

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of April 26th



*Spring tulips,
2019.*

*The city will be
installing two
benches in the
front of our
garden this year.*

As I write this blurb we have had a few days of gentle rain. The rain is needed. I know how dry the soil is around my home, I can only imagine how welcome the moisture is to our farmers. The rain also cleans up the dust and sand on the streets after the winter.

A heavy downpour might also wash the streets and yards but a long, steady, gentle rain is much better for the soil and for plants. I worked for many years in a garden centre and I saw that when lots of water is poured quickly over hard dry soil, most of it runs off without sinking deeply into the soil. The same amount of water poured slowly however, soaks deep into the ground.

Perhaps there is something here to apply to our own health. One large dose of something that is essential to us may not be as helpful as accessing a small, steady amount of it. Imagine eating a years worth of apples in one sitting or eating an apple a day. One of those would be a good idea.

Likewise, our spiritual life cannot be healthy if we only nurture it in large, single doses. Our connection to God requires constant simple, small steps: regular prayer, acts of service, scripture, and spiritual friendships.

May you recognize God's presence at your side, moment by moment.

With love, Joel

Mission Commission: Helping to Feed Others

Trinity Lutheran is a church in the Heritage neighbourhood, near the downtown. They are preparing and distributing packed lunches. The Carmichael is doing the same them. We have arranged with them to provide muffins and cookies over the coming month. If you are finding the hours in isolation getting long and you don't mind baking perhaps this is a meaningful use of your time.

We don't want there to be any obstacles if anyone wishes to participate. The Mission Commission has aside funds to cover the cost of groceries if that would be helpful and is able to drop off groceries and pick up the baking. For more information, please contact Barb Ziolkowski.

New Small Groups

There have been a number of Small Groups running at FBC prior to COVID-19 and a few that have maintained some online connection. We are broadening our Small Group ministry in an online format during this season (using Zoom). If you would like to get connected to a Small Group – a place to deepen relationships, learn more about life and faith through the Scriptures, and engage more in actively living out your faith – please let us know and we'll get you connected. You can contact Pastor Richard at richard.fbcregina@sasktel.net.

Learning for Life: The Book of Ecclesiastes - Breaking our Idols

This class will look at some of the themes in Ecclesiastes and where these are picked up in the teaching of Jesus and the NT Epistles. The challenge will be in looking at some potential idols in our lives and/or our culture. These, according to Ecclesiastes, include such things as wealth, status, power, relationships, pleasure, wisdom, and even religion itself. During this season of instability and uncertainty, where do we find meaning and hope? In what do we put our trust? The answer in Ecclesiastes to breaking our idols is to “fear God and keep his commandments” or, in the words of Jesus, to “seek first the Kingdom of God.” This class will look at identifying potential idols in our lives and then look at how we can reorient our lives around the Lord our God. This class will run for 10 weeks using “Zoom” (April 19 to June 21). Pastor Richard Hovey will be leading this class.

“Do You Love Me?”

Joel Russell-MacLean’s sermon from Sunday April 26th, 2020.

Ephesians 1.17-23, Psalm 2, Matthew 28.16-20

While I was growing up, I would often find my father reading. It seemed though that every time I saw him with a book, he was already at the end of it. I remarked to my mother how fast a reader he was and she laughed. “Your father starts every book at the back. If he likes the conclusion then he will read a bit more, jumping around a bit through the book. If it is really good, then he reads the whole thing from the beginning.”

Whatever you think about this interesting strategy, you would be well served if you applied it to the Gospel of Matthew. Opening to the conclusion of the book, you would immediately recognize one of the main themes of Matthew’s gospel: the authority of Jesus.

Jesus made a claim, a command, and a promise in conclusion:

All authority has been given to me

Go, make disciples

I am with you

If you then looked through the gospel, you would see that everyone who met Jesus was confronted by his authority and had to make a decision.

The crowds met him and asked, “Who is this?”

“He teaches with authority.”

“He has authority over illnesses”

“He has power over death.”

“He has authority over the wind and the waves.”

Pilate met him and asked, “Are you king of the Jews?”

The religious authorities met Jesus and asked, “What right do you have to act with authority over the temple?”

Tragically, at the climax of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, everyone either rejected Jesus or gave up on him for dead.

But God vindicated his claim of authority.

Now in the days of the resurrection, all people stand before him like the disciple stood before him on the mountain. Will they draw near to Jesus? Or will they hesitate, waver and turn away.

Every one of us has this choice to make: will you call Jesus Lord, day after day?

In regards to his authority, there are some questions that are sometimes asked, to which we do not know entirely the answer.

What about those who don't call Jesus Lord?

What about those who never hear about this choice?

We don't know.

We do know that Jesus is the true and best revelation of God's nature: Jesus died for this world, Jesus gave his life for these people. This same Jesus who loved the world and its people is the one who will judge, what will the nature of the judgement be? This same Jesus has broken open the doors of hades and holds the keys to life and death.

But is it possible that Jesus will open his arms to the people and some will still shrink back and turn away? I pray that no one will, but that would be consistent with human behaviour.

However, we ourselves can't plead ignorance. We have already heard the reports about Jesus' life, death and resurrection: what will we decide?

Another question that occurs to some is if Jesus is Lord, why are things still going wrong in the world?

It is tempting to speculate that things are only going wrong because some still reject Jesus as Lord. Again, we do not fully understand God's plan or purpose.

Sometimes people answer, that if only everyone would accept Jesus as Lord, everything would go right! If only our government would honour God - than Canada would thrive! If only it were that simple.

I would suggest that this line of thinking does not take Jesus' death and resurrection seriously enough.

God chose to fix the world and all of us through the cross and empty tomb for a reason, and I personally don't think we will fully understand why until the end. But this much I see in the cross and resurrection: God believes that humanity and creation must be transformed, and God's plan is to restore and transform them through Jesus, and in a way that resembles death and resurrection.

Until that day, even if we have been faithful to Jesus as our Lord all of our lives, we will always need to forgive others and to be forgiven ourselves. Sin has no power over those who call Jesus Lord precisely for that reason, not because we no longer sin, but because we forgive and are forgiven.

What I am suggesting is that we could convert every human being but that wouldn't fix everything. We would still sin. We would still make mistakes.

Beyond that, there would also still be illness. Covid 19 for instance is indiscriminate. Good and bad alike, if we can use those words, are suffering around the world. And even if God had mercy and instantly removed Covid 19 from our world, death would continue to spread. Until Jesus returns, we will all die, one way or another.

No, what the church has always taught is that we do not understand the whole story yet. Why is it that Jesus can be a good person, and Lord, and yet die on a

cross? Why it is that Jesus can be made Lord, and yet centuries full of suffering can continue to roll by? We do not understand why it has to be this way.

What we must do is choose:

We either trust that God is good and present and at work and that this will make sense in the end, or we don't.

I have heard in your testimonies that you have found Jesus' promise to be true: when you have accepted Jesus claim of authority, when you have turned to him, again and again, and said, "Jesus, I will listen to you and serve you," when you accept his claim of authority, you have also received his promise: "I will be with you to the end."

My daughter's gave me permission to share from a Covid 19 journal she was asked to keep by her school. One statement jumped out to me as I read her work, "I am alone but I am not alone."

I'm sure she was talking about missing her friends yet being with family. But it struck me as a profound and beautiful summary of a sense that I would argue all of humanity experiences, though at times it is buried deeply within us. We all long for God to live among us once again. We sense God with us, and yet we long for God to be with us.

When we put our effort into letting Jesus be our lord, we encounter the God who was there the whole time, the God who made us and loves us.

Annabel's sermon last week gave us the context for the nature of Jesus' authority. God's invitation to you and to all creation is to call Jesus Lord - out of love. Knowing that Jesus is with you and loves you, will you seek to do what he asks because you love him?

Likely most of us have been in some situation where we had to obey someone not because they were right, not because they were good, but simply because they were in charge.

Hopefully we have also all had the experience of having people in our lives whom we love in such a way that serving them, and doing what they ask us to do, brings us joy. That sort of obedience doesn't feel like servitude, duty, or obligation, it feels like being truly free and alive. It feels like having purpose and meaning in life. The Anglican Book of Common puts it this way, "Almighty God, serving you is perfect freedom."

To the best of our knowledge, Matthew along with all but two of the twelve disciples was executed because of his devotion to Jesus.

By the time Matthew wrote his gospel, he would have seen some of his friends beaten by mobs, others, murdered, others tortured and imprisoned by the romans, some executed or killed in the colosseum.

He must have been prepared for the same ending to his life.

And yet Matthew still chose to write a book about Jesus that concludes with Jesus saying, "All authority on earth has been given to me."

Jesus promised us, "In this world, you will have trouble: but take heart! I have overcome the world. I am with you to the end."

Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

First Baptist Picture Wall

Do you have pictures of the congregation from over the years? Pictures of events, of groups, or of our life together? We have begun to collect these in order to fill a wall in the lower hall with pictures of the friendships and ministry of this congregation over the years. Perhaps you have been cleaning bookcases or boxes and have found some - we will take them! Call the church or write if you can help.

Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church. We still have salaries and bills to pay, which amount to over \$1,000 per day!

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the Church Office or call to arrange in-person pick-up. Please do NOT send cash through the mail.

2. Establish a Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.

3. Make an online donation:

- Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com (no fee or cost to the church)

- Use a credit card or PayPal via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (no fee or cost to the church)

- Use a credit card via CanadaHelps (a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation)

PLEASE refer to more specific information on these contribution methods that is available on the church website. You may email the church or contact the Treasurer for further details. email the church or contact the Treasurer for further details.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that “there is a time to weep and a time to laugh.” These may make you do both.

Why couldn't they play cards on the Ark? Noah was standing on the deck.

Why didn't Jonah trust the ocean? He knew there was something fishy about it.

Why did Jesus stand at the door and knock? Because Peter had the keys.

How do we know that Pharaoh's daughter was a savvy business woman? She went down to the bank of the Nile and pulled out a little prophet.

How do we know that Peter was a rich fisherman? By his net income.