

Wilmington Emmaus

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OPEN THE GIFT

from Robyn's Roost

I love the Christmas season. It is filled with the joy of family, friends, lights, shopping, Christmas trees and great food. A fun part of our tradition, probably like yours, is the giving and receiving of gifts. How would you feel if you bought the perfect gift, beautifully wrapped in shiny paper with pretty ribbon and a bow and gave it to your best friend and he or she refuses to open it? You are eager to see the joy when opening the gift, but he or she has no interest in it at all. Do you suppose Jesus feels that way when people refuse to open His gift, His gift of salvation?

In the blog, Daring Lutheran, Michael Schuermann wrote this: "Our Jesus is a giver. We are receivers. We aren't good at receiving, but

the Holy Spirit works in us, strengthening our faith, teaching us day by day, week by week, to be better and better at receiving. That is, we grow in faith and in the word of Christ, believing more and more what it says about us and about God and certainly about His Christ and what He has done for us. He has taken away our sin – including our often poor track record at just trusting in His provision for us, that it is good for us and is enough for us.

Finally, how does He give? Well, in terms of our daily bread, in countless ways. But regarding His forgiveness, He has made it very simple for us. His Word. His baptism. His Supper. Those are the places where, if we need them, we can look and say "give me more, Lord!"

Our Lord gives through these Means of Grace. Our Good Shepherd distributes His forgiveness through His under-shepherds. As we heard in our Epistle today, "There is one body (that's the Church) and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all... But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.'" See, He's a giver! And what – or better said, whom – does He give in order to give His gifts? "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers..." – that is, He gave pastors to His Church. These ministers of the Gos (continued on page 2)

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TABOR TALK

Anyone who reads the headlines in the news may believe that, as one non-religious observer put it, worriedly, "The world is going to hell in a handbasket." Watching the news and listening to the reports of terrorism and violence round the world may be cause for such concern. But that senti-

ment is broader than just the commentators on the evening news. It pervades even the local communities. In bold print we read of drug busts and alcohol DUI issues, of domestic violence and fraud, of all sorts of criminal and near-criminal activity. For many who are reading these words, those activities

may be more than just headlines; they may be real life! And real life demands can easily overwhelm us, can they not? Where is God in times like these? Doesn't He care? Isn't He doing anything at all? Those questions and more fill the hearts and the lips of many, even Christians, (continued on page 2)

pel are Christ's gift to all of us, His people, His flock, His receivers, so that He can continue to give and we can continue to receive. Our Lord Jesus is a giver, of all good things – daily bread, comfort, mercy, and forgiveness. Let us receive all these things with joy, with thankfulness in our hearts to God, and most especially, with faith – believing that they are indeed ours. He gives Himself – the Bread of Life. We receive, in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

A gift exchange only works if you have a giver and a receiver. Jesus is the giver of eternal life but we have to open His gift. This upcoming year let's be open to receive all that God has for us.

Merry Christmas,

Robyn Hinman

Merry Christmas!

who look at their newspapers or television screens and cry out, “Why?” As Philip Yancey queries, “Where is God when It Hurts?”

That is the very reason that this time of the year is such a blessed time. There is no part of this holiday season which at its core does not wreak of two words – thanksgiving and hope. Beginning with the last weekend in November and continuing hopefully into the New Year, these weeks are weeks where people in this nation and around the world collectively celebrate the solution to the world's problems.

In my quiet time the other day, I was reflecting upon Isaiah 61:1, which is also quoted in Luke 4:18-19 There Jesus says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” The original words in Isaiah were a direct reference to the Messianic prophecies,

and the promise of what the Messiah would be doing. Jesus' commentary on these verses is given in Luke 4:21, where He says, simply, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The point is that God in His own time sent Jesus the first time to bear our sins – all of them – on the cross and to break the power of sin over us, the pay the penalty of sin for us, and to (eventually) remove the presence of sin from us!. God is never late! But God is also never early either! (Check out the timing expressed in Galatians 4:4-5). God is still on the throne, and this season is a time to recall and remember that He is there and He is not silent. He continually is reminding us of that fact and calls us to be thankful and to simply celebrate the holidays with the song “Gloria In Excelsis Deo!” (Glory to God in the Highest!). Have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderfully Happy New Year!

Chuck Tabor

[Jesus] said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”
Matthew 17:20

DEVOTION

In this reading, we see a father desperate to save his son coming to Jesus after the disciples failed to heal the boy. Maybe the disciples had hoped to hide their failure from Jesus by not bringing the boy to him themselves, but Jesus finds out and reprimands them for their lack of faith.

Does our faith need to be directly proportionate to the problem we face? Or is even a little faith, tiny as a lowly mustard seed, sufficient to remove our obstacles?

I have failed at some major endeavors in this life. I have let down my family and friends, and I have disappointed myself many times. Failure is a humbling experience, but each effort teaches me to put my faith in God when times are hard, when my faith feels very small and my obstacles seem like mighty mountains.

How do you respond when times get tough? What do the seeds of your faith look like? How has God used them to move your mountains?

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PRAYER LIST

These names were lifted up at our November Gathering. Please continue to pray for these folks.

- Zach Bloom
- Dave & Dinah Bond
- Verna Carbolotti
- Carrie Carnes-Denier and sons,
- Chase, Connor and Colean
- Family of Gary Conover
- Gary Flaughter
- Joan Fussner
- Daisy Gill
- Christy Mitchell
- Adele Shoe
- Robin Smalley
- Tom Smart
- Jean Stroman



I'm sure you've seen one of these ladies on the top of a courthouse someplace! She represents the fact that all

are guaranteed a fair trial in this country. The kernel of this article came from something which Joy Stanforth said during her meditation at the November Gathering.

What does "JUSTICE" mean to you? That all will get their "come-uppance" at their court date? Does it mean that those who can afford a hot-shot lawyer can pretty much get off with a slap on the wrist?

How about at our court date when we stand before our final Judge? We know from scripture that we will not experience "justice" but shall experience "GRACE".



Let's consider those Scales of Justice. They are represented as being even—both sides will be at an equal level, such as when we were kids...at least those of us at a, shall we say, "certain age?" We knew that when we went to the dime store and purchased 10 cents worth of candy that the candy lady would put weights representing 1/8, 1/4 or other portion of a pound on one side of the scale, then would begin measuring out candy on the other side. When the needle balanced and registered in the middle, she knew that she had provided us the proper weight of candy for our 10 cents. Justice had been served and she emptied the

bowl into a paper sack, collected our ten cents and gave us our purchase. Occasionally, the clerk would shake a piece or two extra into the bowl and the needle would go a bit past center. We would experience a slight portion of GRACE as she gave us something we did not merit.

True Grace is quite a different thing, however. If you consider Jesus paying our bill, as he takes on more and more of our sins in the form of forgiveness as he answers our requests for that forgiveness, those scales begin to become unbalanced. Jesus' side is weighted down. Now, if you remember that law where an action in one direction causes and equal reaction in an opposite direction, as Jesus' side of the scales is weighted down, we are lifted up, closer to heaven, our goal. We do not experience "justice"; an eye for an eye, our come-uppance, THAT WHICH WE DESERVE! We experience the wonderful grace of Jesus. Remember that old hymn?

*Wonderful grace of Jesus,
Greater than all my sins.
How shall my tongue describe it?
Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden, setting my
spirit free
For the wonderful grace of Jesus
reaches me.*

IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

And how about the pop song from several years ago?

*Your love is lifting me higher
Than I've ever been lifted before
So keep it up
Quench my desire
And I'll be at your side, forever more.*

*Your love keeps lifting me,
Keeps on lifting me.
Your love is lifting me
Higher and higher!
(paraphrased)*

CCLI LIC #784624

What does Christmas mean to you? What are your favorite Christmas memories? How about your earliest memories of Christmas? If you have children, what kind of memories are you creating for them?

I would hope that your Emmaus experience has given you a new perspective, or at least a refreshed perspective on what Christmas is all about and what legacy you are creating.

After your editor's walk, not much changed....no, I wasn't so hardened that nothing from Men's Walk #15 made its way in. I think I've never been about presents, with the exception that I loved buying and giving presents much more than receiving. I've never known why, actually.

I've always enjoyed the buzz at church—creating music and special programs, providing food baskets and/or presents for those less fortunate, and so forth.

When I was a teen, one of my favorite things was to attend the midnight Christmas Eve service at the Episcopal Church. Some of my buddies would meet at our house and then we would walk up the street to St. Mary's. Worshiping in the crowded sanctuary following a long prelude of gorgeous music, and then walking out into the cold night, knowing it was Christmas morning and we had begun the sacred day in the most sacred way.

John Glaze



Join our FACEBOOK page!

Wilmington Area Walk to Emmaus

Wilmington United Methodist Church
PO Box 191
Wilmington, OH 45177

We're on the web:
www.wilmingtonemmaus.org

See you at the GATHERING:
December 8 - 7:00pm

Bring a snack to share
during fellowship time!

Introducing your new editor!

Leone Bihl begins her term as new board member and newsletter editor starting with the January, 2016 issue. Your current editor has completed his TWELFTH YEAR as newsletter editor (second time on the board). Leone will be having a side kick, Jennie Harner, during the time she is in Florida this winter. If you want to contribute to the newsletter, you can get Leone's email address from the community chair.

No room in the inn.....

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them at the inn."

Luke 2:7

We don't know exactly why there was no place for Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus at the inn. Were they too poor to rent a room? Was it sold out with everyone else coming to Bethlehem to be counted in the census? Were they from the wrong side of town?

What is your community like? Is there a place for everyone who wants to be there? What are the barriers for people to join your community?

Jesus' birth is a reminder that the Son of God comes to us with simplicity and humility. It is easy to forget the stories of our own simple and humble beginnings—how we built our lives with love, school, worth, and family.

Perhaps this year, the Christmas gift we give each other is to remember and respond to the understanding that each person begins life as a vulnerable baby, made in the image of the living God, who depends on the love, care, and radical hospitality of others in order to simply live.

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*Contact Forward Movement at
800-543-1813 or visit www.forwardmovement.org*

Christmas Gathering: ALL MUSIC

**What does that mean? We need
YOU to step up and join the
group of folks who will play,
sing, draw, dance, or do a reading
at the Gathering.**

**Call SANDIE WINGO for details:
937-486-3694**