

July 2023

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #3
Dealing with Difficult Communion Situations

August 24, 2023

8:00 pm CDT

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp

Stony Lake Camp

September 22–24, 2023

SLC Bible Course

Palm Sunday to Pentecost—From the Old Testament to the New

Stony Lake Camp

October 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar/
Seminar #4

The Minister as Counselor

October 21, 2023

8:30 am–12:00 pm CDT

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #5

November 2, 2023

8:00 pm CDT

Our Heavenly Father richly blessed our summer services and meetings. One-mindedness, peace, and joy permeated the events from beginning to end. There was a renewed desire and enthusiasm to move forward with the work of God's kingdom following the recent years of spiritual turmoil. While there are many areas of work, the needs of our youth were frequently mentioned in our meetings.

We want to direct your attention to four upcoming events.

The first is LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #3. The webinar will be held on August 24th at 8:00 pm CDT. We will share some thoughts about dealing with some of the difficult communion situations that we encounter in many of our congregations as a result of the recent schism.

The second is the annual LLC Ministers & Wives Camp. This year's camp will be held at Stony Lake Camp September 22nd–24th. We will send out the schedule as soon as it is ready. If you're coming from out of state it's not too soon to bring it to your local boards attention and to begin making travel plans.

The third is the Bible Course at Stony Lake October 6th–9th. The Bible course will look at the events and lessons from Palm Sunday to Pentecost that ended the Old Testament and ushered in the New. If you're interested in attending, we suggest that you sign up soon.

The fourth event is a recent new addition to the calendar—an extra LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar/Seminar. It will be held on October 21st at the LLC office and online. Matti Kontkanen, who will be here on the SRK's fall mission trip will do two lessons on counseling. The webinar/seminar will tentatively run from 8:30–12:00. We will provide a more detailed final schedule in the September issue of Ministers Message. Please mark your calendars and reserve time in your calendar for this event.

We hope that the planned events will provide you with information, knowledge, and tools that can help you to serve God's congregation and His work.

God's Command and the Tradition of the Elders

Esa Tuomaala

“Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, -- Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me...And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to



do ought for his father or his mother” (Mark 7:5, 6, 9–12).

WASHING OF HANDS

The watchful Pharisees noticed once again something reprehensible in the disciples' behavior; they took their bread with unwashed hands as meal began.

The washing of hands was not primarily done by the Jews for health reasons, but rather it was a religious act. The Law of Moses obligated the priests to wash their hands, if they were about to start a meal which consisted of the offerings brought to the temple. The law imposed no such obligations on the common people. The Pharisees demanded much more. The whole nation, in their opinion, was obliged to observe the temple's purity laws, even at each everyday meal. The tradition of the elders, which had not yet been put in writing in Jesus' time, also had the same goal, and they were nonetheless closely followed among the Pharisees. Jesus did not bind himself or His disciples to this tradition which had arisen as an explanation of the Law of Moses but rejected it where it was in conflict with the Word of God preserved in the Old Testament. As such, it was only a human word and a human commandment to Jesus.

OFFERING OF THE TEMPLE

From the external rules of purity, Jesus moved to another area, where the contradiction between God's command and the tradition of the elders was glaringly visible. The temple and its offerings were the be-all and end-all to the pious Pharisees. In the Catholicism of Luther's time, monasteries and churches tried to get donations from lots of religious people. Similarly, it was seen as a good work in Judaism that someone supported the worship service of the temple with gifts. Corban meant a sacrificial gift. Using funds for such a purpose meant the best possible investment for a pious Jew.

It became evident from Jesus' words that this religious pursuit had actually meant that another area of obligation had been poorly

Jesus Converses

looked after by many. When a person committed to giving his property to the temple, he was freed, according to the understanding of the Pharisees, from his obligations to his parents. The temple rose above the home. This approach could go so far that parents were left entirely uncared for by their children. Their expectations boiled down to one word: Corban. Hearing that, many fathers and mothers surely acquiesced and said, "Our children serve God, which is the greatest thing of all. We must yield."

GOD'S WORD REMAINS

Jesus' speech highlights two truths that remain clear throughout time. The written Word of God always remains valid. Nothing that is in conflict with it can be placed alongside it or above it, whatever reputation, or splendor of outward holiness it may have. The tradition of the elders can be valuable in many ways, but if it conflicts with the sacred heritage of God's Word, it must be rejected. The tradition of past generations is cherished among our people also. It includes a lot that has been preserved from generation to generation with the national church. Customs, culture, and homeland belong to that heritage. God's children do not oppose or overthrow these values. But they must always be subjected to and placed under the light of God's Word. Only God's Word has absolute



authority. It alone must be listened to in man's ultimate questions.

HONORING PARENTS

A second teaching of Jesus in this text is that He takes from the varied tradition of the fathers, the simple and clear fourth commandment. This familiar Word of God, learned as a child, is in effect even today, a time with many kinds of undisciplined and broken homes. Although, as believers, we aren't under the law, that commandment contains precious instruction for us also, which the gospel confirms many times.

Honor thy father and thy mother. Let us think about this for a moment in terms of our own lives! What does it mean to you schoolchild, who is cared for and accompanied by your mother as you go to school? What does it mean to you a young head of house, who recently took the reins from your aging father? What does it mean to you daughter, who escorted your tired mother to the hospital ward of a nursing home a short while ago? Without answering these questions in detail, we must say "It means much." The precious instructions of Jesus' and God's Word come to everyday life, to the closest and most sensitive human relationships. They reveal our shortcomings, but they encourage us to continue our endeavor under the abundant forgiveness that has been experienced in many ways.



7th Sunday after Pentecost

Kyösti Pieviläinen

THE LAW OF LOVE

The citizens of God's kingdom are believing people. They have received and can believe all of their sins forgiven in Jesus' name and atonement blood every day. Their hallmark is love. This love is manifested in the one-mindedness of Christ's followers and Christians' benevolence towards all people, including their enemies.

The Scriptural theme for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost is the law of love. Love is the fulfillment of the Law, the Ten Commandments which demand perfection from man, since love does not do any evil to another person. The core content of the law of love is that a person is to love his neighbor as himself.

The royal decree of the law in the Bible, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is tested every day in a Christian's endeavor of faith. To be preserved as a free grace child of God, through faith alone, in Christ alone, a Christian needs the teaching, instruction and rebuke of God's Word. We can learn about these signposts

on the road of life from the day's epistle texts (Rom. 12:16–21, James 2:8–15, Heb. 12:25–29).

YEAR 2

James 2:8–13

THE LAW'S ROYAL DECREE

The Epistle to James includes abundant instruction and warning. The epistle text speaks of the royal decree of the law. Its central content is love of one's neighbor.

THE LAW OF FREEDOM

The law's greatest command is the dual command of love. A person must love God with his whole heart, his whole soul and his whole mind, and his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:37–40). A person's social status, his level of wealth or any human attribute are not conditions for love of one's neighbor. The categorizing of people or looking with respect to person is sin.

As a result of the fall into sin, a person is not able to fulfill the law of love's absolute requirement for perfection. Love's foundation and source of strength is God's love towards sinful people. God has loved the world so much that He gave His only Son for the atonement and redemption of the sins of all mankind. Christ came to fulfill God's will and commands, not to destroy them.

The law's royal decree is called the law of liberty. Words and deeds are judged according to the law of liberty's content: love your neighbor as yourself. A person who is merciful to his neighbor, or a compassionate person, becomes a partaker of the jubilant victory himself. A person who is unmerciful to his neighbor receives a merciless judgment himself. God is righteous, a perfectly just judge. Each person is a lawbreaker before God, only Jesus has fulfilled the law.





LOVE, THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

The fulfillment of the law's royal decree means perfect fulfillment of the law, or perfection. Love is fulfilling the law (Rom. 13:10). Love is God's love in His Son Jesus Christ, the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world (1 John 4:9,10). The love for one's neighbor arises from God's love. Being a partaker of God's love allows a person to see himself as a greater sinner, who has, nonetheless, been pardoned (1 Tim. 1:15).

A person pardoned by God is always an ambassador of neighborly love. He is a minister of the Holy Spirit. As a member of Christ's congregation, he is authorized to proclaim the forgiveness of sins to all people.

TRIUMPHANT VICTORY IN CHRIST'S CONGREGATION

The gospel or the glad tidings of Christ is the power of a Christian's faith. God's love,

as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, affects love in a Christian. It does the work of God's kingdom through faith. Pardoned sinners obedient to the royal decree preach repentance and faith in the gospel to all people.

As God's children our greatest joy is from the gift of personal faith. We wish all people a heartfelt welcome to the mutual gatherings of God's children. Faith comes through hearing and hearing through God's Word (Rom 10:17). We also pray for a triumphant victory from our dear Father for all people who are not partakers of grace. A triumphant victory is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect fulfillment of the law. He is the way, the truth, and the life.



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