

SIERRA EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MONDAY MESSENGER - June 22, 2020

**A FATHER'S DAY MESSAGE OF LOVE AND HOPE**

Many of us approach Father's Day with mixed emotions. Some people have had fathers who are always present and interested in their lives; others may have somewhat distant or disinterested fathers; while others may have been abandoned, and some have fathers who have passed on. But one thing we all have in common, no matter what kind of dad we have or had, is that we have a Father in heaven who has always been there and always will be there for us. The Psalms say that God is a "father of the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5). The Bible encourages us to address God in an intimate way; calling him "Abba" which means "Daddy" or "Papa." The idea is that of an affectionate relationship.

The great novelist Charles Dickens was once asked what he thought was the best short story ever written, Dickens replied... "The Prodigal Son." If you want an accurate snapshot of God, just look at this story in Luke 15. It is a boldly, honest, liberating, incredibly Good News story and the most well-known and best loved parable of Jesus. But it's not really about the prodigal son, or the older brother, but more importantly about the Father's love for BOTH of his sons. The father is a picture of the love of God! He not only **had** two sons, but **loved** two sons, **went out** to two sons and **was generous** to two sons who were very different people!

It begins with the absolute assurance that we are loved, no matter what! Regardless of what we've done to ourselves or to others, in spite of our sins, our doubts, our failings, or the hardships we've endured, or what has gone terribly wrong or has broken us in the depths of our hearts, or the world's rebellion, pain and suffering... God has made peace with us. It's done! Or as Christ said on the cross; "It is finished."

The father's words of love in the Prodigal Son story are so extravagant and loving that they are also difficult and shocking. The father, representing God, loves the son so much that he will give him far more than he deserves.

The story about the Prodigal Son and the Prodigal God, is really about us! Think of all the we have abundantly received (for some, I realize that may be difficult) but for most of us, in comparison to millions in the world, we have received both material things and beyond, such as food, shelter, love, friendships, living in a free world, a grocery store every few miles away, etc. But beyond all that, we - like both sons in the story - are being offered a gift beyond compare. God is love and love is a relationship, and it is one of joy that can't be contained. It is unconditional and for all people! Jesus invites us into that relationship. He is one with God and invites us to be one with him. To have abundant life.

Perhaps we feel we can relate to one or the other brother - Are we like the younger brother, where we've had moments of straying away, being wasteful or putting ourselves first and then we feel unworthy of God's love? Maybe we can identify with the older brother - we feel like we've towed the line, tried to do right, taken on burdens we shouldn't have to bear, and God owes us! God's love cannot be taken away from us for anything we fail to do, nor can it be rewarded by good that we do. Neither son understands the father's love was never about any of that. The father's love, God's love, cannot be earned or taken away. It just is. It's a party, a celebration without beginning or end, it's a "I'll hike up my robe and come running to you" kind of love! A love that keeps looking into the distance waiting and hoping we'll come over the crest of the hill to meet the One who loves beyond all measure.

He invites us to the party! It's an open invitation to everyone, even in all our brokenness, or when we fall back into the pit, or stray away thinking we can manage on our own or trick ourselves into thinking we are having a good time or believing in what the world tells us matters. Despite all of that, God still desires us, and sees who we truly are through all our faults and failures and never gives up on us. No matter the pain, desperation or darkness in our lives, His love and Spirit move alongside us. He is a God for all people for all time. A God you want to meet again and again. A God whose grace exceeds any boundaries we could ever create in our minds. And no matter how far away you go, or how far away you feel, He is always there, looking, waiting for you. A God of extravagant love! A God worth telling people about!

We hope you all had a very blessed and special Father's Day especially in this challenging time! It was a special delight for Pastor Mark and I to deliver several gift bags to our SELC fathers on Saturday who still presently have children or teens at home. May God bless the love and wisdom you are sharing and may God bless all fathers and father figures we have had in our lives and bless the memories of those who now enjoy the party and feast without end with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Linda Perry

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### SUNDAYS' EDUCATION MODULE WITH INTERN PAUL BENZ

We have now sent over 800 Masks and raised over \$9,000!

As per the announcement last week, rather than zoom sessions the last two weeks, we will regroup for a session on June 28 at 1:00 pm for a time with Patterson which will meet the thoughtful request at our last zoom meeting. I encourage you to submit questions you might have for him to me. When we reach a critical mass of questions (Friday before the zoom meeting) I will send them to him as one organized email and cc those of you who submitted the questions so we might have a further opportunity to build personal relationships by name. I invite you to submit ideas on actionable tasks that could shape and give structured purpose to an ongoing and constant relationship with our Siblings at House of Prayer Lutheran Church and NELM. If you are interested in ideas that have already been shared and did not get last week's email where some of these ideas were shared please email me and I will forward the list to you.

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### INTERN PASTOR PAUL BENZ LAST SUNDAY

It is with tears of sorrow and smiles of pride that we prepare to say goodbye to our Intern Pastor Paul Benz and his wonderful wife Monica and their beautiful daughter Joy Rurangwa. Paul and his family have been such a blessing to our church family and our community. **Their last Sunday with us will be July 26<sup>th</sup>.** You are encouraged to send your well wishes, cards, call, or email, etc. soon as these next few weeks will fly by quickly.

Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup> at 10 am, in a live-streamed service from the sanctuary, we will be praying for their safe travels and God's leading in their lives. We are exploring holding an outdoor worship in Len Roberts Park at 8 am, (also observing CDC protocols, such as wearing masks) and will confirm with you soon as to whether it is going to happen.

Following God in the next step: Paul will be serving a year-long Chaplaincy Residency at Bayview Medical Center in Seattle, WA starting the end of July!

## NEWS FROM THE SELC COUNCIL

Well, the council has met virtually now for the past four months. We've worked out the bugs of online meetings and it's actually working out very well, not to mention it keeps us all safe. I want to let everyone know that the Narthex bathroom plans are approved by the City of Sierra Vista and work will begin within the next five weeks!

The council was briefed by Pastor Mark on the SELC COVID-19 Response Team meetings. First, the executive committee attends those meetings as well so your officers within the council are already familiar, but the rest of the council were not. It is with a heavy heart that we can't congregate in person, but the council agrees with the response team that it's still too early to come back to in-person worship. With the overall numbers in Arizona still on the rise the danger is too great for all of us, not to mention those who are at most risk among us. Once we do come back together the task force is working measures to ensure the safety of all our congregants. The key is proper sanitizing not only individually but the area within the sanctuary, narthex, bathrooms, altar, etc. And that requires the correct material, to include the proper PPE and training for all who are volunteering to assist in this effort. We are planning all actions using the CDC's guidelines. Brothers and Sisters, I ask you to please be patient and let's stay safe. I and the council love each and every one of you too much to put us at risk when the risk is so high still.

Lastly, I'd like to ask for your prayers for the Nominating Committee as we are going to begin earlier this year putting together the list of nominees for this year's annual vote. As well as the 2 council members, we need and must get three congregants to volunteer to assist with forming the Nominating Committee. As a reminder, the following positions will be vacated at years' end as all 3 have completed 3 yrs. of their 3 yr. term limits: President (Larry Rewis), Secretary (Lynn Light), Treasurer (Leslie McCourt), and our Financial Secretary (Sandy Stephenson) who is completing her 3rd yr. of a 5 yr. term maximum. We also will need a Faith Formation Liaison at-large member to replace Lillianna Dicks as she will not be able to continue on another year; preferably someone under 30 yrs. of age who can represent our youth. Please search your hearts and see where you can use the gifts our Lord gave you in assisting our church body. I did not think I could be your Congregation Council President 3 yrs. ago and with the Lord's help and guidance I was able to, of course he placed a phenomenal council full of amazing servants to help me. I pray for us all and for God's mercy on all affected by this pandemic. God loves you and so do I.

Larry Rewis  
Congregation Council President

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## THANK YOU

Dear SELC family,  
Thank you so much for all your prayers, cards, and well wishes during my illness. I am so fortunate to be part of such a loving and caring group. I am slowly recovering and can't wait to do the Bisbee stairs again.  
Much love, Ursula A. Hollis.

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## CHRIST IN OUR HOME DEVOTIONAL

The next quarter (July - August) Christ In Our Home devotional books are available. You can pick them up from the church office. Questions / Information please contact the church office - 459-0444 or [admin@selcaz.org](mailto:admin@selcaz.org)

# FAITH5

Every Night In Every Home!

Our FAITH5 verse of the week is

Matthew 10:39:

“Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

*(Post or keep this weekly scripture in a handy place and every morning or evening share the following as a couple, or with family members in the home or even with a dear friend over the phone.)*



**Share** your highs and lows of the day with one another.



**Read** the verse of the week and if time permits, the Bible story that pertains to the Scripture of the week.



**Talk** about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows of the day or how it's speaking to you.



**Pray** for one another's highs and lows and other prayer requests.



**Bless** one another. Make the sign of the cross on each other's forehead or the palm of your hands and say something simple such as: “God bless you and keep you in His love and care!” Or feel free to make up your own blessing that incorporates a part of the FAITH5 verse of the week.

## SUNDAY LECTIONARY DAILY READINGS

The readings are chosen so that the days flowing out from Sunday (Monday through Wednesday) reflect upon that Sunday's readings. The days leading up to Sunday (Thursday through Saturday) prepare for the next Sunday readings.

*Monday*

Psalm 6

Micah 7:1-7

Revelation 2:1-7

*Tuesday*

Psalm 6

Jeremiah 26:1-12

Revelation 2:8-11

*Wednesday*

Psalm 6

Jeremiah 38:1-13

Matthew 10:5-23

*Thursday*

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

Jeremiah 25:1-7

Galatians 5:2-6

*Friday*

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

Jeremiah 25:8-14

Galatians 5:7-12

*Saturday*

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

Jeremiah 28:1-4

Luke 17:1-4

*Sunday*

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

Romans 6:12-23

Matthew 10:40-42

**Be Creative!**