

Context: Danevang Lutheran Church Newsletter February 2024

POINTS TO PONDER:

Are you easily distracted? I seem to be easily distracted lately. Have you considered that even simple distractions may be part of a spiritual battle?

Peter gives this warning --

- Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

The devil is our “adversary”, and while Peter here characterizes the devil as a roaring lion, that is not always the way he approaches us. Lions are good at stalking quietly as well. Paul warns us of schemes of the devil (Other translations say “wiles of the devil” – bringing to mind a sneaky coyote).

- Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the *schemes of the devil*. (Ephesians 6:11)
- Paul also indicates that God provides leaders for a unity in the Body of Christ ...

- so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by *craftiness in deceitful schemes*. (Ephesians 4:14)

In this same verse, Paul indicates the devil uses human cunning to execute his schemes.

One subtle tool of deceit is the planting, or promotion of, the accusation that the Bible disagrees with itself, therefore it discredits itself and a belief in Christ. Rather than ponder why folks are surprised that eye-witnesses seldom tell an identical story of an event, let us take a simple example I encountered this week while looking at the Transfiguration story.

- Matthew 6:1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
- Mark 9:2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
- Luke 9:28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

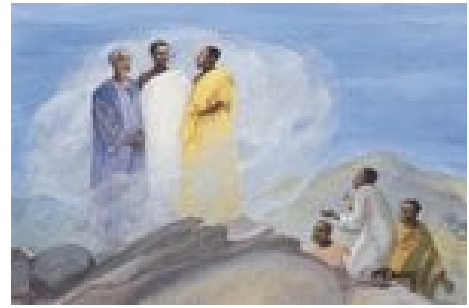
So, which was it, six or eight days? I believe the answer is “YES”, to both.

First, there is the whole confusion about the Hebrew perspective of a “day” starting at sundown, our modern perspective about the day beginning when we get up and see the sunlight, and the 24 hour clock day starting at midnight --- and we are just not going to bother with all of that. Why? Because it is much simpler than that. We have a time between two events, and that is what is Biblically important. So consider the time between Christmas and New Year’s Day ---

- Early Christmas day, I look forward to New Year’s Day and think: Today, the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, and the 1st; ABOUT EIGHT DAYS from now I will be enjoying a new year.
- You may look at the calendar on Christmas and think: 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st; ONLY 6 MORE DAYS UNTIL New Year’s.

The Bible verses are written by different people at different times with a variation in the original audience. Therefore, personal cultural preference is involved. However, never forget the words penned were God Breathed (influenced by the Holy Spirit).

John does not mention this Transfiguration event directly, but John’s Gospel timeline provides an important clue about these events. Read John 6:66-71 and 7:1-39. Examining these verses, and the verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke that precede the Transfiguration, the timeline is after Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and the Transfiguration vision. In that timeline, per John, is the “Feast of Tabernacles” (or Booths, or Tents, or simply Sukkot). This festival focuses on Moses, the Law and Exodus story. It is one of three festivals people were expected to travel to the Temple to celebrate. Today, with no temple, Jews still celebrate by building a three sided, mostly open “booth” or “tent” outside to stay in for the celebration. Sukkot follows shortly after the Day



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of Atonement, or Yom Kippur. Sukkot is an 8 day festival with a high holy day at the beginning and at the end, so 6-24-hour days in between what is essentially two Sabbath days.

So, now some thoughts to ponder:

- The Gospel authors know this happened during Sukkot. Tying the span of this festival with 6 ordinary feast days recalls the tie between this holy festival and Moses' receiving of the law on Sinai (see Exodus 24:16) where clouds cloaked the mountain (similar to the Transfiguration) for 6 days: A way of indicating, to Jews, that the Transfiguration is at the end of Sukkot. Non-Jewish converts to Christ may know of this 8 day festival, but not the significance of 6 days between two high holy days. Also, the number 8 indicates a "new beginning". Six or eight may simply be a "know your audience" kind of thing: invoke a memory of Sinai, or signal a new beginning because the Law has been fulfilled.
- Peter's confession of faith was a few days before Sukkot, and maybe the authors were hinting that it was on the Day of Atonement that Peter declared Jesus was God. Historically on this day, and this day only, the High Priest pronounces the true name of God (YHWH) in the Holy of Holies. Stating this parallel, overtly, at the time would probably prompt "righteous" Jews to stone you, but Jewish believers in Jesus would probably understand the parallel.
- Moses and Elijah are both present at the Transfiguration, representing the Law and Prophets (Jesus fulfilled all the Law and Prophecies).
- John has Jesus present at the Temple on the last day of the feast (John 7-37-39) declaring Himself to be "living water": This was, most likely, at the Sukkot morning "Water pouring ceremony" in the Temple – a ritual symbolic of the outpouring of God's Spirit. For the Jews, another reason to kill Jesus for blasphemy.
- Festival of Booths just ending, and Peter wants to build booths for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. It has been a hectic time for Peter: His world has been turned upside down. Peter now knows, and recently declared Jesus to be the Christ. Yet, Peter did not want Jesus to go to that cross. The prophet Zechariah had written that when the Messiah reigns on the earth, He will require all nations to come and celebrate the Feast of Booths (Zech. 14:16-19). Is that what Peter requested of Jesus on the mountain? Effectively, "Bring YOUR kingdom NOW, bypass that Cross."

Many things are useful in the story than a distracting debate over 6 or 8 days. For example, Peter's story is a reflection of us: Profound revelations leave us confused, and changing our responses based on a new understanding is difficult. Hearing God speak can be terrifying. It is our nature to want to stay on that mountain and camp out with God & the blessed of God, rather than descend to the valley of the unknown that may lead to a cross. Sometimes we forget that "we are made in God's image" means, when we appreciate an ironic situation or story, we are reflecting a nature of God. Search for these natures in Bible narratives. These apostles and early believers, like us, have an appreciation for a good story, including things like sarcasm, irony, and puns. The human elements embedded in the narratives are part of God's insight for us: seeking empathy for Peter's confused response may just keep me from doing something stupid.

So ... finally ---

Ponder this concerning this Transfiguration vision:

Moses died and was buried. Elijah was taken up to heaven and there is no grave for him on this earth. Jesus, the Lord who returns to judge the living and the dead, left an empty tomb and ascended into heaven. God's sense of irony????

Chuck

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Announcements

Serving This Month:

Altar Guild - Ann Schaer

Greeter – Doyle Schaer

Greeters are needed for the month of April & November, 2024.

If you are a member and did not attend the annual meeting and want a copy of the annual report for the meeting, please contact the Church Secretary.

If you receive a newsletter by mail, we will cease mailing the newsletter in the near future (This saves the overhead related to production and mailing of paper copies). If you want to continue to receive the newsletter, please subscribe to the newsletter on the danevanglutheran.org web site, OR send your email address and request sign up for the newsletter and updates to this email address:

newsletter@danevanglutheran.org .

Either option will result in an email to you that allows you to "opt in" to receiving the emails providing links to the newsletter and information updates."

Ash Wednesday Service at 6:30 PM on the 14th of Feb.

Learning with Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study: Canceled for Wednesday Feb. 7th ONLY – Resume on 14th. Ladies Wednesday morning bible study continues 9am-11am in the Educational Building.

Sunday School: Each Sunday, 9am to 9:45am in the Educational Building. Open to all adults and children before church service. Coffee will be served. We will discuss the scripture readings for the following Sunday. No Sunday School on Feb. 11th.

Sweetheart Valentines Breakfast for the Ladies – Hosted by the Men of the Church at 9 AM on Feb. 11th.

Meetings

Men Meet Feb. 3rd at 10 AM in the Hall to plan the Valentines Breakfast scheduled for the 11th.

Council Meeting Feb. 12th at 10 AM.

Pot-Luck Meal – After service last Sunday of month

Services- Each Sunday at 10 AM. services & Ash Wednesday Services with David Kight officiating. There are Baptismal Services in the planning stage for Feb. 2024: The calendar will be updated and email updates sent out when information is available.

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January 28, 2024 Danevang Lutheran Church Annual Meeting Minutes Summary:

- Following worship, the meeting opened with 14 members in attendance. Pastor led us in prayer. The December 2023 and January 2024 council meetings the minutes were read.
- No old business items discussed
- A motion was passed to explore a fundraiser for our neighbors near the church who lost their home in a fire last week.
- A motion was passed for the men of the church to serve a Sweetheart Breakfast before church on Sunday, February 11.
- Copies of the annual report were provided to attendees.
- A motion was approved to amend the proposed budget to increase the benevolence to the LCMC from 1% to 3%.
- The Congregation approved the change and approved the 2024 budget.
- A proposal was made to have the council review the amount our supply pastor is paid each service.
- Meeting was adjourned to the meeting house for a potluck lunch.

Website at <https://danevanglutheran.org/>



Mission Moment

by Pastor Bryce Formwalt
Director of Mission Growth



How to Grow Your Church

In my role as Director of Mission Growth, a common question that church members and even some pastors ask me is “How do we grow our church?” I love this question because it tells me a few things about the person asking it. First, the very question itself communicates that the person asking recognizes that their church has a purpose to connect to more people and reveals a “holy discontent” with the present reality. Secondly, the question also informs me that the asker is genuinely interested and open to learning and implementing new ideas. Both having a heart to connect with more people and a teachable spirit are key components to ministry success and congregational revitalization.

The question also presents a bit of a challenge: Growing a bigger church should never be the mission of the church! Instead, church growth is a byproduct of a church engaging in and accomplishing its true mission and purpose. So, what is the true mission and purpose of the church? In my opinion, it can be summed up with “connecting people to Jesus.” Exactly what this looks like in each congregation and community can and should be very different: no two congregations are alike; nor are the contexts in which those congregations minister.

I truly believe that churches who prioritize connecting people to a life-giving relationship with Jesus will indeed grow. Yet growth, in and of itself, should not be the actual goal. What would happen if we stopped obsessing over worship attendance or confirmation class size or Sunday School participation and started prioritizing and praying for those in our community whom God is calling us to befriend with the purpose and intent of gently and lovingly connecting them with Jesus? How can churches prioritize this activity as their mission, encouraging and equipping one another for everyday mission work?

In the book *7 Habits of Healthy Churches*, Marcus Carlson notes that “Healthy churches are focused more on those outside the church than those inside the church.” I couldn’t agree more with Carlson’s assertion. To be clear, this does not mean that healthy churches do not care for one another within the church; healthy churches always love one another. What the author is pointing out is a reality I routinely observe: in the absence of a clear, outward-focused mission, congregations always default to pleasing their own members as their de facto purpose. Whenever a congregation focuses on member satisfaction, it becomes unhealthy and ultimately, inevitably declines.

God is calling the church to more. That more isn’t simply to worry about stopping decline and growing our congregation. The more God is calling the church to is a mission that extends beyond our church walls and prioritizes connecting people to Jesus.

Pastor Bryce Formwalt is the Director of Mission Growth for LCMC Texas District and Program Director of Harvest Workers, an online ministry training program (learn more at www.harvestworkers.net). Residing in Georgetown, Pastor Bryce is available to coach congregations on mission. Feel free to contact him with any questions or comments: 512-942-7776 ext. 2 or bryce@lcmctexas.org

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LCMC Texas District 2024 Annual Gathering



LOVE WORKS

LUKE 10:27

July 26-27, 2024
Kerrville, Texas

Have an idea for a breakout presentation? Submit your idea to us by March 1.

Scan the code for more details
or to submit an idea!



or visit

www.lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering



WHAT: LCMC Youth Gathering

WHEN: July 9-12, 2024

WHERE: Grand View University, Des Moines, IA
Registration for our youth gathering is open to students completing grades 7-12, youth leaders, and adult chaperones.

GROW: Get inspired and gain practical advice on what God may be calling YOU to do through keynote presentations and breakout sessions.

SERVE: Lend a hand and make a real difference in the community!

PLAY: Connect with other high school students and youth leaders from LCMC, then head out to The Green for mixers, games, inflatables, and an ice cream social. We've also set aside time in our schedule for you to spend quality time with your crew!

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Sunday & Festival Readings for February and March 2024

Date	Church Calendar	1 st Reading	Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel
Fri, Feb 02, 2024	Presentation of the Lord	Malachi 3:1-4	Psalm 84 or Psalm 24:7-10	Hebrews 2:14-18	Luke 2:22-40
Sun, Feb 04, 2024	Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany	Isaiah 40:21-31	Psalm 147:1-11, 20c	1 Corinthians 9:16-23	Mark 1:29-39
Sun, Feb 11, 2024	Transfiguration	2 Kings 2:1-12	Psalm 50:1-6	2 Corinthians 4:3-6	Mark 9:2-9
Wed, Feb 14, 2024	Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12	Psalm 51:1-17	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Sun, Feb 18, 2024	First Sunday in Lent	Genesis 9:8-17	Psalm 25:1-10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15
Sun, Feb 25, 2024	Second Sunday in Lent	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Psalm 22:23-31	Romans 4:13-25	Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9
Sun, Mar 03, 2024	Third Sunday in Lent	Exodus 20:1-17	Psalm 19	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	John 2:13-22
Sun, Mar 10, 2024	Fourth Sunday in Lent	Numbers 21:4-9	Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22	Ephesians 2:1-10	John 3:14-21
Sun, Mar 17, 2024	Fifth Sunday in Lent	Jeremiah 31:31-34	Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16	Hebrews 5:5-10	John 12:20-33
Sun, Mar 24, 2024	Liturgy of the Palms		Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29		Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16
Sun, Mar 24, 2024	Liturgy of the Passion	Isaiah 50:4-9a	Psalm 31:9-16	Philippians 2:5-11	Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47]
Mon, Mar 25, 2024	Monday of Holy Week	Isaiah 42:1-9	Psalm 36:5-11	Hebrews 9:11-15	John 12:1-11
Mon, Mar 25, 2024	Annunciation of the Lord	Isaiah 7:10-14	Psalm 45 or Psalm 40:5-10	Hebrews 10:4-10	Luke 1:26-38
Tue, Mar 26, 2024	Tuesday of Holy Week	Isaiah 49:1-7	Psalm 71:1-14	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	John 12:20-36
Wed, Mar 27, 2024	Wednesday of Holy Week	Isaiah 50:4-9a	Psalm 70	Hebrews 12:1-3	John 13:21-32

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Thu, Mar 28, 2024	Holy Thursday	Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14	Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19	1 Corinthians 11:23-26	John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Fri, Mar 29, 2024	Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	Psalm 22	Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9	John 18:1-19:42
Sat, Mar 30, 2024	Holy Saturday	Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24	Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16	1 Peter 4:1-8	Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42
Sat, Mar 30, 2024	Easter Vigil	OT and responses: #1: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26 #2: Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18, 8:6-18, 9:8-13; Psalm 46 #3: Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 16 #4: Exodus 14:10-31, 15:20-21; Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18 #5: Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-6 #6: Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4 or Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21, 9:4b-6; Psalm 19 #7: Ezekiel 36:24-28; Psalm 42-43 #8: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 143 #9: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Psalm 98	Psalm 114	Romans 6:3-11	Mark 16:1-8
Sun, Mar 31, 2024	Easter Day	Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9	Psalm 118:1-2, 14-2	1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43	John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8
Sun, Mar 31, 2024	Easter Evening	Isaiah 25:6-9	Psalm 114	1 Corinthians 5:6b-8	Luke 24:13-49

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List Month Week Day February 2024 Go < Today >						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Serving This Month Altar Guild - Ann Schaer, Greeter-Doyle Schaer		3 10:00 am: Men meet for planning Valentine Sweetheart Breakfast
4 9:00 am: Sunday School (adults and children) 10:00 am: Sunday Church Service 10 A.M. (Pastor Kight)	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 9:00 am: Valentines Sweetheart Breakfast No Sunday School 10:00 am: Sunday Church Service 10 A.M. (Pastor Kight)	12 10:00 am: Church Council Monday, February 12 at 10 am	13	14 9:00 am: Ladies Community Bible Study 6:30 pm: Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 PM	15	16	17
18 9:00 am: Sunday School (adults and children) 10:00 am: Sunday Church Service 10 A.M. (Pastor Kight)	19	20	21 9:00 am: Ladies Community Bible Study	22	23	24
25 9:00 am: Sunday School (adults and children) 10:00 am: Sunday Church Service 10 A.M. (Pastor Kight) 11:00 am: Potluck after Church	26	27	28 9:00 am: Ladies Community Bible Study	29	30	31