

# **THE GIFT**

**A CHRISTIAN PUBLICATION  
BY ST. JOHN LUTHERAN  
SEPTEMBER 2007**

In ancient Israel, priests such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and even the Levites, were not particularly concerned with the care of the weak, the poor, or the oppressed. It was often believed that if one was poor, oppressed, or weak, it was because God was punishing them. Instead, the priests were concerned with things like ritual purity, the proper way to wash one's hands, the proper way to make an offering, that all of the proper offerings were made, and that the law was properly adhered to. The Pharisees were more concerned about not becoming "unclean" by associating with the poor and the destitute than they were in helping them. It is not surprising, then, that Christ was rather brutal about chastising the Pharisees and the Sadducees, pointing out that they were focused on the wrong things. Spending so much time worrying about living their lives "according to the book" and attending to all of the proper rituals left little time to attend to the people of God who were in need. While Jesus was quite obviously upset with them, it is also easy to understand why they did the things that they did. Not only had they been raised in an environment where ritual observance was central to their understanding of their religion, but they had a lot of scripture that they could point to that supported their position. It didn't hurt that they were well paid and respected in their communities either.

The disciples, on the other hand, were people who followed Jesus and his commands (the literal translation of the word disciple is "follower"). Jesus directed his disciples to be less concerned with the minutia of ritual observance and instead directed them to be concerned with healing the sick, helping the oppressed, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and generally making life a better place to be for those around them. The disciples were far more concerned with BEING Christ for other people than they were about being made "unclean" by eating with prostitutes, tax collectors, or even Pharisees themselves.

Of course, while you would be hard pressed to find a Pharisee or a Sadducee, or even a Levite around today, the attitudes of the Jewish priests do still exist. In almost every congregation, it is possible to find people who are focused more solely on worship, and the "proper" way to worship, than they are on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or advocating for the oppressed. You know the folks I am thinking of - the ones who complain about hymn selection, who can argue for days about the color of the carpeting in the sanctuary, who insist that a big screen TV be installed in order to "reach the children," or any of the other things that can be attributed to any side in a "worship war," but who cannot remember a time in the last 12 months when they have raised their voice in support of the oppressed, or last spoke to a homeless person - much less gave him something to eat, or actually got their hands dirty helping the less fortunate beyond dropping off a box of stuff that didn't sell at the garage sale for Goodwill.

That is not to say that worship is unimportant, or that it should be slopped together mindlessly and without concern for the needs of the community. Worship IS important, and it should be done carefully, with dignity, and treated with the respect that it deserves. But when Sunday worship becomes the entire expression of our faith, or even the primary "church" activity, and we fail to do those other things that Jesus directed us to do in addition to our worship, then we run the risk of becoming modern day Pharisees instead of modern day disciples.

Yours in Christ – Pastor Andersen

## WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH

Are you concerned about the future of the church? Are you concerned about what it means to be a Christian, or better yet a disciple, of Jesus Christ today? Are you a married woman who attends worship without your husband? Are you a married man who regularly sleeps through church? Are you a man who loves church but doesn't know why many of your friends don't? Are you a single woman wondering why finding a godly man is nearly impossible? Are you a parent who is worried that your children will disappear from the church after confirmation? Do you feel called to be a leader in the church? Do you have a nagging suspicion that there could be something more to church than there is currently, but you can't quite figure out what it is?

Are you prepared to be challenged about many of the things you thought you knew about the church? Are you able to discuss challenging ideas without resorting to name-calling and screaming, even with people who disagree with you? Are you able to read?

If you answered Yes! to at least one thing in the first paragraph, and to everything in the second paragraph, then you are just the sort of person who needs to read the book Why Men Hate Going to Church by David Murrow. The book is eye-opening about the way the church does ministry and very frank about the reasons behind the church's slow decline and struggle towards irrelevance in modern society. The text is challenging and paradigm altering about church life, pointing out what passes for ministry in the church today, and what congregational life should and could be like. I think the book ought to be required reading for anyone who wants to join, much less lead, a church today.

To that end, I am starting "Pastor Andersen's Book Club." I am inviting all interested folks to read the book and discuss it over the next few months. We will read one chapter a week, and meet once a week to discuss what has been covered in the chapter.

A word of warning: there will be things in this book that you will not like. There will be things you disagree with (there are things I disagree with). Come prepared to read and discuss things you disagree with – and to do it politely, even when you think other folks are nuts.

A word of encouragement: the book is short, and so are the chapters, so you can easily read a chapter a week. The book was written mostly for lay people, you do not need a degree in theology to understand it. This is important. Please commit to reading as well as coming to the discussion sessions, and be ready to be changed.

There will be multiple discussion sessions a week, as many as are needed, so that there will be a time where everyone who wants to can attend. "Tuition" for the Book Club is \$10.00 (to cover the cost of the book). See the sign up sheet in the narthex, or talk to Pastor Andersen for more details.

### THANKS TO ALL!

Thank you for the cards, visits, gifts, and phone calls to help me celebrate my 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. It meant a lot to me!

Raymond Eden

We want to thank everyone for prayers, cards, food brought in, and visits from Reverend Andersen. It is all greatly appreciated. Thank You!

Bob and Jeanette Yeager

### LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKENDS

Who: Married Couples

When: October 19-21, 2007

April 18-21, 2008

Where: Double Tree Hotel

Schaumburg, IL

Why: Turn your "good" marriage into a "great" one!

More information available in the narthex or visit [NorthernIllinoisLME.org](http://NorthernIllinoisLME.org)

## PRAYER CONCERNS

The family of Sgt. Andrew Lancaster, Kevin Meiners, Kay Gipe, Warren Parker, Allison Hillen, Jim Krohmer, Lucille Groezinger, Donna Wurster, Dennis Ulicny, Bailey McMannus, Robert and Jeanette Yeager, Warren Dailey, Joan Bonvillain, Raymond and Florence Steffes, Marlow Townsend, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces.

\* Updates are Appreciated \*

### DIAPERS, DIAPERS, WHO'S GOT THE DIAPERS?

The Dubuque Domestic Violence Program could use our help! They are looking for size 4 and 5 diapers. You may either purchase some and place in the narthex or designate some of your offerings to this worthy cause by simply indicating so on your offering envelope.

### LAST CHANCE!

Pam Staver will be taking orders for commemorative crocks for approximately two more weeks. Please see her if you are still interested.

Also, more information on the commemorative DVD will become available once the videographer has finalized the video for purchase.

### "LIFT OFF" - SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH GOD

Three young members of St. John's attended the Elizabeth Area Bible School held at First United Methodist Church in Elizabeth, IL from August 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. Jamie Eden, Justin Eden, and Hayley Johnson had a wonderful week of interacting with approximately 35 other youth through bible stories, crafts, science projects, and special music. A special program, which included a balloon release, bible story skit, and several pieces of music, was held on August 9<sup>th</sup> and we had three very entertaining children representing our church family! Judy Woodruff, VBS coordinator, would like to thank those that provided monetary donations in addition to those that assisted during the week - June Eden, JoAnn Eden, Jen Johnson, Cindy Paisley, and Paige Paisley. Mark your calendars for the first week of August, 2008 for another great VBS experience!

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

September 9<sup>th</sup> - Sunday School Begins!

September 23<sup>rd</sup> – Rally Sunday with lunch provided by the Sunday School and lots of fun games!

October 28<sup>th</sup> – Confirmation Sunday with reception to honor the confirmands.

Sunday School Halloween Party

November 11<sup>th</sup> – Worship with Bishop Wollersheim and fellowship to follow

\* A church work day will also be coming up in September to complete exterior painting and other small jobs before the snow flies! Coffee, donuts, and sub sandwiches to be provided for all helpers! \*

## **DON'T FORGET!**

It's still St. John's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year! If anyone has suggestions on other ways that the church can celebrate this milestone, such as guest speakers, entertainment, church outings, etc., please notify one of your church council or 150<sup>th</sup> committee members. Let's keep the ball rolling!

## **CHECK OUT THOSE SMILES!**

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary pictorial directories have arrived! They are free to any family who submitted or had a photograph taken. Other individuals may purchase a directory for \$6.00 (plus postage for those that need to be sent). Thanks to Pam Staver, Jen Johnson, and Pastor Andersen for the countless hours put toward organizing and constructing this priceless piece of memorabilia!

## **NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN!**

- A baseball will travel farther in hot weather than in cold.
- A camel doesn't sweat until its body temperature reaches 106 degrees.
- The sun has enough energy to burn for 100 billion more years.
- Pigs CAN get sunburned!

## **GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE...**

Still looking for individuals to assist in creating and assembling another care package for St. John's own Greg Klopff, who is currently serving in Iraq. It has been eight months since our last package brightened his day. Please see Jen Johnson if you are willing to help!

# **HAVE A GREAT MONTH!**