

November 2023

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #1
February 1, 2024
8:00 pm CST

LLC New Ministers Workshop
February 16–17, 2024

LLC 2023 Phoenix Winter
Services
March 14–17, 2024

LLC Ministers Camp
April 5–7, 2024

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #2
May 30, 2024
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Longview Summer Services
July 4–7, 2024

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #3
August 29, 2024
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp,
West Coast
September 20–22, 2024

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #4
November 7, 2024
8:00 pm CST

This church year, the second in the three-year cycle, will end in just a few weeks on November 26th with Judgment Sunday. A new church year, the third in the three-year cycle, will begin on December 3rd with the First Sunday in Advent. The Epistle Postil article in this issue of Ministers Message is for the next to last Sunday in the ecclesiastical calendar, Vigilance Sunday. Its theme is “Watch.”

In all of the gospel texts for Vigilance Sunday, Jesus reminds His disciples that none of us know the moment that He will return and that we all need to watch and to be ready for His coming. As servants of the Word, we too need to take His exhortation to heart. It is easy amid the cares and busyness of this life to neglect the care of our own conscience and faith. The enemy of souls is relentless, world is near, and, while our spirit is willing, our flesh is weak. It was with good reason that the Apostle Paul encouraged his co-worker and servant of the Word, Timothy, to keep faith and a good conscience. May God grant us strength and sober minds to watch and so endeavor in our lives and calling.

While it seems hard to imagine in our society and current environment, Advent in the church calendar was not traditionally a time of feasting, but rather a time of fasting. It has been known as the “little Lent.” A time to prepare hearts and minds first for the second-coming of our Lord and then in its last week for the celebration of His birth. This is reflected in the gospel texts of the First Sunday of Advent which tell us of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It was the day in Israel upon which families were to separate their Passover lamb from the flock. Thus, the church year begins with the message of the cross as Jesus presents himself as the Passover Lamb. It points us His suffering and death on the cross. He was born that He might die for us.

This is the last issue of Ministers Message for 2022. The pane on the left side of this page contains a list of noteworthy events for 2024. Please take a look mark relevant events in your calendar. Next year’s edition of Ministers Message will continue both the **Epistle Postil** articles and the **Jesus Converses** series. Please let us know if you have suggestions for items you would like us to cover in future editions. Our contact information is at the bottom of the last page.

We wish you all a blessed and joyful Advent and Christmas.

Jesus and Parents

Leo Väyrynen

Luke 2:46–52

JESUS AND PARENTS

Jesus' life can be viewed on two levels: as the life of a Jewish boy and man, and in terms of salvation history in the light of the mission that He had as the Son of God performed. These two levels intersected on the trip that Jesus made to the city of Jerusalem at the age of twelve.

The child Jesus had brought much that was perplexing into Mary's and Joseph's life. Among the most difficult things was the persecution that Herod raised against the little boys in Bethlehem. They had to flee to Egypt from this persecution. After Herod's death, the family was able to return to Nazareth. Jesus went to synagogue school there and helped Joseph build houses.

When Jesus was 12 years old, His parents took him to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. There he conversed with the scribes in the temple. This trip was similar to our confirmation exam. A Jewish boy of that age became a "son of the law," that is, an adult and it was especially the duty of the firstborn son to take responsibility for the family's livelihood. The responsibilities of an adult came to Jesus early, for Joseph died early, and there were also other children in the family. On this trip to Jerusalem, Joseph was still with them.

As for Jesus' second mission, in Mary's opinion there was much that was wondrous and difficult to understand in that too. The angel had announced that her Son would be born of the Holy Spirit as atonement for our sins. The angel had spoken of the same matter to the shepherds in the fields and to Simeon in the temple. Mary had been told that Jesus' life fulfilled the prophets' prophecies regarding the Messiah. She often pondered the meanings of these things. The sword piercing Mary's heart began its work early on. Being the Messiah's mother meant the pain of loss more than the joy of possession.

The trip to Jerusalem went well, although that 100 km had to be covered on foot. Boys usually traveled holding their father's hand or swinging on his shoulder. There was a problem on the way

JESUS CONVERSES

Jesus met many people during His life. Several of them wanted to converse with Him. Jesus' teaching gave birth to questions in some listeners. They wanted to hear more since His teachings deviated from the teachings of the scribes of that time. Several people approached Jesus because of their difficulties and problems. Jesus also used to talk on His own initiative with people He encountered in various situations.

Several discussions which Jesus had with various people are recorded in the Bible. This year we will publish a series of writings in this paper by Leo Väyrynen on some of these discussions. Although around two thousand years have passed since these discussions, their topics and issues are still timely. We notice this in this series of writings.

back: they noticed that Jesus was not in the traveling party. Men and women in the caravan from Nazareth traveled separately. Mary and Joseph may have thought that their Son was with the other. They returned and their Son was found in the temple. There He sat at the feet of the priests. Where had their Son received such a desire to attend "confirmation school" that He had forgotten about His return trip and His parents? Jesus was interested in the holy scriptures.

Like a model student, Jesus sat among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. All marveled at His wisdom. Jesus gave a strange response to Mary's dumbfounded wonder, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" His parents were left pondering what Jesus, the model of an obedient boy, meant with this blunt-sounding response. In speaking of His Father, Jesus did

Jesus Converses

not refer to Joseph, but rather to God. It had been opened up to Jesus that He was God's Son, and He had an important task to perform in this capacity.

The two levels of Jesus' life now seemed to be at odds with each other. He was preparing for His prophetic duty, which meant leaving His home. The obligation of obedience to His parents and faithfulness to His calling as God's Son seemed to be pulling in different directions. Looking into this more deeply, this wasn't the case. Jesus' entire life was fulfilling His duty as God's Son, and this also included obedience to His parents.

Jesus left the temple for Nazareth with His parents and remained subject to them. He grew in wisdom, age, and grace before God and man. Jesus was to perform His duty as the Messiah publicly at the age of 30, but He performed that duty the whole time, from His holy conception until His death. This included the fulfilling of the Law of Moses on our behalf. The Law of Moses was fulfilled already in this, when He was circumcised, a sacrifice was offered on His behalf and He, upon returning home from Jerusalem, was obedient to His parents and cared for them. On the cross, He still looked after His mother Mary by placing her in John's care. Thus Jesus fulfilled the fourth commandment, which encourages us to honor our parents and to care for them when they become old.

Jesus also fulfilled the fourth commandment with regard to authority. His conduct in the temple shows that He honored that Jewish holy place and the representatives of spiritual authority who were there. That He had to later strongly criticize the priests and the religious life shows his desire to love people who had fallen into unbelief in truth regardless of person.

We can consider Jesus' obedience when we ponder our responsibility to our parents and to representatives of authority. It was good that Jesus also fulfilled the fourth commandment, since we have not been able to fulfil it as we would have wanted to. Through Jesus' work, we can also believe our faults in honoring our parents and authority forgiven.

Jesus gave us an example at the same time. One good effect of living faith is that we as Christians want to speak with and treat our parents and representatives of authority with honor and diligently care for the duties associated with our



own calling. It often may seem that various responsibilities also pull us in different directions and generate cross pressures. We should have time for our spouse, children, parents, our work duties and the work of God's kingdom. How can we fit everything together?

Jesus' life was permeated by His calling as the Son of God. May the calling of a child of God rule our lives. When we live this life as a believer, it is not divided into mutually opposing sectors, rather it forms one entirety, where the perspective of faith rules everything and helps to put everything together as well as is possible in this world of sin and deficiency.

Vigilance Sunday

Erkki Savela

WATCH

The message of the next to last Sunday of the church year is “Watch.” Watching signifies the nurturing and tending of our faith life. It means living in the righteousness of faith and soberness of life.

Watching means readiness to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. The apostles emphasize this in the day’s texts. They teach and remind us of the Lord’s Second Coming. They also speak of the signs of the last times, of the dangers of sin, of God’s peace and false peace, of the necessity of repentance, of the time of grace, and of Christ’s love.

The life-giving word of God and being partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith help us to be ready. He loved us so much that He sacrificed himself on our behalf and has ascended into heaven. He also wants to give His kingdom and eternal life to all of His children.

YEAR 2, Hebrews 3: 12-15

WATCH OVER THE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART

A special feature of the Epistle to the Hebrews is its exclusive appeal to the Old Testament. This is also the case in this epistle text. The Letter to the Hebrews in its entirety very powerfully presents the only sacrifice acceptable to God, the Lord Jesus. No other sacrifice is comparable to the sacrifice of Jesus, when He in obedience to God sacrificed himself to death. No one else can open the way to God than Jesus Christ. He is the propitiation for our sins. He is the beginning and the end. This message cannot be separated from the entirety of God’s Word. We always want to keep this in mind.

SIN SEPARATES FROM GOD

The writer turns the gaze to each individual’s own heart: Take heed that you do not fall away from the living God through the deceit of sin, that you don’t become hardened. The apostle refers to the peoples’ murmurings during the Israelites’ wilderness journey. He explains this elsewhere. Those who sinned did not believe, nor did they reach the Promised Land. That is to

say, they did not believe their sins forgiven nor did they abandon them. Thus, they fell into a state of unbelief. They certainly heard the Word, but they did not believe it, and thus simply hearing it did not help them. Their hearts hardened.

Christian Doctrine teaches: “Sin is the falling away of the heart from God.” Sin separates a person from God. If God’s grace cannot wash sin away through the gospel of God’s kingdom, the person falls into unbelief. Luther says that unbelief is the mother of all sins.

There are cautionary examples in the Bible of unwatchful hearts. In The Acts of the Apostles Luke relates of Ananias and Sapphira who lied before the Holy Spirit. Greed had overtaken them. Satan filled their hearts. Their time of grace came to an end. They died without repenting. Eternal condemnation befell them (Acts 5:1).

GUIDE AND ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Guide and encourage one another is the instruction of God’s Word. We should counsel each other all the more as the Lord’s Day approaches.

When we have to be instructed, false honor often rises in opposition. We want to approach one in fault with love, with a forgiving mind. One who has fallen into sin is instructed through the wisdom of God’s Word. The penitent is forgiven from the heart.

When I remember how much I have been loved in God’s kingdom, it helps me to willingly forgive another. We live of God’s grace ourselves and want to be vigilant with regard to our own conscience. At the same time, we care for one another.

WITH THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The apostle directed his letter to those who had earlier come into faith (Heb. 5:12, 2:3). He reminded them that even a lengthy endeavor does not save one if faith is not kept until the end. That’s why it is important to strengthen the heart with God’s grace. Thus, the name of a child of God is preserved in the book of life. Christ’s gospel helps us in this. Many saints referred to by name in Hebrews have taken refuge in it. They have been victorious through faith. The gospel is the source of strength even today for all believers. “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).