

The Messenger

March 2024 Edition



A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!

Short Stories that Speak Volumes for Our Lives

Devotional Corner: The Measure of a Mustard Seed

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 13:31,32

Who is America's richest man? What is America's tallest mountain? Largest lake? Largest city? Most populous state? If you answered Elon Musk, Denali (Mount McKinley), Lake Superior, New York City, and California, you're part of the proof that Americans pay attention to big things. We live in bigger houses, eat larger meals, and work longer hours than almost any other people in the world. We tend to live by the maxim, "Bigger is better."

But Jesus takes the "less is more" approach. He says: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." Have you ever seen a mustard seed? It's so small that you could hold thousands in your hand. Why would Jesus tell us this? Because it's possible to be so focused on what looks big and impressive that we overlook him and his blessings.

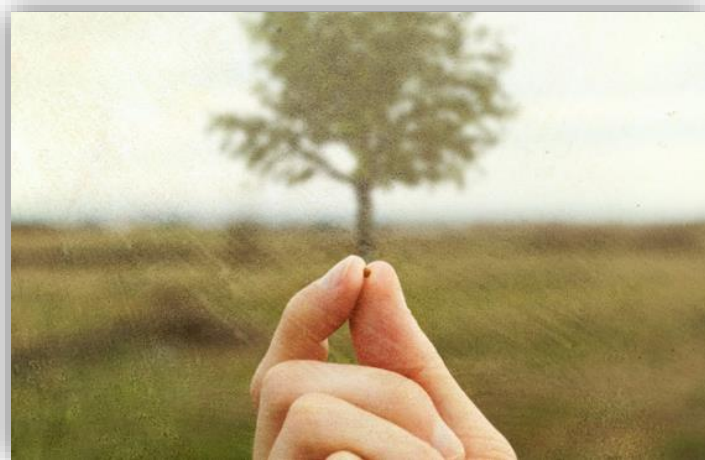
It's a common mistake. At first glance, there was nothing big or impressive about Jesus. When he came

to establish his kingdom, he arrived as a child of a poor girl in a conquered country. He was born in a barn. He grew up in an obscure village. His followers were nobodies. He never wrote a book or held a high position. He never lived in a palace or even a house of his own. After a few years in the public eye, he was killed on a cross like a common slave. On Good Friday, he looked small and powerless.

When Jesus spoke about the mustard seed, he gave us a short story that speaks volumes for our lives. The measure of a mustard seed isn't its tiny size but the huge plant that it grows into. In the same way, the measure of Jesus' humble life and death isn't how many people missed its meaning at the time but what he accomplished. By his perfect life and his innocent death, Jesus has freed the world from the guilt of sin. Countless millions who have put their trust in him have become part of his eternal kingdom.

When Jesus rose from his humble grave to conquer death on Easter morning, he proved that what seems small and weak can be amazingly powerful. It's Easter time again—why not celebrate by exploring what his life and death and resurrection can mean in your life? You might be surprised!

In Christ's Service & Yours!
Pastor Mike Gehl



Worship With Us!

Sundays at 8:00 and 10:30am

Thursdays at 6:30 pm (Switches to Wednesdays during Lent)

Bible Classes and Sunday School Sundays at 9:15 am

Christian Parenting Today



Christian Parenting Today: Help Kids Recognize Their Identity in Christ

Excerpts from a *Focus on the Family* article
See the full article at: focusonthefamily.com/parenting/help-kids-recognize-their-identity-in-christ/

Teach your kids that Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves: He measured up.

Understanding your identity in Christ is difficult when you are adjusting to a whole new world.

We first met Cooper when he was nearly 4 years old. My husband, Zac, and I had imagined flying overseas to meet our cuddly toddler, but we arrived to realize Cooper was a full-blown kid. For 1,400 days, we'd had no input into his life, and suddenly he was our son.

When we returned home with him, Cooper entered a world he couldn't have imagined during his years in the orphanage. High-tops, slushes at Sonic and cartoons on Netflix. But Cooper had one obsession: He wanted a bicycle.

So I made a chart with boxes leading to a printout of the most epic bike he'd ever seen. Whenever he did anything noteworthy — stayed in bed, shared toys, used his fork — he earned a metallic star sticker, one box closer to owning that bike.

Cooper was adjusting to the concept of parents, and we needed a way to motivate his cooperation that was different from the ways we'd disciplined our other children. The chart worked. And it still works. Cooper still relies on stickers and prizes as his motivation to get homework done.

[But] our identity is in Christ, not gold stars and checked boxes. While the chart encourages good behavior and performance, it has its downside. At

some point as an orphan, Cooper started seeing himself as a bad kid. So when he earns a star, a bright grin breaks out, as if he sees himself as a good kid. But if he doesn't land a star, his head drops; he's believing the old lie again. He wants the stickers, but this ache is bigger. Something in him strives to prove he is enough.

I don't want any of my children to think they are defined by stars or empty boxes, yet we live in a world that issues gold stars and, more often, scolding shame. I want my kids to learn how to rest their identity in the God who created them. The God who defines them.

You are loved. I suppose everyone has some version of that star chart, some internal way of measuring approval. We quickly learn that the more effort we put into something, the more "stickers" we get. Studying hard or working diligently leads to better performance — and the corresponding praise from teachers, coaches and bosses. Being a positive, encouraging friend can lead others to be a good friend in turn. This is just how the world works.

These interactions and achievements do contribute something to our identity; they bolster our confidence and help us feel special and valuable. But an identity crisis can form when kids view their significance entirely through things that change. Activities, academics, relationships — these things all have one thing in common: They aren't stable.

But our Lord never changes (Malachi 3:6). His love is the foundation of our identity. Teach your children that God's love never changes and that nothing in this world can separate us from it (Romans 8:38-39). Believing that we are unconditionally loved by our Maker is the first step toward seeing our true, unshakeable identity.

God's love isn't manipulated by our performance.

I was teaching at a Bible study when a participant stopped me with a comment. "I just find it hard to believe that we don't have to do anything to measure up to God. Sounds good, but I can't believe it."

We may not be as direct, but I think many of us struggle with this same issue. And even as our kids begin to recognize their significance in God's eyes, it's hard to let go of that chart system. They want to please God, perform to make Him proud; and when they make mistakes, they fear His disappointment.

Article continues on page 7

Upcoming Events



Easter Egg Scramble- Saturday, March 23rd

Join us at 10:00 am on Saturday, March 23rd for our annual Easter Egg Scramble! This year's event will be held in our gym regardless of weather and will feature over 10,000 eggs for youngsters to gather. Watch our Facebook page for a special contest for adults as well! During the event, we will also be holding a special non-perishable collection for Apple Valley Pantry; please consider donating.



FVL Presents: Mary Poppins Friday-Sunday, March 1st-3rd

FVL's annual spring musical will be the beloved tale of Mary Poppins. Shows are available Friday, March 1st at 6:30 pm, Saturday, March 2nd at 6:30 pm, and Sunday, March 3rd at 2:00 pm—but tickets are selling fast, so order online asap if you want a seat! The production will be appropriate for all ages and will feature special effects and a 17 piece live orchestra. Running time is 2 hours and 45 minutes with a 15 minute intermission. Additionally, FVL is running an Art Show over the weekend, so give yourself plenty of time to arrive early and check out the student displays!

St. John Goes Bowling- Saturday, March 23rd

Church and school families are invited to come for a casual get-together at Electric City Bowling in Kaukauna on Saturday, March 23rd. Our lanes are now full for the 1:00 pm time slot, but the alley has agreed to reserve lanes for an additional 2:30 pm time slot. Please contact Courtney Schisel (920-707-0039) to sign up. Cost is \$16, which goes to bowling, shoes, pizza, soda, tax, and gratuity. The last day to sign up will be March 8th, so be sure to register asap!



Mark Your Calendars!

- March 1-3- FVL Spring Musical (Mary Poppins) and Art Show
- March 4-8- No School- Spring Break
- March 4- FVL Open House
- March 10- Daylight Savings Time- Spring Ahead!
- March 22- End of Third Quarter
- March 22- Hot Lunch
- March 23- Easter Egg Scramble
- March 23- St. John Goes Bowling
- March 25-28- Spirit Week
- March 25- Blood Drive
- March 28- Maundy Thursday Worship
- March 29- No School- Easter Break
- March 29- Good Friday Worship
- March 31- Easter Sunday Worship and Breakfast
- April 1- No School- Easter Break
- April 2- Parent/Teacher Conferences

Church Highlights



Pastor Gehl Takes Call to Arizona

Pastor Gehl has decided to accept a call to serve at Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Kingman, Arizona. He will remain at St. John until mid-May. We wish him God's blessings on his new ministry and extend him our thanks for the eight-plus years he served here in Wrightstown. A farewell luncheon will be held for the Gehl family on Sunday, April 28th.

Our congregation has started the process to begin calling a new pastor. We encourage all members to fill out a pre-call survey—available on the table across from the kitchen—so that our district president has input on which potential candidates may best meet our needs. Surveys are due on Sunday, March 3rd. Watch for information on upcoming call meetings and updates.

Please keep Pastor Gehl, his family, and our congregation in your prayers during this time of transition.

Lent and Holy Week Schedules

With the Lenten season upon us, we have temporarily suspended our Thursday night worship services but have added a Wednesday Lenten service at 6:30. The remaining Lent services will be on March 6th, 13th, and 20th, with pastors from Trinity, Kaukauna and St. John, Woodville rotating pulpits with Pastor Gehl.

Our worship schedule changes further for Holy Week. On Thursday, March 28th, we offer Maundy Thursday worship at 2:00 and 6:30 pm. We also have two options for Good Friday worship at 2:00 and 7:30 pm.

Easter Sunday also breaks from our regular schedule to hold our traditional offerings of a Sunrise Service, Easter Breakfast, and a Festival Service. The Sunrise Easter Service will begin at 6:30 am, followed by breakfast from 7:45 until 8:30 and a Festival Service at 9:00 am. Both services will offer Holy Communion.



Easter Lilies Available

Easter Lilies are available to be purchased in memory or in honor of loved ones. The cost is \$15 each. The deadline for ordering is March 24th. Please drop off your payment and honorarium information with Mrs. Sary. Order forms will also be available in upcoming bulletins and can be collected with the offering.

Church Birthdays

Happy birthday to our church members celebrating in March!

Mar 6 Darol Reschke
Mar 6 Shannon West
Mar 8 Alton Jahnke
Mar 9 Sydney Parrish
Mar 11 Christian Schisel
Mar 12 Jaylyn Coenen
Mar 13 Terry Schaeuble
Mar 13 Trevor Snyder
Mar 16 Barbara Bowers
Mar 16 Chevelle Bowers



Mar 18 Christopher Lemke
Mar 18 Tim Raddatz
Mar 18 Cheryl Uitenbroek
Mar 20 Carroll Treptow
Mar 21 Ralph Bohrtz
Mar 23 Hannah Torres Ammel
Mar 24 Stephen Wierschke
Mar 26 Amy Fehlauer
Mar 29 Gabrielle Solomon

School Highlights

School Spirit Week

It's school spirit time at St. John! We will be celebrating our school and having some fun in the week before Easter. Each day will feature a different dress-up theme:

Monday, March 25th: Pajama Day

Nobody really wants to wake up on Monday mornings, so we'll be a little lazy and come in our pj's.

Tuesday, March 26th: Sports Dress Up Day

Support your favorite sports team by showing off all the gear you have!

Wednesday, March 27th: Wacky Wednesday

Get as wacky as you can: mis-matched clothes, crazy hair dos, and loud colors can all be on display (more than usual)!

Thursday, March 28th: School Spirit Day

It's time to celebrate St. John! Put on your spirit wear or break out red and black clothes. Go Cardinals!



School Choice Window Open

The window for applying/reapplying for school choice is open! Applications may be submitted through April 18th to receive tuition payments from the state through the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP/ School Choice). It is open to any family with students entering preK, Kindergarten, first grade, or ninth grade or those who are transferring from a public school to a private choice school.

Anyone who is interested in using the school choice program to fund their tuition at St. John is highly encouraged to meet with Mrs. Starry and/or Mr. Raddatz. They can assist with the application process to ensure that you have completed everything correctly. Please remember that even those already enrolled in school choice must reapply annually.



Spring Parent/Teacher Conferences Are Approaching

Spring parent/teacher conferences will be held on Tuesday, April 2nd. Mrs. Otto and Mrs. Gamboa will be available from 12:00 to 7:00 pm to meet with early childhood students' parents. Miss Buss, Mrs. Wicks, Mr. Raddatz, and Mr. Solomon will be available to meet with elementary students' parents from 3:00 to 7:00 pm. Third quarter report cards for elementary students will be available by Thursday, March 28th, prior to the conferences. Conferences will be held in fifteen-minute time slots. If you would like more time to meet with your child's teacher or cannot make it in on April 2nd, please contact the teacher regarding an alternate time. We ask that all families attend this session of conferences. Watch for an online sign up to come via e-mail soon.

School Birthdays

Happy birthday to our students celebrating during March!

- Remy R.- March 10th
- Jaylyn C.- March 12th
- Eduardo P-A.- March 20th
- Mark B.- March 25th
- Haylie N.- March 25th
- Lily P-A.- March 27th



Your Children's Identity in Christ

Christian parenting article continues from page 3

Help your kids understand that God's love isn't manipulated by performance. After Jesus fed the 5,000, people asked Him what work God wants us to do. What a response Jesus had! "Believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). Our job is to believe. Through this trust Christ rescues us. What does a person have to do? Trust the rescuer, cooperate with the process.

Teach your kids that Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves: He measured up. He satisfied all that God asks of you or anyone to be in relationship with Him. And instead of keeping that for himself, Jesus trades places with us. He trades His enoughness for our scarcity. He shouldered our not-enoughness and put it to death on the Cross, allowing all who believe on His name to measure up before a perfect God.

You are light. John opens his Gospel with the incredible imagery of what Jesus brings when He arrives in our world: light shining into darkness, light becoming the light of men. God's vision for our lives is that we would receive His light and then reflect that light to the world (Matthew 5:14). We receive who Jesus is — and then share Him with others.

I tell my kids that when we embrace our identity as God's adopted child, His light begins to shine through us. God is in us and with us. We can rest from striving to perform as we sit in awe of this awesome light that is not contained and is fully accessible to us.

The night we met Cooper in the orphanage, Zac and I lay in bed thinking about the challenges ahead. How do we parent a child who's never known love? Where does this unconditional love come from? Then Zac said, "To the degree that I am able to receive the unconditional love of God will be the degree that I can reflect that love to Cooper.

So simple. So difficult. Everything flows out of our identity as adopted children of the King. The battle in our souls isn't the fight to become something; it is a battle to believe who we already are. When we are secure in that truth, the light that fills us shines forth.

Who am I? Our significance comes from the Creator of the universe. Together with your child, reflect on these promises from God's Word:

- I am the wonderful creation of a loving God. He knows everything about me (Psalm 139:13-14).
- I was made to reflect the image of God. My abilities to create, learn and love come from Him. I have so much in common with the Creator (Genesis 1:27).
- I am adopted into God's family, and I will live for eternity as His child (Romans 8:15).
- I've been created with a purpose. God has prepared good works for me to do, and He will "give me everything I need to carry them out (Ephesians 2:10).
- I'm chosen by God and special to Him (1 Peter 2:9).
- I am a citizen of heaven; this world is not my home (Philippians 3:20).
- I am never in the dark. God's Word helps me find my way in dark times (Psalm 119:105).

Contact Us

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