

NOVEMBER 2022

THE CROSS & CROWN

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PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF GOD TODAY, PART 2: STEWARDSHIP

PASTOR HANS FIENE

In Ephesians 6, St. Paul urges us, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." It's a section of the Scriptures that is beautiful but rather vague. What exactly is Paul telling us to do in these words? When he urges us to put on "the belt of truth" and "the breastplate of righteousness," what is he asking of us in our daily lives?

Last month, I began answering these questions in our newsletter article by focusing on the subject of church attendance. This month, I'll discuss them from the perspective of congregational stewardship.

Why don't we do those things anymore?

This is a common lament among older Christians when they see that their congregations are less busy than they once were. Years ago, they had a giant VBS program. Now they struggle to wrangle more than a few kids during the summer. Years ago, they had a robust choir. Now they don't. Years ago, the congregation hosted a multitude of fellowship activities for members. Now such events are few and far between. Why is that? As with many problems in the modern church, there are a few reasons.

One reason is that most congregations today don't have as many people as they used to. National church attendance rates are down, both because Christian parents are having fewer children than previous generations and because fewer people of all ages are coming to church. Likewise, many Christian families today have been so consumed by the Cult of Busy, shuffling kids around to a thousand different activities or overbooking their own schedules, that they don't have the time, talent, or treasure to share with their congregations. So why don't we do those things anymore? It's because we have fewer people showing up for them, fewer people volunteering for them, and fewer people paying for them.

Granted, congregations have always relied on a few people to do most of the heavy lifting. I've heard numerous pastors describe this as "the 80/20 rule," meaning that 80 percent of a congregation's giving comes from 20 percent of the members. What's different now, however, is that we no longer have the "luxury" of relying on others to be part of the 20 percent.

From a stewardship standpoint, therefore, putting on the armor of God today means taking up tasks that we might not have taken up a generation or so before. It means doing more to support our congregations financially, making a concerted effort to treasure the preaching of God's word more than we treasure the fleeting treasures of this life. It means taking greater care to remember your congregation in your will, recognizing that there may well be fewer people to carry on the work of the church after you die, unlike how things may have gone in previous generations. (CONT. on pg 2)

NOVEMBER AT A GLANCE

NOV 7

ELDERS' MTNG.

NOV 9:

FELLOWSHIP DINNER (5:30)
FAMILY HERITAGE

NOV 14:

COUNCIL MTNG.

NOV 23:

THANKSGIVING EVE SERVICE

NOV 27:

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

NOV 30:

SOUP SUPPER (5:30) AND
ADVENT SERVICE



"...catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God's Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God's Law day and night."

Luther, Preface to The Large Catechism

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH

VICAR MATT DOEBLER

When we read in St. John's gospel that "the Word became flesh," or when we confess in the creed that Jesus "was conceived by the Holy Spirit [and] born of the Virgin Mary," do we really grasp how incredible this is? Probably not.

Partially, the fault lies with the fact that we are so familiar with the notion that God became man that the idea no longer shocks us. We hardly blink an eye anymore when we hear someone say that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

But this wasn't always the case in the first few centuries of the Church. In fact, there were some major arguments that the early Church had over how one should talk about Jesus—how we should understand the fact that he is both human and divine. During this period, there were some men who helped the Church learn to confess this doctrine faithfully—men like Athanasius. Other men sowed the seeds of confusion and division by spreading abroad their heresies. All told, it took about 500 years, four or five different church councils, and two additional creeds (the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed) before the arguments over this question really started to die down.

But just because the Church has settled on a clear and faithful way to confess the incarnation it doesn't follow that we should ever lose our wonder and amazement over this article of faith. Luther certainly didn't. In fact, he often said that the doctrine of Christ's incarnation was the most comforting article of faith that we Christians possess. When St. John says that Jesus became flesh, he means that God himself assumed our entire humanity—including our weaknesses, our frailties, and even our mortality.

Why? So that he could redeem them from the power of sin, death and the devil. It was through a man that sin entered the world. It was a man who incurred a debt with God that he could never repay. Therefore, in the incarnation, the Son of God humbles himself—he takes on the form of a servant. Christ becomes a man to pay back the debt that men owe. The debt he assumes through his flesh includes all the suffering that sin causes—yet not his own sin, but ours. Christ was hungry, thirsty, tired, experienced pain—but even beyond that, he endured God's punishment for sin. His flesh was beaten, bruised, pierced, and killed. And yet, because he was not a mere man, but was also, at the same time, fully God, his payment satisfies the entire debt. His body doesn't stay dead. And in his resurrection, he gives us the power to become the sons of God.

It's November, which means that the season of Advent is almost upon us. This Advent season, take some time to slow down and meditate on the incarnation. Read John's prologue. Read Matthew and Luke's nativity accounts. If you're feeling really adventurous, read some of Luther's Christmas sermons. Experience the comfort that comes from knowing that God became man—for you.

**...who was
conceived by the
Holy Spirit, born of
the Virgin Mary...**

CONT. FROM PAGE 1

Putting on the armor of God means fighting harder against the Cult of Busy, rejecting the wisdom of the world that says you or your children can only find peace in a hectic schedule of self-glorifying activities, and embracing the wisdom of Christ, which says that your children will know peace by knowing Him and being one with those who belong to Him, across all ages and cultures. Putting on the armor of God means seeing every worship service, every choir rehearsal, every Advent potluck not as another tedious obligation, but as a joyous gathering of the greatest and truest family you have—the family of Christ.

Likewise, putting on the armor of God means casting aside the timidity that often prevents us from taking on roles of leadership in a congregation. It means prioritizing the congregation's need for service over our insecurities about being able to provide that service. It means trusting in God to grow the talents and abilities others have seen in you but that you often find to be lacking in yourself. It means saying "yes" to the roles you're asked to take on in a congregation because you live in a world where "no" is spoken far more than in previous years.

Finally, from a stewardship standpoint, putting on the armor of God today means learning to ask a new question, not why don't we do those things anymore, but what is God blessing us to do now? One of the great joys of being a Christian is that we are not called to be effective but faithful. Just as God was pleased with the small offering of the widow who gave all she had, so God is pleased with the small offerings and half-empty rooms of those who give humbly but generously.

We don't need to rebuild the glory days (that were never as glorious as we remember them) in order to please God. We get to build congregations and church families where, no matter how much sorrow surrounds us, Christ still surrounds us with His glory. We don't need to fix the shrinking church, as though it were in our power to do such a thing. We get to rejoice in the fellowship the Holy Spirit grants us, whether those circles of fellowship are large or small. We don't need to fear that, through our stewardship, we are picking up a burdensome yoke that will be too heavy for us. We aren't picking up a yoke at all. Rather, we're taking the love of God that Christ has placed into our hands and sharing it with those in need. How blessed we are that, amidst this world of storms and unbelief, Christ has preserved our faith and sanctified our hands to share His love.

A LOOK BACK... AT OCTOBER

CRESTWOOD PARADE

On October 15, the city of Crestwood celebrated its 75th anniversary with an entire day's worth of festivities--including a parade down Watson Rd. Many volunteers from Prince of Peace helped to transform our parking lot into a staging area and our library into a hospitality room for Crestwood's oldest citizens.

Additionally, a team of volunteers from Prince of Peace created a "float" that was themed "The Tree of Life." During the parade, we handed out candy to all the wonderful people that gathered along Watson.

This was a great opportunity to be a part of the life of our local community and to share the love of Christ with our neighbors!

GARDEN REPORT

The anticipation of the annual sweet potato dig did not disappoint. There were multiple potatoes over 2 pounds and two that were over 5 pounds. The sweet potato total was 142 potatoes, weighing in at 121 pounds, which averaged 0.85 per potato.

The sweet potato harvest pushed this year's total to 425 pounds. The potatoes are curing in the shed and will have dirt cleaned off for delivery to the pantry in time for Thanksgiving.

Stay tuned for the "clean date" - your help will be welcomed.

LUSO MUSICAL

The LUSO musical, "Back to the 80's," was a great success! Thank you to all of our members who came out and supported this production. Two of our members, Chloe Doeblner and John Fiene, were cast members. Pastor Fiene was the co-director.



PARADE TIME!



WHAT A HARVEST!



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

TREASURER'S UPDATE

DANIEL SCHOW

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

One of the best ways to demonstrate our gratitude for the countless blessings bestowed upon us is to support Christ's bride - the church.

Scripture teaches us that our giving should be cheerful, that is, the response of a thankful heart to the blessings we have received through the gospel. In addition, giving is how we ensure our church will continue to provide liturgical worship that proclaims the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Please prayerfully consider incorporating Prince of Peace into your estate planning portfolio. There is such profound comfort in knowing that, even when we fall asleep in Jesus, we are still able to support His bride.

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

SWADDLING CLOTHES UPDATE



Swaddling Clothes is still going well here at Prince of Peace. We don't see many people walk through our room, but each month we make deliveries to families who don't have cars.

We are currently switching out the clothes in our Swaddling Clothes room from summer to fall/winter. Come and join us on November 12th anytime from 9-12 to help switch over the room.



A CLOSER LOOK AT... THE DIVINE SERVICE

Why do we call our Sunday worship *The Divine Service*? The term "divine service" is the English rendering of the German word *gottestdienst*—which literally means "the service of God."

The term itself has a double-meaning. In one sense, *gottestdienst* describes the service that Christ gives to us—that is, the promises and benefits that come to us through Word and Sacrament ministry. Through the Word, Christ comes and serves us with his promises in the gospel. Through the Sacraments, Christ gives us the benefits promised by the gospel—forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

On the other hand, *gottestdienst* also describes the service that we give to God. We serve him by offering our prayers, praise, and thanksgiving. Sometimes, we refer to this as our sacrifice of praise. (Heb. 13:15)

While both definitions of "divine service" are intended when we speak of Christian worship, it's important to understand that one of these definitions is *primary* and one is *secondary* (flows from the primary definition).

Therefore, we say that Christ's Word and Sacrament service to us is primary. First, Christ comes to us. He comes among us. He gives us his gospel and his gifts and makes us righteous—he washes away our sins and gives us peace with God.

Thus, *our* divine service (service to God)—our response of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving—is only possible because Christ *first* served us. We can only pray because God promises to hear us, we can only give thanks and praise because Christ has delivered us from the curse of sin.

NOVEMBER 2022



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THR

FRI

SAT

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
<p>Deadline to submit an announcement for the bulletin is 12:00 Noon, each Wednesday.</p>	<p><i>HAPPY Thanks Giving</i></p>	<p> 1 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 2 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 3 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 4 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p>5 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 6 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Fletcher Usher Team: 2 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 7 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Androff Usher Team: 2 8:00 p.m. Elders Meeting</p>	<p> 8 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 9 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 5:30 p.m. Dinner/Fellowship Night Theme: <i>Family Heritage</i></p>	<p> 10 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 11 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p> 12 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon Swaddling Clothes Shopping Day Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 13 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: McGrew Usher Team: 3 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 14 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Weisheit Usher Team: 3 8:00 p.m. Council Meeting</p>	<p> 15 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 16 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 17 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 18 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p>19 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 20 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Doebler Usher Team: 4 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p> 21 9:00 a.m. Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Doebler Usher Team: 4</p>	<p> 22 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 23 9:00 a.m. Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Thanksgiving Eve Service Com. Assistant: Weisheit Usher Team: 1</p>	<p>24 NO Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p>25 NO Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p>26 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 27 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Lasky Usher Team: 2 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p> 28 9:00 a.m. Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assistant: Fletcher Usher Team: 2</p>	<p> 29 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 30 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 5:30-6:30 p.m. Soup Supper 7:00 p.m. Advent Worship Usher Team: 3</p>			<p> <i>Altar Guild</i> Ann Million Paul Heidbreder</p>