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February 2025 Happenings

From Pastor Brand's Desk: *C.S. Lewis and the Four Loves*

February will soon be here, and the stores are filled with Valentine's Day stuff. I noticed that as soon as the Christmas stuff is gone the Valentine's Day stuff moves onto the shelves. Thoughts of many move to the 14th and to that nebulous word "love." Whenever I am pondering love, I find myself turning to C.S. Lewis's book *The Four Loves*. In this book Lewis does a masterful job describing the four main words for "Love" used in 1st Century Greek, the language of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 3:14- "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." The love word Paul used here, was agape, Christian love, or as Lewis summarizes- "charity." Below is a full summary of the book and if you are moved to read the whole thing (which I encourage you to do), you can find it in our church library or ask me to borrow my copy. I pray that your life, relationships, marriage and faith are blessed and strengthened.

The Four Loves is a 1971 book by C.S. Lewis which examines the nature of love from a Christian, philosophical perspective. The book has its roots in a series of 1958 radio broadcasts that were met with wide criticism for containing what, at the time, was considered an unusually forthright discussion of sex. In the book, Lewis distinguishes between four different types of love, inspired by the four Greek words for love. The categories are affection, friendship, eros (romantic love), and charity (God's love or agape). The first three categories of love he presents as "natural," while charity is categorized as "supernatural" love. For Lewis, charity is the highest form of love. Lewis explores these different types of love, how they reflect God's love, and how they can fail to fulfill the expectations of God's love and become destructive. Lewis begins by discussing different aspects of love and the difference between likes and loves. He talks of "need", "gift", and "appreciation". A "need" love exists because of the need to love or to be loved. Lewis says this can be a selfish love, to some extent, but it is not totally selfish, since love is a human need in the same way that food is. "Need" love does not last, but rather fades away once the need for it is satisfied. A "gift" love is totally selfless. This is a love that is given without any expectation of receiving something in return. "Appreciative" love, meanwhile, is love that stems from the admiration of something. It is when the person bestowing love feels that the recipient is worthy of it. "Need", "gift", and "appreciation" loves are most commonly combined, rather than existing independently. Affection is commonly the kind of love that is found among parents and their children, or among people who have grown quite familiar with each other in situations such as being roommates or sharing a common work environment. It provides the comfort of being with other people. It brings together people who might otherwise remain separated from each other. This type of love breeds an appreciation for things that might not grow without it. Possible shortcomings of this type of love are that it can lead to people becoming so comfortable that they develop a lack of courtesy, or in situations when the recipient changes, it can create a sense of jealousy. Lewis cites friendship as the least natural of the four types of love he discusses. He says it is unnecessary as, much like philosophy, it has no survival value, although it does provide value to survival.

It is the love that is least likely to result in jealousy, since sharing friends with more friends tends to improve friendship. Lewis goes on to say that true friendship is uncommon and much of what we call friendship is actually companionship. Companionship can lead to friendship when those involved have a common interest. Friendship, he adds, is spiritual in nature, but that does not mean it is holy. God’s love is not generally represented as friendship, but is more commonly seen as affection. The dangers connected to friendship include the possibility of being ignored by others, or shutting others out. Lewis says that friendship, “is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others.” Lewis says that when Christians talk of eros it is frequently in a negative way, but he sheds a positive light on it. He avoids characterizing it as lust, but rather as romantic love which can, but does not have to, have a sexual aspect. He exemplifies the differences by comparing lust and eros. A lustful man wants the pleasure that he can derive from a woman, and the woman is simply the vehicle through which such pleasure is delivered. A man who experiences romantic love, desires the woman herself and does not think in terms of how much pleasure she can deliver in comparison to any other woman. He carries this argument further, explaining that a man would stay with a woman he loved even if marriage with her would not lead to happiness, because he feels it would be better to be unhappy with her than to be happy without her. Eros transcends the difference between giving and receiving. Romantic love is close to God’s love, but Lewis adds, does not necessarily bring one closer to God. One potential danger of romantic love is that it can be idealized. Lewis is clear to point out that he does not consider the natural loves to be all that is required in life. Since all four forms of love are determined by feelings, they require goodness to keep them from turning bad and he uses the example of a garden that needs to be tended, not just planted, to illustrate this idea. Lewis talks about the supernatural love that God gives people and how it allows them to give their lives to God, while becoming altruistic and developing the ability to love that which seemed unlovable.

We experience all four loves in our lives and it is very good for us to distinguish which kind of love we have for things and keep them all in perspective. And it is very good for us as Christians to pursue Godliness with all of our loves, so that they don’t degrade or downgrade into sin and rebellion. And perhaps the best thing for us is to wrap all of our “affection,” “friendship,” and “eros” up in that amazing agape love that God has for us because of Jesus death and resurrection. “Agape” love is heavenly love and it will stay with us for eternity. May our Lord grant you a large portion of “agape” love in the here and now and give you that foretaste of heavenly love, and then encourage and persuade you to love like Jesus.

Peace and joy in Jesus, Pastor Brand

SAVE THE DATE

2025 VBS

July 14th—17th

6:00—8:00pm

St Paul Lutheran
Church & Preschool

Join us for an Unforgettable
Journey with Jesus!



Pastor David's Thoughts - What is God's Will?

What is God's Will?

There's been a lot of talk recently about a lot of things. The future of both Pastors. The direction of the church. The direction of the nation. So on and so on. And one of the things that I keep hearing about is "God's Will". We keep praying for God's Will to be done. But what does that mean?

And I believe we don't understand what we should understand about God's Will, because there are some things that we can and should understand about God's Will.

God's Will is simply what God wants. So what do we know about what God wants? I found the verse:

John 6:40

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Words from Jesus Christ Himself. Ok, so the Will of God is that all who look on the Son, believe in him, should have eternal life, and will be raised up on the last day. (Don't let the word "should" throw you for a loop. It's definitive in the Greek.) Ok, so the Will of God is that His people be saved. But what about the will of God for myself (Pastor David) or what is the will of God for you, for example.

Well, you and I have immense freedom in Christ. We know from John 8:36 "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.", Romans 8:1-2 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.", Galatians 5:1 "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.", and 1 Peter 2:16 "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God."

We're free to do things. We're free to vote for whomever you want to vote for. But then we'll reap those rewards and bear those consequences. We're free to work wherever we want to work. But then we'll reap those rewards and bear those consequences. We're free to do pretty much whatever we want inside of God's Law.

The question then becomes, what are the bounds of God's Law? How big of a fenced in area do we have freedom in? Pretty big. This is what Luther meant by "Sin boldly". Not that we are to be scared to move or do anything, but we're free to roam inside of the bounds of God's Law. You've been liberated by faith apart from what you've done. You are no longer bound by the law for righteousness, but are freed by Christ to serve Him and serve your neighbors.

So, what is God's will for your life? That you know Christ. Pretty much everything else is freed to you to pursue. You want that house? Glorify God with your savings and work towards it. You want to marry that person? Honor God with your relationship and come talk to me. You want a new job because you feel that you are not making enough money to serve the Lord because of debts and other things? Pursue that new job in a God honoring way.

What I am about to say next is true some of the time, but not necessarily all of the time.

I think we often scapegoat, or hide behind God's Will because we're afraid to do something. We're afraid to have hard conversations because *what if that isn't God's will?????* We're afraid to make decisions because *what if that is not God's Will???* We're often afraid to do something because *what if it's wrong?*

That's not what living in Christ is about. That's a lie from Satan. This is what Luther was getting at. DO SOMETHING and if what you did was wrong, you get to experience God's Will in the reconciliation of Jesus Christ!!! That's a WIN-WIN if I've ever seen one. God's Will is that you have freedom in Christ Jesus.

But now we get to the timing issue. Ok, we know we have Freedom to do things, but when is the *right time* to say something, do something, etc. Here we run into the same sinful problem. We use phrases like "God's a lot more patient than we are". Which is certainly true. But I believe that we hide behind this idea to NOT do something. It removes that issue from us and pushes it down the line, when maybe the problem will be much worse. Who knows. God does. But we often push it back like Jonah giving some reason for not doing something that God wants us to do.

When I visit the sick and distressed I tell them that they need to continue to be good stewards of the bodies that God has given them. That there is no pill or medicine that will stop God from coming to take them home. It's not like Jesus will show up ready to take a person home and then say "Uh oh, they took a baby aspirin. I guess I'll be back tomorrow." NO! There is nothing that can stop the Will of God.

So if God wants something done in your life, there are few decisions that you can make that will derail that. But even then, God will work it out.

As a Pastor, I've been told that I'm often the greatest hindrance between people and their Lord. And that my goal is simply to let God work and say "Yes Lord" when it's time to do something.

I encourage you all to do the same. Because we have great freedom in Christ we often believe the lies that slow us down, or incapacitate us. So instead of doing something, we don't do anything.

So what is God's will for your life? That you believe on the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Ok, but what else? That you love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Ok, but what else?

What else? What more do you need? Go! Do! Something! Anything! And give Glory to God along the way. And when you sin, which you will, you get the opportunity to receive forgiveness in Christ. Again I say, that's a "WIN-WIN".

We fret too much about God's Will. He knows what it is. You don't need to know much beyond Christ died for you, and you're justified by faith.

You've been freed to serve him. Go and do it gladly.

Ministry Governance Board

St Paul Lutheran Church

Q4 2024 Update

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

Below is a summary of your Ministry Governance Board’s activities for Q4 2024.

Our Annual Voters’ Meeting was held in October. David Lark and Eric Tuori were reelected to the Board. Their three-year terms begin in January. Thanks again to all who attended the meeting! In December the Board completed Sr. Pastor Brand’s annual performance review.

Total expenses for 2024 were \$372,300 and total revenue was \$359,700, resulting in a deficit of \$12,600. At year-end, the General Fund Balance (surplus) was \$49,900 and the Capital Project Fund balance was \$36,500. Lastly the Organ Repair Fund Balance was \$16,800.

It is important to note that the 2024 budget planned for a deficit of \$9,797. While we continue to do an amazing job controlling expenses by being \$3,200 under budget, the additional deficit is a result of giving coming in \$12,700 under budget.

In December, Sr Pastor Brand informed the Board he is certified to serve in an Intentional Interim or Transition Interim role within Michigan and that he will be making himself available in the Northern Lower Michigan region. He also informed the Board that he is on a short call list at Bethlehem Lutheran in Glen Arbor, MI. Please pray that the Lord guides Pastor Brand in understanding how and where He wants him to serve in the future.

Lastly, in December, with the assistance of the Finance Committee and the Teaching Elders, the Board adopted a 2025 budget. Planned total expenses are \$355,636. Planned total revenue is \$354,800. Resulting in a planned deficit of \$836. It is important to note that: 1) Proposed Plate Giving is assumed to be \$350,000 which compares to 2024 actual. 2) Health Insurance Costs have increased 21% or \$6,800 year over year. 3) Pastor Brand again declined a salary increase, while Pastor Miller received a salary increase that aligns with Synod guidelines. 4) St. Paul can no longer support the salaries of two pastors. Consequently, the budget includes a \$50,000 reduction for a ‘Pastoral Adjustment’. This adjustment not only balances the budget but also represents an undetermined change for the upcoming year.

As we begin 2025, the Ministry Governance Board remains dedicated to representing your interests. Your continued prayers and support are invaluable. We pray for God's direction and blessings as this year is sure to bring new challenges and changes to St Paul. Should you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please reach out to any Board member. Blessings to all and all glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your Ministry Governance Board

Dave Smith	Jan DeGood	Eric Tuori	Jake Ergang
David Lark	Lisa Holmes	Tony Dykhouse	

Items recently added to St. Paul Library:

“Bethsheba: Reluctant Beauty” (Dangerous Beauty #2) by Angela Hunt [2015 – Christian Fiction]

“Carolina Reckoning,” by Lisa Carter [2013 – Christian Fiction]

“Egypt’s Sister” (Silent Years #1) by Angela Hunt [2017 – Christian Fiction]

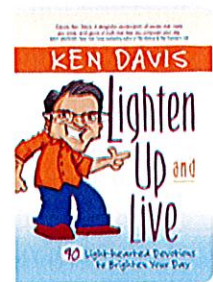
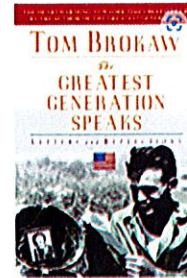
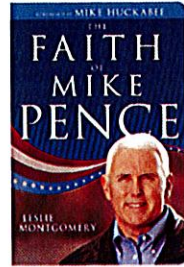
“Esther: Royal Beauty,” (Dangerous Beauty #1) by Angela Hunt [2015 – Christian Fiction]

“Faith of Mike Pence,” by Lisle Montgomery [2019 – Biography]

“Greatest Generation Speaks,” by Tom Brokaw [1999 – NonFiction]

“Judah’s Wife,” (Silent Years #2) by Angela Hunt [2018 – Christian Fiction]

“Lighten Up and Live,” by Ken Davis [2014 – Devotion]



LWML Meeting

Tuesday, February 11th

6:30PM

LWML will be having a meeting on Tuesday, February 11th at 6:30pm.

All ladies are invited to attend.

Family Unity Night

Wednesdays

Dinner @ 5:30pm

FUN Activities @ 6:00pm

Compline @ 7:00pm

Come and see what's going on!

Thank you very much for the beautiful quilt that you made.

I am a student in the 1-year MA program at CTSFW. My family and I are from Norway, and we have been blessed to witness and experience the great joy you and others show in giving.

After this year of study we will return to Norway, where I will serve as pastor in LKNJ.

We will return to Norway with a greater appreciation of our family abroad.
in Christ

Blessings from Gunstein Innvæn.

This is the day which the LORD hath made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24

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Dear Ladies of St. Paul's,

Dec. 18, 2024

Thank you very much for the thoughtfully and well-crafted quilt you provided for me as a seminary student. May God bless you for your work in support of the Gospel!

Christmas blessings in Christ,

Jonathan Anderson

February Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Luke Smith
2 Barb Miller	3	4 Caleb Gutschke Joyce Schomberg David Smith	5 Mary Grathen Pauline Brower	6 Eric Tuori	7 Gary Lynn	8 William Gutschke
9	10 Nancy Browne Matthew Schaidt	11 Linda DeBoer	12	13 Debra Merchant	14 Pam Doublestein Jon Merchant Carol Paalman Kathy Richert	15
16 Dave Miller	17	18	19 Coralie Miller Linda Parker Brayden Ruple	20	21	22
23	24 Mitch Sanderson	25	26 Frank Zacsek	27 Evelyn Swartz	28 Dominic Amato Ken Ritz Sr Judith Wolbert 29—Zach Tuori	



Ladies Aid

February 13th @ 10:00am

Ladies aid will meet February 13, if weather permits. Remember, if Caledonia schools are close so is Ladies Aid. We begin at 10:00 to tie quilts for a couple hours and share a pot luck meal at noon. Lots of conversation followed with a short devotion by one of our Pastors and then a short business meeting.

Reminder - If you are cleaning out cabinets we can always use sheets and bath towels for our quilts and layettes. Hope to see you there!



Hand2Hand is currently in need of the following items: Chicken Rice-A-Roni, canned chicken, spaghetti (16 oz), spaghetti sauce (can or plastic jars), soup, and mini boxes of cereal.

Donations can be placed in the box, in the south hallway, by the door.

Journey In The Word Bible Study

Thursday Mornings @ 9:00am



Period.



Saturday Night

Euchre

February 8 @ 6:00

Bring a snack to share and join the fun!

2024 Giving Statements

Are In Your
Church Mailbox
Questions?

Contact Teresa Neeb



Men's Prayer
Breakfast

02/13/2024

Thursday 9:00 am




FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARYS



Dom & Kathy Hossler	02/02
Doug & Maraline Meyerink	02/02
Robert & Judy Gutschke	02/08
Larry & Pam Weber	02/11
Michael & Jan Kunst	02/14
Fred & Linda Ainsworth	02/25
Dave & Coralie Miller	02/29

February Events

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 8:15 We Are Not Alone— Our Savior Lansing
2 8:30a Communion 9:45a Sunday School & Fellowship 10a Adult Bible Study 11a Communion 12:30p Elders	3	4	5 5:30p Dinner 6p FUN 7p Compline	6 9a Journey In The Word	7	8 6p Euchre 
9 8:30a Worship 9:45a Sunday School & Fellowship 10a Adult Bible Study 11a Worship	10	11 6p MGB 6:30p LWML	12 5:30p Dinner 6p FUN 7p Compline	13 9a Journey In The Word 9a Men's Prayer Breakfast 10a Ladies Aid	14 2p Food Pantry Delivery	15
16 8:30a Communion 9:45a Sunday School & Fellowship 10a Adult Bible Study 11a Communion	17	18 10a Food Pantry	19 3p Food Pantry 5:30p Dinner 6p FUN 7p Compline	20 9p Journey In The Word	21	22
23 8:30a Worship 9:45a Sunday School & Fellowship 10a Adult Bible Study 11a Worship	24	25 10a Food Pantry	26 3p Food Pantry 5:30p Dinner 6p FUN 7p Compline	27 9p Journey In The Word	28	