

# THE MESSENGER

May 2020

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

## Men's Bible Study Resumes

The Men's Bible Study is **online Saturday, May 9 at 9:00 am**. We will resume our study of the Minor Prophets with the book of *Nahum*. Please plan to do a little preparation work in advance:

- Get a copy of the Bible study:
  - Click here for [study guide](#)
  - Pick one up from church during Sunday drive-through time (11-1)
  - Call/text 715-921-5132 to be mailed or emailed a copy
- Read the book of *Nahum* (it is only 47 verses)
- Scan the Bible study and be prepared to read the Bible references
- Read 2 Kings 18 & 19

Looking ahead to the summer, our schedule is as follows:

June 13: *Habakkuk*      July 11: *Zephaniah*      August 8: *Haggai*

### There are two different ways to join the live study:

- 1) Call **1-408-418-9388** and enter the meeting number **622 095 837** and password **6367**.
- 2) Go to <https://globalpage-prod.webex.com/join> or click the Join meeting button below. Enter in the meeting number **622 095 837** and meeting password **Mens** (case sensitive) to join the class.

[Join meeting](#)

### NEW CHRIST LUTHERAN FACEBOOK

**GROUP:** This group will be a place for members of the congregation to interact, ask questions, participate in Bible studies and build each other up as the body of Christ. To join, go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/christmerrill>

**NEW!** Sermons will air **Sunday mornings during the month of May at 8:00 am** on 96.3FM, 730AM, stream at [bluejay963.com](http://bluejay963.com), Alexa, and TuneIn (for mobile streaming).

### In this Messenger:

- 1) Men's Bible Study
- 1) NEW Christ Lutheran Facebook Group
- 1) NEW Sermons on the Merrill radio station
- 2) Pastor's Devotion
- 3) Covid-19 Related Updates
- 3) Financial Update
- 3) NEW Online Giving
- 3) Adult Bible Class
- 4) Camp Phillip Delegate
- 4) Worship Aids Meeting
- 4) Upcoming Meetings
- 4) Ben Stahoski Award
- 4) Youth Group Candy Bar Sale
- 4) Called Worker Tuition Assistance
- 4) P-16 Tuition Assistance Fund
- 4) Thrivent Choice
- 4) Birthdays
- 5-6) Article: Kindness and Godness



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## God Moves in a Mysterious Way

1. God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform;  
he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.
2. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;  
behind a frowning providence he has a smiling face.
3. Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain.
4. You fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy and will break in blessing on your head.

The above lyrics were written by William Cowper and these lyrics are found in our hymnal, hymn 420. But who was William Cowper, and why did he write these words? William Cowper was a man who suffered from extreme depression and tried to commit suicide multiple times. In fact, these lyrics were written after William Cowper tried to commit suicide by drowning himself.

Take all of this into consideration as you reread those lyrics. The first verse mentions how God's footsteps are on the sea which probably William Cowper mentioned that since he tried to drown himself. Verse two mentions how God has a smiling face even when it's behind a frowning providence. William Cowper probably mentioned that since he viewed God as someone who hated him. Verse three mentions how scanning God's word according to our ideas would lead to vain. William Cowper probably mentioned that since he thought of God in this way. Verse four mentions how the clouds are filled with dread would break into mercy and blessing. William Cowper probably mentioned that since life was dark and bleak for him, but God's mercy and blessing came to him.

There can be times when we may feel like William Cowper, especially right now. It's interesting that the last hymn we sang in church was this one, and since that service so much has changed. We might feel depressed, judging God to our own ideas, or life can seem dark and bleak.

And to be open with you, in some ways I feel that way right now. Right before I started writing this devotion, my parents called me to let me know one of my uncles suddenly passed away. Is it easy to accept this and be happy about it? No, it isn't, and I humbly ask you to keep me in your prayers.

But regardless of how I'm feeling or how all of us are feeling, let us look closely at the words of this hymn. Even though life isn't always perfect we have a God who is in control, who smiles upon us, who explains his loving purposes to us, and who gives us his mercy and blessing. God moves in a mysterious way; let us trust in him for his grace.

- Pastor Neal Behm

## COVID-19 RELATED UPDATES

Visit [www.christmerrill.com/covid19](http://www.christmerrill.com/covid19) for the most up-to-date information.

Pastor Behm will continue to post a weekly **sermonette** by Sunday morning at 9 am to the church's [YouTube channel](#) and [Facebook page](#).

From **11 am to 1 pm each Sunday**, people may **drive up** to the church to deliver their offerings and to pick up paper copies of the sermonette, Adult Bible Study guide, and *The Messenger*. Offerings may also be mailed to Christ Ev. Lutheran Church, 1204 N. Sales St., Merrill 54452.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Through the end of April, Budgeted Offerings and Expenses were \$47,978.67. **Actual Offerings were \$44,586.50**, which is \$3,392.17 below the Budgeted Offerings. **Actual Expenses were \$43,995.06**, which is \$3,983.61 lower than the Budgeted Expenses. Actual Expenses through April are \$591.44 below the Actual Offerings.

**NEW ONLINE GIVING OPTION:** Christ Lutheran has recently gone live with online giving to provide a safe (physically and financially), efficient, and simple way for members to give their offerings directly from their checking/savings account or with a credit card. To participate in online giving, go to the [www.christmerrill.com/giving](http://www.christmerrill.com/giving). You can also give through the GivePlus app available from the App Store or Google Play. You will be given the options to give to your preferred church fund and choose to pay directly from your checking or savings account or use a credit or debit card. You will also be able to do one time giving or set up recurring giving. There is a small cost to the church to use the service; there is an option available for you to offset the processing fee when using a credit/debit card.

Your gifts will be automatically deposited in the church bank account and your giving details imported directly into Church 360 and will be tracked the same way as our current regular giving. And if you are using the app please confirm that you are giving to the correct Merrill church, **Christ Ev. Lutheran Church**.

Go to <https://youtu.be/2KGZ4-WOaWw> to view a demonstration of the online giving.

### **ADULT BIBLE CLASS UPDATE: The class will be held on Sundays at 10:00 am.**

Topic for May 3 is "Reviewing the Basics of Luther's Small Catechism." The next topic for May 10 and 17 will be The Passover Psalms (Psalm 113-118).

#### **There are two different ways to join the live study:**

- 1) Call **1-408-418-9388** and enter the meeting number **623 780 608** and password **47374784**
- 2) Go to <https://globalpage-prod.webex.com/join> or click the Join meeting button below. Enter in the meeting number **623 780 608** and meeting password **hPfp4QVhj56** (case sensitive) to join the class.

[Join meeting](#)

For technical assistance, call Ken C. at 715-218-5393 or Scott S. at 715-539-0250.

A [study guide](#) is available. If you would like to have a paper copy of the study guide mailed to you, please include your name and address and email [ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com](mailto:ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com) or call/text 715-921-5132.

**CAMP PHILLIP DELEGATE NEEDED:** Christ Lutheran is a congregational member of Camp Phillip. As members of a corporation congregation, our church members receive a 10% discount on all camp programs. Each congregation may also select two adult male members to serve as representatives at the annual meeting on June 13. One man has already agreed to serve; if you are interested in representing our church, please contact Scott Schult 715-539-0250 or [christmerrilleducation@gmail.com](mailto:christmerrilleducation@gmail.com)

**YOUTH GROUP FUNDRAISER:** Candy bars are for sale for \$2.50 each in the church entry.

**CALLED WORKER TUITION ASSISTANCE:** Applications for those that are preparing for full-time ministry are due on **May 4**; request an application - call/text 715-921-5132 or email [ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com](mailto:ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com). The fund designed to financially assist students is currently below its maintenance goal; please consider making an offering.

**WORSHIP AIDS MEETING** is planned for **May 19** at 6:30 pm. All are invited.

At this time we are recommending that everyone join via the WEBEX site below or call in on the phone number below. Thank you in advance and hope to see/hear you there.

**There are two ways to join the live meeting:**

- 1) Call **1-408-418-9388** and enter the meeting number **296 849 100** and password **24747824**
- 2) Go to <https://globalpage-prod.webex.com/join>

Enter in the meeting number **296 849 100** and meeting password **ChristAids** (case sensitive) to join the meeting.

**P-16 TUITION ASSISTANCE FUND:** The P-16 Tuition Assistance Fund is designed to financially assist those who attend WELS preschools, grade, middle and high schools. Please consider contributing to the fund.

**THRIVENT CHOICE:** Thrivent Choice provides a platform for members to have a financial impact on the causes and nonprofits they care about. Eligible members can recommend where Thrivent distributes a portion of its charitable funding by directing Choice Dollars. Members become eligible for Thrivent Choice based on insurance premiums, contract values and Thrivent volunteer leadership. **Monies designated for Christ Lutheran Church are placed into the P-16 Tuition Assistance Fund.** Visit [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://Thrivent.com/thriventchoice) or call 800-847-4836 and, when prompted, say "Thrivent Choice" for more information.

### UPCOMING (virtual) MEETINGS:

May 4: Board of Christian Education @ 5 pm

May 13: Youth Group @ 5 pm

May 13: Council @ 6:30 pm

**BEN STAHOSKI AWARD:** This annual award is given out to a catechism youth that is able to recite all of the books of the Bible in order and in the fastest time. This year **Ethan Rasmussen** had the fastest time of **19.84 seconds**. Thanks goes out to all the students that participated!

### MAY BIRTHDAYS

2 Donna Polak	17 Dave Polak
6 Frank Abbrederis	20 Avery Kleinschmidt
7 Robert Dehnel	23 Lily Kotila
8 Ken Neff	25 Mitchell Stockowitz
9 Samantha Kasten	26 Brenda Rasmussen
10 Daniel Whitson	26 Wally Pontel
10 Renee Waliczek	29 Russ Rasmussen
14 Kathleen Plummer	30 Grace Berg
15 Joe Plummer	

Please submit items for next month's Messenger by the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month to [Messenger@ChristMerrill.com](mailto:Messenger@ChristMerrill.com) or place them in the Messenger slot located in the top row of church mailboxes in the narthex.

# Kindness and Goodness

By John A. Braun

*Solomon wrote, “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). Yet sadly those on the Christian Way easily turn down the road to jealousy and anger.*

Road rage is a relatively new term. One expert said that it was coined in 1988. Today the local news frequently carries a story about two drivers enraged and creating danger not only for themselves but also for other drivers.

The apostle Paul never drove a car or truck down a freeway, but he listed “fits of rage” in his list of acts of the flesh. Two additional attitudes—jealousy and selfish ambition—help us see what lies within us all. Paul also knew the fruits of the Spirit—kindness and goodness—that were different and part of the Christian way of life.

## **Acts of the flesh: Jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition**

All three of these acts of the flesh—jealousy, fits of rage, and selfish ambition—flow from the natural sinful tendency within us. Sometimes they lie hidden behind a face of respectability. At other times they erupt into acts that are destructive and sometimes violent.

For example, a driver cuts another driver off, almost or actually creating an accident. Most of us have been in that situation. We feel the sudden surge of anger. We may control the impulse and drive on, still seething. But the urge doesn't disappear all at once. At times it explodes like a volcano, sending sparks and hot angry retaliation. We don't even think. We just react as our blood pressure spikes and our sinful natures take over.

We easily see the trouble with road rage. It's explosive and dangerous. Yet fits of rage also show up in marriages. Ask any police officer about domestic abuse calls. Bruises, broken bones, even gunshot wounds are familiar to police who must calm a fit of domestic rage. Shelters for abused women and children exist because of such fits of rage. Some of those angry outbursts hide behind closed doors and never rise to the level that requires a police report.

There are victims. Children are abused, starved, beaten—not just by fathers and boyfriends, but also by mothers. Sadly, children sometimes are in the middle of a family dispute and are hurt in the crossfire of words, fists, and whatever else is handy to throw. These acts of the flesh are obvious as Paul says (Galatians 5:19), and they are destructive at so many levels. Even if we have escaped the worst of the consequences, we all have felt the anger and rage within. Sometimes we have painfully learned how destructive rage can be.

Jealousy and selfish ambition may hide from public view, but they also lurk in the sinful human heart. They quietly take over, sometimes with just a slight bump of discontent. Shakespeare described jealousy as a green-eyed monster in the Merchant of Venice. His story tells how jealousy can destroy love, distort words, imagine the worst, and bring destruction. Jealousy sours marriages, families, and friendships. It removes contentment not only from the vocabulary but also from the heart. All the while it hides behind that face of respectability while consuming us from within.

Is selfish ambition any different? Maybe a little, but it's related to jealousy. Perhaps it does not hide as cleverly as jealousy. We should remember that there is nothing wrong with ambition and a desire to achieve. But selfish ambition drives people to action in order to seek an advantage over someone else at all costs.

*(continued on next page)*

A person's desire to move ahead can leave wounded and bruised people who have been sacrificed for advancement. The wounded know they have been run over or used, but they are in the rear view mirror of selfish ambition and no longer count. The greatest casualty of selfish ambition is love and concern for others. The same casualty comes in the wake of rage and jealousy. Personal agendas and desires trump love for others.

### **Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness and goodness**

The counterweights to rage, jealousy, and selfish ambition are kindness and goodness. These are created within us by the Holy Spirit. We remain sinners, forgiven, but still retaining our sinful flesh. So the works of the flesh show up in our lives, and at the same time so do the fruits of the Spirit. We are both saints and sinners.

Others, even those that do not know Jesus, are often gentle and good. We should rejoice and give thanks for those qualities no matter where we find them. They contribute to the welfare of our neighborhoods and society. At times they put Christians to shame. Yet our kindness and goodness on the way to heaven has a distinctively Christian characteristic.

What lies behind Christian goodness and kindness? Two things. First, our faith in Jesus has changed us. We know the love Jesus has for us unworthy, angry, jealous, and selfish sinners. We are deeply loved and forgiven. That warms our hearts and changes our attitudes. We see things differently. Second, our attitude has changed so we want to do as Jesus directed. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . . The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:30,31). We are familiar with his two commandments and also know his example. We understand his compassion for us and for those who suffer in this world. We know that he did not show rage, jealousy, or selfish ambition while he lived here. We are his disciples here and now and want to be like him. We want our lives to show our compassion, our generosity, and our willingness to do what is right and good for others.

So the Christian Way is a path of kindness and goodness. It is also a way of repentance. We all find it difficult at times to wrestle with and control the acts of the flesh when we feel the strong urge to be angry, jealous, or selfish. Again and again we must repent of our failings, turn toward the mercy of our loving Savior, and resolve to be better disciples.

The works of the flesh erupt so quickly in our marriages, families, and daily lives. It's no wonder that we learned "the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desire be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Luther's Small Catechism, Baptism, The Mean of Baptism for Our Daily Life, Fourth). Note the word "daily."

We are to be lights in this world and let our good deeds—including our kindness and goodness—be seen so others can give glory not to us but to our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16). When our light is dimmed by our rage, jealousy, or enmity toward others, Jesus beckons to us embrace the forgiveness we need, to turn away from those acts of the flesh, and to repent, so that we can reignite the light of kindness and goodness on the way to heaven.

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