

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC Ministers Webinar
 Pentecost—The New
 Covenant Established
 June 2, 2022
 @ 8:00 pm CDT

LLC Summer Services
 June 30–July 3, 2022

LLC Ministers Webinar
 August 25, 2022
 @ 8:00 pm CDT

Ministers & Wives Camp
 September 23–25, 2022
 Hasscib Lake Camp

LLC Bible Course
 October 7–9, 2022
 Stony Lake Camp

LLC Ministers Webinar
 November 3, 2022
 @ 8:00 pm CST

Reminder

If you plan to attend the
 Ministers & Wives Camp
 or the LLC Bible Course,
 remember to sign up
 soon.

Pentacost is approaching

We are now nearing the end of the festive segment of the church calendar which begins with Advent and ends with Pentecost. The festive segment of the calendar includes all of the major festivals. It focuses on Jesus' life and mission.

The non-festive segment of the church calendar runs from Trinity Sunday to Judgement Sunday and focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit. If you would like to refresh your knowledge or understanding of the church year and its message, see the section "Church Year" in the LLC Bible Reference Materials binder or in the Bible Reference Materials section of the Minister Resources page on the LLC web page.

As this issue of the Ministers Message arrives, we have but three Sundays and Ascension Day remaining before Pentecost. The theme for the 4th Sunday after Easter is "As a citizen of heaven in the world" and the epistle texts for the day speak of a view of heaven that opens through Jesus' death and resurrection. Ahti Riihimäki writes about the Year 1 text in this issue's Epistle Postil article. The theme for the 5th Sunday after Easter is "The heart's speech with God" and the epistle texts for the day show the necessity of prayer in the life of God's children. The theme for Ascension Day is "The exalted Lord" and the epistle texts speak of Jesus' ascension to heaven. The theme for the 6th Sunday after Easter is "Awaiting the Holy Spirit." The epistle texts illustrate the operation and power of the Holy Spirit.

We have scheduled an LLC Ministers Webinar for June 2, 2022 at 8:00 pm CDT. At the webinar we will take a look at Pentecost from the perspective of its fulfillment of an Old Testament type and the establishment of the New Testament covenant. Jon Bloomquist will give a presentation based on lessons that he kept on Pentecost at last fall's LLC Bible Course at Stony Lake Camp. The webinar will be 1–2 hours including time for discussion. We welcome you to join. A Zoom link will be sent prior to the webinar.

We will also hold two additional LLC Minister's Webinars for 2022. The second webinar will be held Thursday, August 25th, and the third will be the annual Minister's Teleconference on Thursday, November 3rd.

The Dinner Host and the Uninvited Guest

Esa Tuomaala

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment.” (Luke 7:36–37) “And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.” (Luke 7:48)

It is doubtful that Jesus would often have been invited by a Pharisee to dine in his home. The hatred which governed their hearts prevented them from inviting Jesus to their homes. But this happened at least once according to Luke's account. The course of events during the event was such that it is certain that the meal's host and the Pharisees would not have been enthused to invite Jesus later either. Namely, it actually happened that in Jesus' address, the host of the home was rebuked, and the uninvited guest – a sinful woman – was raised above him in faith and love.

When the Pharisee, Simon, and his invited guests had been seated around the table for the meal, the door to the house opened. A woman, who was from the same city and whom the host, Simon, knew well, stepped inside. He didn't know this woman by name only, but also by knowledge of her past and her way of life. She was guilty of such, which according to both divine and human norms was wrong; she had completely lost her purity in the eyes of God and men. Jesus testifies that a truly decisive change had occurred in her



JESUS CONVERSES

The gospels present us with a rich picture of Jesus' public ministry. There we find His works and miracles, teachings, parables, and also some of His conversations. Some of those conversations were with adversaries, some with the curious, and others with the downcast or seeking. Some of the conversations were with individuals and others were with groups.

In these conversations we can see how Jesus approached people and responded to their questions. His teaching, methods, and manner offer us valuable lessons. We can apply them in our own lives and in our work as servants of the Word. The articles in this series will examine some of the enlightening conversations that took place between the Son of God and His contemporaries.

life: “Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much” (Luke 7:47). Apparently the Pharisee Simon didn't know anything about this great change. In his eyes, the woman carried the mark of her black past, even though before God everything was otherwise.

That which happened between the sinful woman and Jesus attracted the attention of the invited guests and especially the Pharisee Simon. In Simon's mind the arrival of the sinful woman amounted to a certain kind of test situation for Jesus, a test in which His worth as a prophet was weighed. He did not see that it was at all possible that Jesus would be the Messiah, the Christ. Now in Simon's eyes He also lost His standing as a prophet. The reason was that Jesus allowed a woman, who due to her past not one Pharisee who knew her and who had any self-worth would have allowed near him, to anoint His feet.

Pharisees tended to think much and say nothing of what they were thinking. This was not Jesus' way. That's why, knowing Simon's thoughts, He opens a conversation with him. Simon is ready to talk. In an embarrassing way for Simon, Jesus compares the uninvited guest who came into the house, the sinful woman, and the home's host with each other. The

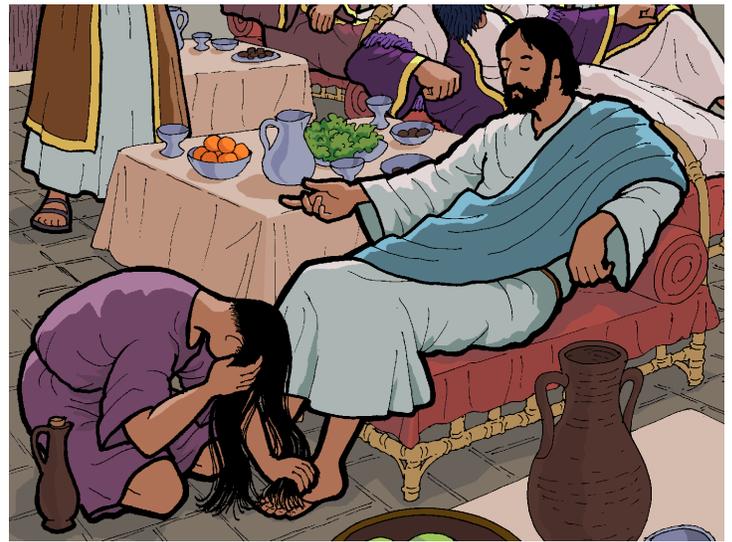
subject of the comparison was a key point for the Jews, namely showing hospitality to others. This was displayed to arriving guests: the guest's feet soiled on the dusty roads were washed either by the host, or at his command, by a servant or slave. This was also shown by the custom in the Eastern lands of kissing a special guest. Hospitality could also be shown by anointing the guest's head. Simon's cold and unloving attitude towards Jesus appeared not only in this that no one in the household wanted to wash His feet, but even more clearly in this, that water for this purpose was not even offered. This cool attitude tells us as well that a welcoming kiss and the anointing of the head were also left out. Simon was polite in inviting Jesus, but his attitude remained at the level of polite formality. Love was missing.

The invited guest's blunt rebuke of the host probably crackled uncomfortably in all the listener's ears. It may have given even greater offense to them when Jesus showed that the woman who was considered a sinner had fulfilled all of the requirements for hospitality. She had served Jesus with all of the deeds that Simon had neglected.

Jesus, in speaking of these matters, was not satisfied only with explaining the differences in outward behavior. In addition, He shows what is behind the behavior of both Simon and the woman who served Him. The difference in outward behavior tells of a different relationship with divine forgiveness. The woman who had lived in sin and who had been living so for some time had needed and received much forgiveness from God. Jesus did not deny that the woman had sinned much. Everyone who was present knew it. But Jesus assures them that the woman had received all of her ugly sins forgiven. That explained her serving love. Jesus confirms this comforting forgiveness yet again by proclaiming to the woman who surely longed for the absolution: "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48).

Simon's coldness also had something behind it. Jesus states: "...to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). It is unlikely that even many Pharisees dared to assert that they had completely fulfilled God's law. If offenses occurred, surely forgiveness was

required. But obviously in the opinion of one who worked hard in fulfilling the works of the law, less forgiveness was required. In fact, this text's context and the entirety of the New Testament, reveal that Simon, along with his Pharisee friends, was completely outside of God's grace kingdom. This is reflected in the astonishment of the dinner guests when hearing Jesus' proclamation of forgiveness: "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" (Luke 7:49)



What does Simon's and Jesus' conversation teach us, Christians of this time? A great deal— and the core matters of the endeavor. One of these is how Jesus reacted to the Pharisee, into whose home He was invited. Jesus did not refuse the invitation; He did not seclude himself. But Jesus brought with Him truly wholesome salt. He did not blend in with the Pharisaic atmosphere of the discussion, but rather revealed the grace and truth of God's word in the discussion which ensued with the arrival of the woman who was considered a sinner. But a very central matter is the text's teaching about the two fundamental powers in the life of God's kingdom, forgiveness and love. The first is forgiveness. Forgiveness begets love. If the gift of love is disappearing, it will not come back by appealing to the command of the law: love God above all other things – love your neighbor as yourself. God's love brings into our hearts God's regenerative grace, forgiveness, and the power of the Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). ■

James 1:17-21

As a Citizen of Heaven in This World

Ahti Riihimäki

CORRECT HEARING OF THE WORD

The Epistle of James is one of the general or catholic [universal] letters. It is directed to all of the tribes of Israel. The message of this letter has sometimes been experienced as difficult to understand. Because of its strong emphasis on works, it has been assumed that the writer of the letter would not, in fact, have been committed to the Apostle Paul's teaching, namely: a person becomes righteous through



faith without the works of the law. A need had appeared among Christians of the early Church to emphasize that living faith also causes a change in life.

ALL GOOD COMES FROM GOD

We can enjoy God's goodness. Most of us have healthy bodies and use their well-functioning members. God has blessed us with the light of reason and senses which facilitate our lives. He also endows us with all the necessities of this life. We understand through faith that God's fatherly

AS A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN IN THIS WORLD

4th Sunday after Easter

This Sunday is included with those Sundays which portray the spontaneous joy of those who believe upon Jesus. The experiences of Good Friday are still vividly remembered. Nonetheless, above them has risen the joy and triumph of Easter. Our Lord lives. The repeated appearances of the Resurrected to His own prove it.

God had allowed the experiences of Pentecost to live in the midst of His own. The Holy Spirit had joined new members to the congregation of those that believe in Christ. The sermon of the gospel and the shared meals of love reminded them of their connection to the world to come. But at the same time, they were also joined with the people of their own time and their aspirations. The danger of getting bogged down in the life of the present time was always close.

In this Sunday's epistle texts, those who endeavored in the early Church had to be encouraged. The sermon of God's Word enlightens and encourages them to preserve the viewpoint of hope. Hope is the anchor which they can hold to during difficult days. This is established by God's Word. The Holy Spirit guides every one that endeavors to avoid the desires of our corrupt nature and to seek and put into practice the mind of Christ.

goodness surrounds us all of the days of our lives.

THE EFFECT OF THE WORD OF TRUTH

James writes that God has begotten us with the word of truth. In the sermons of the early Church, the living word of truth and its power to create anew was strongly emphasized. The message of Peter's letter also reveals the same thing: "But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto

you” (1 Peter 1:25). The living word, the gospel, worked in believers’ hearts, it begot new life in them. They had experienced the grace of new birth, and that’s why they were to endeavor as children of a new life. James states in his letter that wrath begets an evil result. It never accomplishes the righteous will of God.

CORRECT HEARING OF THE WORD

The gathering of the congregation always included the sermon of God’s Word. Psalms were also sung. Breaking of bread meant the observance of communion according to the instruction given by Jesus. The mutual gathering also helped them to experience Christian fellowship and encouraged them to pray together.

A cessation of congregation fellowship appeared quite early. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews had to admonish: We cannot neglect the mutual gatherings of the congregation as the manner of

some is (Heb. 10:25). The exhortation signals that some Christians did not consider it necessary to gather together. They no longer sought strength for the endeavor of faith through recurring participation in the Word and sacraments. This was considered a worrisome sign of weariness.

Another unfortunate phenomenon was that the hearing of the Word remained as an external thing. The preached word did not affect inwardly. That’s why James encourages people to accept the Word. Hearing the word includes humble subjection under the Word: this especially applies to me! The living Word both condemns and pardons. The correct hearing of the word causes a desire to repent and to forsake sin. Paul encouraged, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). The Word of the gospel

is powerful to help those that believe it to eternal salvation.

One coming into the hearing of the Word feels a need to pray. First it is right to pray on behalf of the preacher, that God would open His Word to him and that the work of the kingdom would be successful. Secondly, he prays on his own behalf, that he would be able to put himself under God’s Word for study and nourishment. Then the hearing of the Word bears the most beautiful harvest for the Lord’s granaries.

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Contact Information

Jon Bloomquist, Mission Director
jbloomquist@llchurch.org
218.255.0173

Adrian Pirness, Mission Director
apirness@llchurch.org
763.360.0820

Adeline Moll, Mission Dept. Asst.
amoll@llchurch.org
928.499.8079