storm Lake in the months ahead. + For our goal of calling a bilingual pastor and the help from Rev. Haney. + ***In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of the Iowa District West who support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison & Storm Lake and also in our other 2 missions in Sioux City and Des Moines.***

Rev. Daniel Vogel
32678 Aspen Ave., Manning, Iowa, 51455
Home: 712-653-2354 / Cell: 712-309-1292
Email: daniel.vogel@ziondenison.org

SERVING THE LORD
ALL OVER ASIA
NEWS FROM THE FERRY FAMILY
July 2020

Our Lord Working Through Everyday Life

Christians live out their vocations wherever the Lord has placed them. This is what you do where your life is, even (especially!) in these days of pandemic and protest. You simply live out the life you've been given, speaking and acting in accord with the faithfulness to who our Lord Jesus has made you to be in the waters of Holy Baptism. You speak and act as a faithful Christian (also known as Lutheran) in everything, confident in His forgiveness and love. This is also what we do here in Taiwan, where the Lord has placed us through you, His church. And many times, without us even realizing it, He is working wonderful things through this everyday faithfulness.

We take the bus to church every Sunday, from one side of Chiayi to another. Then we have about a ten-minute walk through a busy market area, from the bus stop to the actual church building itself. Along that way, we pass food and drink stalls, and sellers of everything from pants to pineapple.

One of the pineapple sellers has a young daughter of seven years old, just in between our Cassandra and Carissa. The family is not Christian, but we had interacted with them several times as they sold us pineapple on the way to church, and as they asked curious questions about our large white family, and why we passed their stall every Sunday about that time.

After several Sunday mornings of this interaction, the family had more to say: they actually asked us to take their daughter along with us so that she could attend Sunday School and church with us, since their stall was just a few doors down from the door of the church. The daughter did not speak any English (and neither did the parents!), so we were thankful for our two years of Chinese lessons thus far! Would we take their daughter to church, where she could hear about Jesus?!? You bet we would. What a privilege.

The girl joined us for Sunday School and church, sitting with the pastor's wife and daughter, and with Cheryl, and interacting with our kids. She clearly had no idea what to expect, but she was anxious to learn more about what we were doing. God only knows what she took away, but we know that because we sing Lutheran hymns, follow the church's liturgy, and are a Lutheran church, she certainly heard the Word of God in Christ, for her!

To our pleasant surprise, the parents sent her along with us the next week, too. And the week after that! It's been several weeks now that we've had her along with us, and the local Chinese pastor has made contact with the parents as well. God grant His Word to take root in the lives of this family, and spring up into eternal life according to His promise. And all this from buying some pineapple! Thanks be to God.

SERVING THE LORD

ALL OVER ASIA

NEWS FROM THE FERRY FAMILY

Continued…

July 2020

Congratulations and Happy Birthday to two of our girlies who celebrated birthdays in May and June…

Chloe (left) turned four years old, and picked out a chocolate cake to share with the families in the building. Chloe wanted to watch a movie with her family to celebrate her day, and chose the latest from the Frozen franchise.

Carissa (right) turned eight years old, and decided she wanted to visit the water park for her birthday. We swam all day long, even in the midst of a lightning storm; being careful to stay under the roof of the pool. She's a social little girl who loves to be in the middle of everything. Her cake was a Black Forest cake she picked out at the local bakery.

Cheryl did some research as part of her Chinese class and discovered that there's a brass instrument factory right in the general area of where we live. We took a day and visited the Carol Brass Factory, about a 30 minute drive outside of Chiayi. The tour was all in Chinese, but was a fascinating opportunity to interact with our host community and meet some new people. The kids even got to try out some instruments. Charlotte was somewhat less than impressed.

PLEASE PRAY FOR: • Those like the neighbors we all have who do not yet know Jesus and His peace. • Courage and wisdom to take advantage of the chances we have to speak the Word of God with confidence. • Your newest LCMS missionaries who cannot freely visit congregations to raise support.

GIVE THANKS FOR: • Protection and health for your LCMS missionaries as they continue to live out their vocations where you have placed them. • Our generous church, which continues to support her missionaries and servants even in uncertain times.

Stephen, Maggie, Ginny, Gary, Isaac

中華信義神學院 China Lutheran Seminary

Back in Taiwan!

We just finished our 14 days of quarantine in Taiwan after being in the U.S. for one year. In the photo (right) we are waiting to take off from Chicago's O'Hare airport in our Covid-19 prevention gear. Thankfully, we've all had a good bill of health! One of our main prayers traveling back to Taiwan through Chicago is that we wouldn't pick up the virus in transit. Thank the Lord for His protection!

We're ready for Gary's fifth grade graduation, which was done as a car parade (below)!

In Taiwan, we received the Covid19 quarantine care bags that you can see on the left. On the right, you can see our quarantine quarters.

We are all at our work and study stations in the missionary apartment during lockdown in St. Louis. As I designed and taught Ethnic Immigrant Institute in Theology (EIIT) courses, it seemed just right since they are online courses with students in LCMS churches across the United States.

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

August 6	**Meals from the Heartland at Trinity (6:00 p.m.)**
August 11, 18, 25	**Griefshare at Trinity (2:00 p.m.)**
August 17	**Trinity Leaders Thank You Dinner at Trinity Parsonage (6:00 p.m.)**
August 20	**Thursday afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)**
August 25	**Trinity outdoor worship at Manilla Bandshell (4:00 p.m.)**
August 26	**Confirmation Orientation at Zion (7:00 p.m.)**
August 27	**Historic Trinity Summer Series (7:00 p.m.)**
August 30	**Sunday School at Trinity (9:00 a.m.)**
September 2	**Confirmation Begins**

ZION

August schedule:

- Morning Prayer (M-F) via Facebook Live at 7:30 a.m. (viewable anytime)
- Sunday worship at 9:00 a.m.
- All Sunday services will also be live streamed
- Bible studies will soon begin to be offered in person on Sunday. Watch for weekday online opportunities.

TRINITY

Summer Schedule:

- Beginning August 12th, we will meet on Wednesdays rather than Thursdays. We'll begin with worship @ 6pm, have a meal (bring a side), and then have a Bible study from 7-:30pm.
- On August 29th we'll meet at the Manilla Bandshell for an outdoor service @ 4pm. In case of rain, we'll move to Trinity-Manilla Fellowship Hall. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. We have a new FM transmitter so if you prefer to sit in your car and listen to the service on your car radio you're welcome to do so.

August Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. David Kusel
2. Juniper Hinners (T)
   Judy Lingle (T)
   Justin Musfeldt
3. Sophia Beck
4. Jade Dawson
   Madilyn Trost
   Maddox Weitl
5. Janet Brus
   Jocelyn Griesman
   Maddox Vetter (T)
6. Matthew Alexander
   Zachary Grove
   Morgyn Irlbeck
   Alison Peters
   Beverly Rix
   Donna Rutz
   Grace Sextro
7 Kevin Struve
   Katie Weitl
8. Haylie Irlbeck
   Arlene Mohr
   Makenzie Trost
   Logan Vonnahme
9. Mckenna Benton
   John Ferneding
   Mackenzie Jorgensen (T)
10. Rhonda Grimm
    Kent Vollstedt
11. Scott Dreier
    Ashley Ehlers
12. Kelly Ferneding
    Luke Jorgensen (T)
    Stan Musfeldt
    Audrey Roe
14. Elizabeth Alexander
    John Blom (T)
    Jennifer Bunker
    Cole Lingle (T)
    Mark Segebart (T)
15. Addalynn Alexander
    Emma Reese
    EmmaLynn Salter
    Rick Spack
16. Cathie Segebart (T)
17. Jill Arp
18. Tyler Bruck
    Kason Jacobsen
    Carol Schroeder
    Paula Wulf
19. Jean Borkowski
    Miranda Hansen
    Shelby Heaton
    Randy Mahnke
20. LeAnn Christensen (T)
21. Tina Miller (T)
    Stephany Olson (T)
    Jacob Rosener
    Mitchell Walters
22. Loretta Arnold (T)
    Ladelle Hansen (T)
    Will Jorgensen (T)
23. Karl Rutz
24. Jasmine Bauer
25. Kristian Woebke (T)
26. Barb Hargens (T)
    Kadynce Ketcham
27. Mary Grimm
    Dorothy Kusel
    Coltan Lesle
    Linnet Nissen
    Leggy Thomson
    Gale Vinke
28. Brian Vetter (T)
29. Justin Weller
30. Abby Bruch
    Cash England
31. Margaret Kuchel
    Jeremiah Segebart (T)

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

Anniversaries

1. Scott & Lisa Dreier
2. Dewayne & Cheral Buhr
3. Nathan & Chelsey Jensen
5. Don & Susan Lamb
6. Pastor Daniel & Paula Vogel
9. Duane & Melodie Boell (T)
10. Daniel & Taya Vonnahme
12. Bob & Irene Genzen
13. Alan & Jennifer Morris
15. John & Deb Blom (T)
18. Robert & Brenda Ehlers
20. Mark & Cathie Segebart (T)
23. Gary & Bonnie Witt
24. Curtis & Rachel Hofbauer
25. Dwight & Jeanne Gruhn
    Tim & Joni Kienast
30. JoAnn and Earl Thomas
31. Daniel & Wendy Stribe

Official Acts

Baptisms:
Bristol Monroe Stoberl, daughter of Brian and Rachel Stoberl, July 11, 2020; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Everlynn Elizabeth Sybesma, daughter of Abraham Sybesma and Jordynne Bauer, July 11, 2020; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Funeral:
Russell Lee Mohr, Died July 17, 2020; Funeral July 25, 2020; Pastor Robert Riggert

Marriage:
Scott Stribe and Beth Waldon; July 18, 2020; Pastor Robert Riggert

In Our Prayers

Nancy Grimm, Arlene Mohr, Dewayne Buhr, Ron Schilling, Connie Sorbe (Annette Hilsabeck's mother), Nancy Walters, Janice Monson, Ron Brus, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Natalie Mason (Bruce and Mary Grimm's daughter), Gage Carlson (great grandson of Russ and Virginia Mohr), Maridee Bohlmann (David & Joene Bohlmann's daughter-in-law), Patty Meeves (Laurene's daughter in law), Jean Kusel, Carolyn Werner, Jeanne Gruhn