



*Be kind
To one
another.*

EPHESIANS 4:32, ESV

August 8, 2021

Saint Thomas Lutheran

23801 Kelly Road, Eastpointe, Michigan 48021 - 586-772-3370

www.stl-eastpointe.org

Rev. Mark W. Hetzner, Senior Pastor

Specific Ministry Pastor - Rev. Richard A. VanBriggle, Deacon Don Cooley

Saint Thomas Lutheran

Eastpointe, Michigan

Connecting Individuals to Jesus and to One Another
Educating Minds – Growing Faith – Serving People

We are here to serve our community. As you worship with us online, the Lord Jesus is at work, uniting us as friends and family. If you are curious to learn more out ministry in the community, go to www.stl-eastpointe.org, or like us on Face Book. To get your questions answered in a more personal way, contact the church office (586-772-3370) and ask for a pastor/staff member to give you a call.

Divine Service

Stories of God @ Work

stories of trust

INVITATION

God draws us into his presence.

Opening Hymn

“Christ, the Eternal Lord”

[LSB 829, vv. 1-3]

Christ the eternal Lord, Whose promise here we claim,
Whose gifts of grace are freely poured On all who name Your name;
With thankfulness and praise We stand before Your throne,
Intent to serve You all our days And make Your glory known.

Christ the unchanging Word To ev’ry passing age,
Whose timeless teachings still are heard Set forth on Scripture’s page;
Transform our thought and mind, Enlighten all who read,
Within Your Word by faith to find The bread of life indeed.

Christ the redeeming Son, Who shares our human birth,
And by His death salvation won For ev’ry child of earth;
Inspire our hearts, we pray, To tell Your love abroad,
That all may honor Christ today And follow Him as Lord.

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Entering Prayers

L: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

- L: Children of God, do not forget the Lord's teaching, but let your hearts keep his commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.
- C: We will not let steadfast love or faithfulness forsake us, rather we will bind them around our necks and write them on the tablets of our hearts.**
- L: Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first-fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.
- C: We will not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves those whom he loves, as a father the child in whom he delights.**
- L: God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things,
- C: We will abound in every good work at all times.**
- L: Dear Jesus, we know that you came not to be served but to serve. As we walk by grace, help us to use our time, talents, and money in support and service of others. In your name we pray.
- C: Amen.**

Hymn of Praise

"Holy Spirit – Living Breath of God"

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God, Breathe new life into my willing soul.
 Bring the presence of the risen Lord To renew my heart and make me whole.
 Cause Your Word to come alive in me; Give me faith for what I cannot see;
 Give me passion for Your purity. Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within; May Your joy be seen in all I do
 Love enough to cover ev'ry sin In each thought and deed and attitude,
 Kindness to the greatest and the least, Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
 Turn my striving into works of grace. Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth, Giving life to all that God has made,
 Show Your power once again on earth; Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.
 Let the fragrance of our prayers arise. Lead us on the road of sacrifice
 That in unity the face of Christ Will be clear for all the world to see.

Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

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INSTRUCTION

God feeds our heart, soul, and intellect.

The Holy Gospel

John 6:35-51

- L: The Holy Gospel according to Saint John, chapter 6.
C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 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."

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

L: This is the Gospel of the Lord

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Announcements

Hymn of the Day

"O Bless the Lord, My Soul"

[LSB 814, vv. 1-4]

O bless the Lord, my soul! Let all within me join
And aid my tongue to bless His name Whose favors are divine.

O bless the Lord, my soul, Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness And without praises die!

'Tis He forgives thy sins; 'Tis He relieves thy pain;
'Tis He that heals thy sicknesses And makes thee young again.

He crowns thy life with love When ransomed from the grave;
He that redeemed my soul from hell Hath sov'reign pow'r to save.

Sermon

"And Walk in Love"

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Voluntary

[Personal notes and reflections]

INTROSPECTION

God convicts us to action.

KINGDOM THOUGHTS

“My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.” (Psalm 145.21)

Are you better at praising God with your lips or your checkbook?



EASY WAYS TO SUPPORT THE STL MISSION There is a variety of ways to give your support to the mission of STL. For many the easiest is to simply mail in a check or drop your offering off at the church. If you prefer electronic giving, STL offers multiple options:

- Text “GIVE” to 1-586-800-2223
- Visit: <https://www.stl-eastpointe.org/2015/07/13/mission-support/>
- Go to <https://www.elexiogiving.com/app/giving/stthoms>
- Through your Pay Pal account
- Scan this Quick Response (QR) code

These will connect you to our on-line giving form, where you can have your mission support offering automatically taken from your checking account or use your credit or debit card (STL is charged extra fees for debit and credit card transactions). **You can even set up recurring giving with many of these options!** IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, OR DESIRE ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE (586-772-3370).

A Reading from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

L: In the first half of his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul describes the bounteous blessings that are ours through the grace given us in the Gospel of Jesus. In the second half he urges us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called. Today we pick up his urgings in chapter 4, verse 17.

(Ephesians 4:17 – 5:2) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have

given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ! - assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness....

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

L: This is the word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Offertory

“Take My Life and Let It Be”

[LSB 783, vv. 1, 3, 5]

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my voice and let me sing Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne.

Confession and Absolution

L: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

C: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness**

L: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

(time for personal reflection)

L: Most merciful God,

C: **We confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: Upon this your confession, I as a servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to you, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

We Confess our Faith

"The Nicene Creed"

P: Let us then join in confessing our faith in the God who forgives us and gives us eternal life:

C: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

The Prayer of the Church

L: The eyes of all look to You, O Lord. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear us this day as we lift our eyes to you.

(after each petition)

L: Lord in your mercy:

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Father of our risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, by Your Holy Spirit, hold us steadfast in faith. Keep us ever turning toward You, and keep our eyes ever focused on the life that never ends, knowing that You will raise us up on the Last Day; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen

INVOLVEMENT

God makes his absolution shown in the world.

The Sanctus

"Holy Is Our God"

[BOTB 89]

**Refrain: Holy is our God, whose name we praise forever.
Holy is the Son, who reigns in majesty!
Come, Spirit, come and fill our hearts with wisdom,
that we may long to worship you alone.**

Oh, Spirit, come and unite us in one communion with our Lord.
Free us from the chains that bind us, for the Comforter has come. **Refrain**

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Service of the Sacrament

[Psalm 42]

L: As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

C: My soul thirsts for God, the living God.

L: These things I remember as I pour out my soul to him.

C: How in days of old we came to him with glad shouts and songs of praise.

L: Our hope is in Jesus, for we shall again praise him.

C: He is our rock and our salvation – our God who loves us forever.

L: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Words of Institution

Private Prayer before Communing

O Jesus, our great high priest, be present with us as you were present with your disciples and make yourself known to us in the breaking of bread. Amen.

The Distribution of the Sacrament

Distribution Hymn

“The Church’s One Foundation”

[LSB 644]

The Church’s one foundation Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation By water and the Word.
From heav’n He came and sought her To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.

Elect from ev’ry nation, Yet one o’er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses With ev’ry grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping; Their cry goes up, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping Shall be the morn of song.

Through toil and tribulation And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth has union With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won.
O blessèd heav'nly chorus! Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us, May see You face to face.

The Post-Communion Canticle

"Holy Is Our God"

[BOTB 89]

Holy is our God, whose name we praise forever.
Holy is the Son, who reigns in majesty!
Come, Spirit, come and fill our hearts with wisdom,
that we may long to worship you alone.

The Sending

The Post-Communion Collect

The Benediction

The Sending Hymn

"Christ Is Our Cornerstone"

[LSB 912]

Christ is our cornerstone, On Him alone we build;
With His true saints alone The courts of heav'n are filled.
On His great love Our hopes we place
Of present grace And joys above.

Here may we gain from heav'n The grace which we implore,
And may that grace, once giv'n, Be with us evermore
Until that day When all the blest
To endless rest Are called away.

Oh, then, with hymns of praise These hallowed courts shall ring;
Our voices we will raise The Three in One to sing
And thus proclaim In joyful song,
Both loud and long, That glorious name.

*You are living in
the (your)
Mission Field*

*“The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.
Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send YOU out into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)*

NEXT SUNDAY:

The 12th Sunday after Pentecost

August 15, 2021

Scripture Readings: Exodus 36:1-7 / Matthew 26:6-13

Sermon Topic: “Abounding in Good Work” - Text: 2 Corinthians 9:8

Return from Exile

“Stewards Walking by Grace, part two”

As God’s people returned from exile a layman named Nehemiah prayed, *“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servants today, and grant us mercy in your sight.”* (Nehemiah 1.11) He was asking God to provide the resources necessary to rebuilt Jerusalem. He soon saw how God’s grace was sufficient for him, as his every need was met – and surpassed.

As we return from exile, we live in the same assurance as our Lord Jesus says to us, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12.9) This grace abounds in us through Word and Sacrament. It unites us as one people in faith and mission, making us to be stewards who walk together by grace.

Please encourage others to celebrate the sufficiency of God’s grace at our “Faith and Fellowship” return from exile gathering on August 22.

Memorial Celebration

Everyone is invited to a memorial celebration in honor of Tim and Cheryl Phaneuf on Saturday, August 21, from noon until 4:00 p.m. at Stony Creek Metro Park (Gladview North). If you plan to attend, or for more information, text or call Jenny at 586-804-0200.

Faith and Fellowship Gatherings

Saint Thomas Lutheran

“Connecting Individuals to Jesus and to One Another”

Sunday, August 22, will be our first “Faith and Fellowship” gathering. We then will continue them quarterly throughout the year. On each of these Sundays two things will occur. First, during our God @ Work time, we will update you on what is happening in STL’s Barnabas Ministry, and then, after worship, we will gather for food, fellowship, and information on STL’s “growing faith” ministries. The second “Faith and Fellowship” gathering will be on Remembrance Sunday – November 21.

Faith and Fellowship Picnic

Sunday, August 22

On **Sunday, August 22**, we will return to having just one Sunday morning service (dropping 8:00 a.m.) so that we can all be together again. It will also be our first of what will then be quarterly “Faith and Fellowship” gatherings. Please dress in casual clothing for the outdoor (weather permitting) activities afterwards.

Immediately after worship we will gather – at the south end of our facility – for a **“Faith and Fellowship” Picnic-Brunch**. It will start with brunch (catered by Andary’s) ... will include games (for all ages) and information on STL’s ministries returning and growing this fall ... and will conclude with frozen custard (from Wally’s) with a variety of toppings.

Please make plans today to be a part of this fun and special day.

Additional Fellowship Gatherings

“in the planning stages”

September 10 – Tiger ball game ... October – Ballroom Dancing

November – Euchre Night ... December - Caroling

MCREST 2021 - AUGUST 8TH – 15TH Our 2021 MCREST week is upon us, and it’s time to getting ready! As usual we will be responsible for the daily needs of 30 women and children. The MCREST guests have been vaccinated. As we do not have enough volunteers to help in our building, we will be only providing meals and vital daily needs as they remain in the hotel rooms provided by MCREST.

We will need money for expenses like gas, bus tickets & laundry, as well as donations of prepared food. We will need volunteers for kitchen help. Sign-up sheets will be in the narthex.

Please keep this ministry in your prayers over the coming week that we may be blessed with the volunteers, funds and donations that we will need to serve His children through this wonderful ministry.

If you have questions, please feel free to call me at 313-550-2950.

Attention All Choir Members Please return all your music to the office or give to Lori so she can organize for the Fall. Mark September 19th on your calendars as the day to start practice for the upcoming year. Practice will be at 8:30 on Sunday mornings. Watch for more information.

July through September Mission Envelopes

M.C.R.E.S.T.

(Macomb Country Rotating Emergency Shelter Team)

DID YOU KNOW? 43% of homeless population in Michigan are families with children. In 2018-2019 there were 1,441 homeless children in Macomb County. 500-600 homeless people are taken in and offered a fresh start by MCREST each year. As you make your missions contribution, please also say a prayer that the MCREST facility for women and children will be able to open this calendar year.

100% of your Mission Envelope donations (either using the envelope provided in your box or through your designation electronically or with a different envelope) to STL during the months of July, August, and September will be given directly to M.C.R.E.S.T. For more information on the ministry, go to mcrest.org or call 586-415-5101.

Lutheran Northwest is looking for a Physical Education teacher for the '21-'22 school year. Interested applicants should contact Principal Matt Tschudy at mtschudy@lhsa.com.

Clothing Closet open 2nd Saturday of the month – 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

NO CLOTHING CLOSET IN AUGUST – MCREST IN BUILDING

Food Pantry open 3rd Saturday of the month – 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Drive Thru Communion – 3rd Sunday of the month

11:00 a. m. – 12:00 p.m.

God's True Comfort Foods from STL

(ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR – and tell a friend)

Mondays – Hymn Sing-Along with Tony

Wednesdays – Virtual Prayer Vigils

Thursdays – Thursday's Thirst

Tuesdays & Fridays – Video Devotions

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=st.+thomas+eastpointe

Please Remember in Your Prayers this Week
August 8, 2021

Our Primary Prayer focus is the life transforming power of Christ's Word, and especially:

- Through printed and online devotions, and worship gatherings, in-person and virtual.
- At work in the redeemed, increasing our generosity and joy in giving.
- As God draws more and more people back to in-person worship services.
- As we share Christ's priceless treasures in old ways and new.

And we remember the unborn and newly born, the elderly and those nearing life's end, remembering all grieving families, and those who are in hospice care.



To connect to the **STL PRAYER CHAIN**, contact Karen Dolan (mdolan421@gmail.com), text "Prayer" to 1-586-800-2223, or scan this QR code, with your phone's camera, to be taken to the prayer request form.

† In Our Thoughts and Prayers †

✠**God's Healing Hand on:** Rick Vanbriggles, Alicia Kersy, Betty Knox, Marg Bittner, Dan Dolan, Davis Cardamone, Loletta Hogan, Henry Bradychok, Jim Rowland (brother of Jan Patty), Bill Brinkey (husband of Debra Barowicz), Dr. John Herzog.

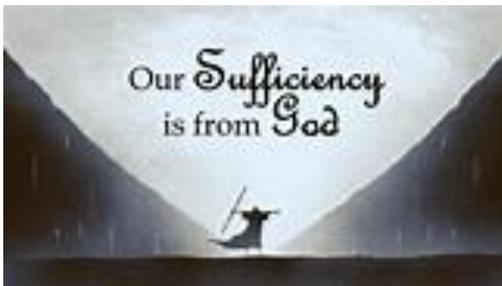
✠**Continued prayers for Healing & Strength for:** Lori Kucharek, Sieg Gannon, Elsie Adams, Chris Huber, Vada & Don Habermas, John Lemke (friend of Monica Hetzner), Beth White, Robert Laroche and Jan Adams (family of Elsie Adams), Tiffany Crow (granddaughter of Marilyn Redmond), Kathy Johnson (friend of Vicki Leberg), Claire Armstrong (granddaughter of Clyde & Carolyn Armstrong), Luella Riske (granddaughter of Jim, Thrivent Rep.), Karl Hallberg (son-in-law of Cardamone's), Payton Gifford (great-granddaughter of Jane Gurnack), Emily Henze (daughter-in-law of Caroline), Linda Taggart (former member).

Our Confession of Faith

As members of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LC-MS), we subscribe to the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian) and the Christian faith as confessed in the Book of Concord. This includes believing that:

- Jesus Christ is both true God and true man who died for our sins and rose again to save us.
- His body/blood are truly present in communion under the form of bread/wine (page 326).
- Communion is, among other things, an expression of doctrinal unity.
- Infant baptism is a Means of Grace through which God delivers one from sin and gives eternal salvation to all who believe (page 325 in Lutheran Service Book).

Having All Sufficiency



“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Week two of:
*Stewards Walking
by Grace*

How we understand the title “Having All Sufficiency” is determined by our perspective. The natural man learns to rely on his own sufficiency. The world teaches that he is the captain of his own destiny. He is in control and what he accomplishes in life will be determined by his own human effort. In contrast, God tells us through Isaiah, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord*” (Isaiah 55:8). Through the lens of faith, we see God’s truth which enables us to comprehend that we are not “*sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God*” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we realize we are without any adequacy on our own and no longer trust in our own sufficiency. God’s sufficiency is always sufficient. Without God’s sufficiency, there is no forgiveness, no abundant life on earth, and no life eternal with Him

Relying on the Holy Spirit

God gives us His Holy Spirit Who came to us at Baptism and dwells within us. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through God’s Word. As we spend time in His Word, the Holy Spirit nurtures and deepens our faith. It is the Holy Spirit Who opens our eyes and hearts to address the question of whether we will depend on God’s sufficiency or our own. With self as the center of our

lives, we are either filled with pride when we succeed or fall into despair when we fail. Either way our lives will end in discouragement and defeat.

When we walk in the Spirit, we are being led and directed by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:16).



This walk of faith with the Spirit empowers us to live lives that are more Christ-like. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are no longer slaves to sin. Sin will never be avoided, but we belong to Jesus so we will sin less. Our delight will be in pleasing Him and doing His will. Joyfully we use our time, talents, and money in ways that give our Lord honor and glory. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, we eagerly spend time reading and studying God’s Word, praying, and attending worship services and receiving communion.

As we grow and mature in our faith, our lives are changed from self-indulgent living to lives reliant on the Holy Spirit. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we begin to exude what Paul refers to as the fruit of the Spirit, which is *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control...”* (Galatians 5:22). The fruit of the Spirit gives evidence to our spiritual growth and maturity. We begin to become more like Jesus, although we will never be made fully holy until we are with Jesus in heaven. Let us respond to Jesus’ invitation: *“Come to Me, all who labor and are heaven laden, and I will you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

Living in the power of the Holy Spirit, we live lives so others can see that our goal is to glorify Christ. Jesus said, *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

Luther Trusted God’s Sufficiency

For years Martin Luther had labored seeking to earn God’s favor. He had kept the law; he had prayed and meditated; he had preached and taught. He had fasted and done countless acts of devotion. He walked from Nuremburg to Rome where he climbed the same steps Christ had ascended to the palace of Pontius Pilate in order to free his

loved ones from purgatory. Still peace in his soul eluded him.



What changed? What transformed Luther, the pious monk, into Luther, the Reformer? It is the same thing that transforms us, which is the Word of God and trusting in God’s sufficiency. How important is this treasure that God has given us! How we cheat ourselves when we neglect this great gift! The weight of the Law is lifted from us, as it was for Luther, when we read Ephesians 2:8-9: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* This is good news for us who *“were dead in the trespasses and sins in which [we] once walked”* (Ephesians 2:1)!

Somehow many miss this truth. Although they have been brought up in

the church, have read and studied their Bibles almost daily, the Gospel has eluded them. They strive, as did Luther, to appease God, our judge; they work to earn the favor of the One Who sits enthroned above. They live by the Law; burdened with the guilt of sin they can never rid themselves of. Let us pray for those who labor under this load that they may hear the freeing words. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith.”*

Then having been freed from the constraints of the Law, we can view ourselves as God made us, His *“workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). We are saved by grace, and *“...having all sufficiency in all things at all times, [we] may abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:8). We are empowered by grace to give ourselves *“...knowing that in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

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