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Desert Reflections

April 2011

“Lamb of God” – Holy Week & Easter

From Palm Sunday–Passion Sunday through the Resurrection celebration (Easter Sunday), we will continue our theme of “Lamb of God, Pure and Holy.” The sermon titles are listed on the last page of **REFLECTIONS**. We invite you to “walk” with us during that week, with prayer and devotional times each day.

The Palm Sunday–Passion Sunday services begin with Scripture reading and prayer, and continue with a procession into the Sanctuary, palm crosses in hand, and singing praises to the Lord. Assemble in the narthex or on the porch to begin this service.

Monday-Thursday at 8:00AM, you are invited to gather for a brief devotion in the narthex at the baptismal font (this is year-round). Monday-Saturday, we encourage you to use our Lent devotion booklet. You may wish to set aside personal time for prayer and meditation or fasting and prayer, as well.

Wednesday, 20th, please participate in our annual Prayer Vigil. From 8:00AM-8:00PM, at home or in the Sanctuary, we take 20-minute prayer “slots.” A printed guide will be provided. Please commit to one time!

Thursday, 21st, Maundy Thursday, two (basically identical) Divine Services will be conducted, as we commemorate and celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Please worship with us at 5:00 or 7:00PM.

Friday, 22nd, Good Friday, you are invited to worship at noon and 7:00PM. The noon service will emphasize Godly healing and the Hope we have of ultimate spiritual healing for eternity. This will include hymns, prayers, the Bidding Prayer, and the Procession of the Cross. The evening service will be one of hymns, prayers, sermon and reflection on the events and meaning of this day.

Saturday, 23rd, Holy Saturday, we will gather in the Columbarium to begin our Easter Vigil. With candles lit, we process to the baptismal font, and with songs and prayers, proceed to the Sanctuary. A variety of Scripture selections is read, prayers are prayed, and we celebrate the first Holy Communion of the Easter Season. Please join us at 7:00PM.

Sunday, 24th, the Resurrection of our Lord, we rejoice and give thanks that “Christ is risen, indeed!” The “Alleluia” returns, we sing Easter songs and hymns, and we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, “thankful” for all God has done for us in Christ Jesus, His Son, our Lord! This begins the Great Fifty Days, leading to the Feast of Pentecost!

Sunday Worship Themes -

April

6th: “The Message from the Mountain”

Matthew 17:1-9

13th: “All for one - One for All”

Romans 5:12, 17-19

20th: “Righteous - By Grace Through Faith”

Romans 4:3-5

27th: “No Shame - Rejoice in Hope!”

Romans 5:1-8

We invite you to read, pray and prepare for each time of worship.

jws

*Reminder - - - April Voters' Assembly
Sunday, 10 April, Noon - Fellowship Hall*

The Parson's Paragraphs

With our joy and rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise, God has "birthed" a daughter church through us. Some of us think back about ten years, as we noted the expansion of Sahuarita, our neighbor to the north. Given county statistics of 50% unchurched, we knew this was our second-closest mission field ... after Green Valley!

Many have prayed, and many have studied; many have envisioned, and many have planned. With faithful laity, assistance from our District and the LCEF, ideas floated (and many dismissed), with a DCO and then a "mission planter" vicar-pastor, God has been in the "mix" all along . . . and He will continue to be here!

As we celebrate this wonderful time, I reflect on the special associations and relationships we have with sister churches in the Arizona South Circuit of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, English District. (*Our Circuit includes Catalina, Messiah, Ascension, Faith, Mt. Olive, Holy Trinity, Peace in the Valley, Christus Rex, Risen Savior (and now) Gracepoint churches; and our UA campus ministry.*) Here are a few ways in which God has and continues to bless our area efforts.

- 1) Our Lutheran Servanthood School: providing excellent teaching in biblical and confessional subjects, and preparing men and women to serve as lay deacons and deaconesses in home congregations;
- 2) The SAFE-Lutheran project: since 1999, financial gifts have generated over \$3,000,000 for our Lutheran schools in Tucson;
- 3) Our campus ministry: the Lutheran Student Fellowship group that worships, studies, witnesses, serves, and provides campus-wide opportunities for students and faculty to gather and share;
- 4) Circuit mission projects: prayers, labors and offerings that have supported many ministries in our area;
- 5) Birthing of new churches, from our "grandmother" Faith: in our case, to our "mother" Holy Trinity, to us, and now, to our "daughter," Gracepoint;
- 6) Generally strong support of and from "professional workers" who participate in circuit, district and synod ministries and leadership;
- 7) Our LCRS Endowment Fund, that continues to give financial support to churches, schools and other ministries in our area.

As we give thanks to God for His good works, may we pray, propose, plan and participate in what He has prepared for us to do together in the future. To God be the glory - Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Amen!

John Wm Stieve

"Following Christ into People's Lives"

***Annual Holy Week "Prayer Vigil"
during our Year of "HOPE" ...
Wednesday, April 20, 8:00AM-8:00PM
Take twenty minutes to pray!***



"I have made you the father of many nations"--in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Rom 4.17

Congratulations! It's a boy.

These words are loaded with imagery. For most of us, when we hear these words, we think of the birth of a child. When I think about my audience at Risen Savior, I think about how (after 9 months of waiting) husbands used to wait outside the birthing room for the doctor to come out and deliver these wonderful words. My how things have changed.

But one thing has never changed. How God brings life wherever He is working. God's Word reminds us that He "calls into existence the things that do not exist." We congratulate the parents when a baby is born, but the real work of creation is God's.

This past weekend, there was another important birth. It was the birth of a congregation, Gracepoint Lutheran Church. Once again, by God's creative hand, He called into existence something that did not exist before. It has been a labor (pardon the pun) of love. It has involved some hard work and planning and there is much work to do. I am personally thankful to the leadership of Risen Savior and Gracepoint, who have joined together in the work and the vision that our Lord has laid out.

There was much to celebrate and be thankful for on March 20th. Our new congregation, the new property, and the many people who have joined us in the work, prayers and support to make this all possible. And of course, we are thankful for the mighty and gracious hand of our Triune God, who gives us life and blessings in such abundance, that we often times miss them. Thanks be to God, that He is working in many and various ways, even when we cannot see Him. Creating life, creating faith, and creating congregations. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow! Again, when it comes to creating, the real work is God's.

Back on my ordination day, I reminded the congregation of how God used Abraham and Sarah to create new life, to give birth to Isaac. I then challenged this congregation to believe that God could use each one of you in the same way to grow Gracepoint. OK, so no one in their 80's or 90's gave birth to a child at Risen Savior to help grow our new church. But God has used you to give birth.

Maybe you have felt a little like the father in the waiting room at times. But after two and a half years of waiting, I have great news for you...

Congratulations! It's a church.

But between you and me, we know the real work was and always will be...God's.

Light in The Darkness

The God Most High

"They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer." Psalm 78:35

If you search for "Most High" in an online Bible (ESV), you will find 57 references and most of them are in the Psalms. The Hebrew term, El Elyon, "is the name that designates God as the sovereign ruler of all the universe." (Kay Arthur) "Sovereignty" in the dictionary, is 1. Supremacy of authority or rule.

The Psalms acknowledge our God to be: a great king over all the earth (PS 47:2), the Almighty, a shelter in which we can abide (PS 91:1), a dwelling place, my/ your personal refuge (PS 91: 9), "most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods." (PS 97:9).

It is beneficial for us to include some thoughts of adoration in our prayers. In His Word, our God, who cannot lie reveals many aspects of His character to us. "Most High" is just one of those. What does it mean to you to have a personal relationship with the One who has the highest authority in all of creation? This Ruler sees you, knows you, has compassion for you, and cares about every detail of your life- whether you are battling a major illness or annoyed by a hangnail; or whether you are trying to share your faithful witness of Him to someone or if Satan is trying to convince you faith is just a fantasy or that you can't really be forgiven.

In Job we see that Satan had to ask permission of God to torment Job, and even though God gave permission, He set limits. Throughout history, many countries have endured governance by tyrants or those who were not looking to serve the people, but to ensure their continued power. What these rulers failed to recognize is that any 'power' they had, came from and because of El Elyon- the one true and almighty God Most High.

Though most people are not given the authority to rule over cities, states or countries, or to live in huge lavish homes, we are blessed in many ways. We are also given opportunities to share these blessings (our time, talents and treasures) with others. Hopefully that will lead to being able to share with them why we do it. As we continue through Lent toward the Celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus, may we be mindful that our loving God is in control of everything. We need not understand why, only believe that the Lord has our best interests in mind.

Remember the man in Mark 5 who was possessed by demons? As the Lord approached him they shouted out, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." The demons recognized Jesus for Who He is. May that same Jesus, by the power of His Holy Spirit reveal Himself to you and make His continued presence known to you and give you boldness to share that knowledge with others who are living in Spiritual darkness

First Tuesday Women's Bible Study

Our study topic will be "Striking a Balance when you're caught in the middle"

Who are you? We define ourselves by any number of aspects: our job, family role, how we spend our time, even how we look. Yet none of these completely define us.

As Christians, we live in the constant tension of living in the world but not being of the world. We are caught in the middle. As we strive to live out the Christian life, it is helpful to remember Whose we are, and to keep our focus on Christ and our heavenly destination.

Deaconess Jeri will lead this study in the Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, April 5 at 10 AM.

Tip of the Month Casa de Esperanza

is a shared-site facility with a mission to connect people with a better life through social interaction, education, and caring support in Green Valley and surrounding communities.

Since 1988 we have continued to provide a nurturing environment through day care programs for both [children](#) and [older adults](#). Meals are provided. Transportation is available for adults. The [Casa Community Center](#) houses the [Senior Lunch](#), recreational activities, and life-long learning opportunities. www.casabilities.com or 520-625-2273

Help Needed: coordinator for the "Home Handyman" ministry. Bob Call has served as volunteer leader for most of the time I have been here. In general, the coordinator receives the phone calls for assistance, determines which volunteer (or maybe professional) would be best for the task.

Please contact me, or Bob if you would consider helping this essential ministry to continue.

Together in His service,
Deaconess Jeri Morrison

Adopt-a-Roadway

The Adopt-a-Roadway clean-up opportunity is scheduled for **8:00 A.M.** on Saturday, April 9, 2011. This is a good witness of our stewardship of God's creation in our own neighborhood. Be sure to mark your calendar. Meet at church and be sure to bring water and sun screen and wear appropriate clothing (long sleeves, gloves, and hat). If you are willing to help with this witness, please sign up at the Information Desk in the narthex. In the event of inclement weather, clean-up will be rescheduled for Saturday, April 16, 2011. Questions? Contact Tom Baird, 648-7258.

LWML/Ladies Guild

The LWML/Ladies Guild of Risen Savior will meet on April 19, in Fellowship Hall with a dessert luncheon at 1:00 P.M. The prayer service "Being with Jesus-Living on the Edge!" was written by Reverend Carl Gnewuch. Considering the problems of the world, daily prayers are needed. All women of Risen Savior, neighbors and friends are encouraged to attend this meeting. Ladies, remember to bring your mite box offerings. Enjoy the beauty and the warmth of Spring!!!

Home Bible Study

The "In His Word" women's home Bible study has begun the Life Light study on "The Triune God." This 9 session study is part of the Life Light Bible study series. The goal of Life Light is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. Please come and join us at 10:00AM at Linda Connors home at 240 W. Placita de los Anillos. If you have any questions please give Linda a call at 399-2647.

"You Took My Place!"

One day, a man went to visit a church. He got there early, parked his car and got out. Another car pulled up near the driver got out and said, "I always park there! You took my place!" The visitor went inside for Sunday School, found an empty seat and sat down. A young lady from the church approached him and stated, "That's my seat! You took my place!" The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

After Sunday School, the visitor went into the sanctuary and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit! You took my place!" The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still He said nothing. Later as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood up, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet.

Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, "What happened to you?" The visitor replied, as his hat became a crown of thorns, and a tear fell from his eye, "*I took your place.*"

Risen Savior Choir Presents "The Victor"

Wednesday, April 6th, at 5:00PM, Risen Savior Choir will present David Clydesdale's "The Victor" during the Lent worship service.

I was very touched by this music many years ago. As I sang and listened through each number of this cantata, I could almost sense the last 40 days of Jesus Christ's life of having been praised, worshiped, then betrayed followed by crucifixion then, finally, victory!

Risen Savior Choir and I wish that you, also, would walk through the last 40 days of Christ's life with us as you listen to such powerful music. We, as a choir and as musicians, cannot preach like pastors, but we try our best to deliver the Gospel through our voices and playing.

We have special guests who will join us for this event: Esther Siebold on piano, Julie McCrea (Alto), Doug Spurlin (Tenor) and Jayanth Ganesan (Tenor).

Please come and experience the beautiful and meaningful work by David Clydesdale.

-----Music Director Ji Sun Lee

Easter Sunday Worship at 10:00AM, we will have a Brass Quartet, Hand Bells, and choir for special music, including the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*. Come and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ with this festive musical offering.

Christian Education Opportunities --- Sundays, 9:25 AM April 2011

*NEW: "**Luke**" April 3, 10, & 17. Led by Bruce Casper in the Library*

Three lessons will study Chapters 19- 24 of the Gospel according to St. Luke concerning Jesus' Jerusalem Ministry, the Passion and Resurrection.

Jesus Ministry in Jerusalem is filled with His great teaching and the failed attempts of the leaders of Jerusalem to trap Him. His kingship is not to be of this world or concerned with earthly riches. He leads us to treasure His teachings and their eternal benefits.

By the Cross, God demonstrates that HE hates the sin but loves the sinner, even so much that He gives His only Son over to death for sin in our place. Seeing Jesus on the cross is beholding the great gift of forgiveness and the victory over our trespasses. this work of God has lasting significance for our lives in Christ.

In the last section of Luke, our Lord Jesus Christ is raised triumphant from the grave. Jesus breaks free from the bands of death, appearing in the flesh to His beloved. The sight of His risen flesh destroys the doubt festering within His disciples. They worship Him with great joy, even after His ascension into heaven, because they know that He is ever present with them.

*CONTINUING: "**Confession**" (will conclude April 10) Led by Deaconess Jeri, in the Fellowship Hall*

This study probes Confession and Absolution in the multiple ways that they are given us, such as the Lord's Prayer, Divine Service, words of repentance and forgiveness spoken between brothers and sisters in Christ, and that often overlooked and underused gift, individual Confession and Absolution before one's pastor. The goal of this study is to deepen in you the knowledge of Absolution as the comfort and consolation that Christ alone provides when the devil terrorizes you, tempting you to believe his lie that there is no forgiveness of your sins.

Palm Sunday: we will show a relevant seasonal video in the Fellowship Hall

Easter Sunday: no Bible classes

Special Worship Services --- Holy Week & Easter Sunday

<i>DATE</i>	<i>TIMES</i>	<i>DAY</i>	<i>THEME</i>
April 21	5:00 & 7:00 PM	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>	<i>"The Lamb of God Who Has Mercy on Us"</i> Holy Communion
April 22	Noon & 7:00 PM	<i>Good Friday</i>	Service of Healing-Hope ----- <i>"The Lamb of God Who Bore Our Shame"</i>
April 23	7:00 PM (No 5:00PM Service)	<i>Holy Saturday</i> The Easter "Vigil"	<i>"The Lamb of God Who Gives Us Rest"</i> Holy Communion
April 24	7:00 AM & 10:00 AM	<i>Our Lord's Resurrection</i>	<i>"The Lamb of God Who Gives Us Peace"</i> Festival Eucharist Celebrations

Please join us for these special times and days of worship!

