

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

The Forgiving Father and His Two Prodigal Sons

Luke 15:4-24 - "After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

No surprises here, at least at the start of the reading. The child who has everything and can hardly wait to get away from home often turns out this way. As clever as he thinks he is, he does not understand a basic principle of the way that God deals with us, namely this: There is no such thing as sin without consequences! It is amazing to see how few people grasp that. They sin with reckless abandon. They ruin their lives and drag down anyone who loves them. Eventually, health is gone. Wealth too, and often even the ability to earn wealth disappears. Spouse, children, friends—all gone. And still "the fun" continues! Life has no purpose. The goal of the day is to forget yesterday and to think not at all about tomorrow; merely existing for the moment is about as much as one can handle—and scarcely that.

But God governs all things by his might and for our good. In his grace, God sees to it that this young man comes to ruin. He sees to it that his money runs out, his money-bought friends run away, his ability to continue on is exhausted. The principle of consequences is God's gift to the perverse and God's warning to all who are tempted to follow the devil's lie: "Just do what you want and you'll be happy!" The supposed freedom offered turns into a witches' brew of disappointment, then pain and loss, then an all but inescapable slavery to helplessness and hopelessness.

Have we not seen it in others, perhaps experienced it in our own lives? Willful sin always begets the opposite of the devil's promise—the principle of consequences cannot be repealed! That's true even when the level of the fall is not as apparent or as deep as that of the youngest son in the parable. It's useful to keep that in mind as we make plans for our use of God's gifts. Think of God's gifts of time and treasure, friends and family, health and physical strength; think of his spiritual blessing of Word and sacraments and the faith God gives us through them. Treasure them all. Cherish them as proof of God's great generosity. But remember as you plan your day that God gave all these things so that you would grow in your realization of his boundless love for you and so that you would grow as well in love for him and in thanksgiving. He gave them all so that you could be a blessing with them to those around you. To squander and waste them is to invite the principle of consequences: What is unappreciated is taken back. What is squandered will be lost. What is selfishly wasted is gone and may never come again.

(Continued on next page.)

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UPCOMING DATES

August 2
Elders

August 9
Church Council



But again, God is gracious to us in our self-inflicted wounds when he causes us to suffer the consequences of our sins. He does that in order to bring us to the point that the youngest son finally reaches. Listen to how that son reasons within himself when he receives what he deserves because of his wickedness. He comes to recognize that he has not only sinned against his father but against God as well. As he considers his life and looks at himself inside and out, he can only despair. He can only expect to die of starvation in the squalor of the pigs, animals abhorred and considered unclean in Jewish law. But he doesn't just look at himself. At length, he looks outside of himself to another; he remembers his father's love for him. And that gives birth to hope. The hope is to be sure, slight. The thought might yet lurk within that his father could say, "You made your bed; now you can lie in it! How could you imagine that such a worthless son as you have been could even be a useful servant? The very sight of you as a servant would be a daily reminder of the pain you have inflicted on me and on the rest of the family."

Most blessed for the son and for the rest of us, the memory of God's love and grace triumphs over despair. May it ever be so when we look inside of ourselves and find so many reasons for disgust to the point of despair! May it ever be that with longing we seek the Father's face and yearn once more to hear his voice!

For look at that father in the parable. That he would forget about his son didn't occur to him. With longing he looked each day down the road, hoping against hope that the boy would return. When he saw the son coming, he did not wait for the boy to come to him and grovel before him. Rather, without waiting, he runs to welcome his son home. He pays no heed to the unwashed stench of the pigs that covered the rags the boy now wears. He wraps his arms around him and will not let him go. Then—how amazing—there was no reproach, no angry lecture.

There it is for us every time we make confession in church. There it is for us every time we lower and then raise our eyes to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, . . . forgive!" He has been waiting for us. He has been looking and longing for our return. No word of "Not you again!" No scold. Not even a "This is the last time; once more and you're out for good!" Instead, there is the washing water of Baptism that never ceases to cleanse from the filth of the pigpen. Instead, there is the banquet of salvation—Jesus himself in the feast from the altar to take away the bitter taste of guilt. Instead, there is the embrace of the Father's love in the Word of pardon and peace. None of it ever gets old. None of it ever wears out.

Thanks be to God that he brings us to pain and loss when we squander his blessings in selfish service only to self. By pain and loss God shows the devil up for the liar that he is when he promises us happiness and satisfaction away from the Father's house. Thanks be to God that he brings us to look inside of ourselves to see what we have deserved and then turns us back to look outside of ourselves to him for relief and pardon. Thanks be to God that in answer to our despair, he gives us the sure and certain promise of grace in his Word and evidence of his love in the sacraments. (Adapted for use at Immanuel, from Daniel Deutschlander, *On Giving Advice to God*, pp.122-124)

Season of Pentecost Divine Service Themes

On the first two Sundays in August, we finish our services under the overall theme of: **What Makes Christians Different.**

The Bible says Christians are different. Christians are people who believe in Jesus as their Savior. But they often look the same as those who do not believe in Jesus. How are Christians different? The answer is often something internal, attitudes or perspectives that come only from the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and sacrament. Ultimately, Christians are people who run to Christ for forgiveness because they have failed to live perfect lives. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to do all the things that Jesus says Christians do, things that make Christians different.

August Worship

- August 2nd – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Trust God to Provide
 - The hardest times to trust God are the times we need him most. It's easier to trust God when your job is going great, your health is fine, your relationships are fine, and your family is good. It's easier to trust God when the sun is shining, but what happens when your life is suddenly overshadowed by dark days?

When tragedy strikes, we may wonder if God continues to care for us. At those times, Christians do not despair like those who have no hope. Instead, Christians focus on certain foundational facts. We are chosen and adopted as God's dear children. God provides us innumerable spiritual blessings and promises us an eternity of peace and joy. If we recognize those spiritual blessings, how can we doubt that God will give us everything we truly need at the right time? Christians trust God to provide.

- August 9th – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Answer Doubt with Faith
 - Wherever faith clings to the promises of God, doubt is always lingering. Doubt asks the serpent's garden question, "Did God really say?" People doubt God's care, God's promises, or God's providence.

The answer to doubt is not found in loud, dramatic demonstrations. The true answer to doubt is found in the still small voice of our Savior God whispering to us in his Word. Through Word and sacrament, Christ reaches out to us with nail-scarred hands, proof of his great love. Jesus gently says, "Why did you doubt?" Our faith is restored. Christians answer doubt with faith.

On August 16th, we will begin a new focus entitled **Unexpected Truths**. The opening lines of the United States Declaration of Independence boldly assert that certain truths are “self-evident”—truths accessible to human reason and widely recognized by observation of the world. Among these are that all people are created equal and possess unalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The founders appealed to principles they believed reasonable people could recognize simply by reflecting on human nature and justice. These truths were meant to be obvious, clear to the mind, and persuasive in the public square.

Lutherans, however, note that the most important truths revealed in the Bible are not self-evident at all. In fact, they frequently appear surprising or even contrary to human expectations. Scripture teaches that humanity is not naturally good but deeply sinful. It declares that salvation cannot be achieved through human effort but comes entirely by God’s grace. Most unexpected of all is the message that God brings forgiveness and eternal life through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

Biblical truth is revealed by God rather than discovered by reason alone. While some truths may seem obvious to human judgment, the truths of the Bible are often unexpected.

- August 16th – Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost – The Church Is for All People
 - “All are welcome!” Is that true at our church? Or is church meant only for people of the right heritage who behave the right way, “good church folk”? Is it conceivable that a stranger could walk into church unexpectedly and for some reason you would ask yourself, “What is someone like that doing here?” Or perhaps you ask that question about yourself. “There seem to be godly people here. I’m not like them. Do I really belong?”

Today Jesus shows us that the Church is for all people. All of us—regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or social status—have the same problem of sin. And we all have the same Savior. Anyone who comes to Christ’s Church and cries out “Lord, have mercy!” is welcome.

- August 23rd – Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – The Son of Man Is God
 - Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?” It’s the most important question in the world, and it is a question every human being must answer. The expected answer may be dead wrong. Some in Jesus’ day thought he was John the Baptist. Some thought he was the prophet Elijah who had come back from the dead. Today plenty of people believe that Jesus existed. They think that Jesus was a wise teacher or a role model for love. Both answers are expected. Both miss the main point.

Jesus is a real human being, the Son of Man. He is also Lord and Savior, the Son of the living God. This unexpected truth is the core of saving faith.

- August 30th – Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Cross Comes before Crown
 - Some churches teach that if a person follows God, God responds by granting prosperity and peace, as would only be expected. Today we see how that is nonsense. The Bible explains that if we are part of the Church of God, we will have bear crosses. Believers suffer in this world, sometimes just because they are believers.
Why bother? We carry our crosses in gratitude for Jesus carrying his cross, one too heavy for us because it was weighted down with our sin. We carry our crosses because we know that in those moments of struggle, we are forced to turn to Christ and rely on his strength. This is the unexpected path, the one Jesus himself walked: the cross comes before the crown.

County Fair Volunteers

Immanuel will have a booth at the Kandiyohi County Fair, August 5-8. We are looking for volunteers to take a shift or more sitting at our booth and handing out materials. There is a signup sheet in the Narthex. Please indicate how much time you would be willing to be there. Thank you for your help!

Thank You

The evangelism committee would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped at our community meal last month by making cookies, helping to set up, helping to serve and helping to clean up. We served just short a hundred people a hot dog meal and shared information about our congregation.

From the Dennis Krueger Family

We have no words to describe the love and support shown our whole family by so many. We want to thank all who attended the visitation, funeral, or burial and those who shared memories, offered prayers, brought food, sent flowers, or reached out with words of comfort, and encouragement. Thank you for showing our family an abundance of love in helping us celebrate a life well lived and a faith well placed. In our Savior’s promises, the family of Dennis Krueger.

From the Tom Jurgenson Family

Can hardly believe it’s been five months since Tom went home to Jesus, to his Mom and Dad, and the rest of his family. I’m sure they are doing a lot of singing! Thank you for all the love and support you gave us, through all the ups and downs. It meant a lot to us. And when you came to sing at Bill and Christina’s—pure love!!! Thank you also for the lunch after the funeral. I can’t thank you enough! I love you all! --Patti Jurgenson

Thursday Services

If your summer plans take you away for the weekend, remember that there is a service on Thursday evenings. The Thursday services will be the same as the Sunday that follows. The final Thursday service for the summer will be on September 3rd.

Christian Life Ministries Baby Bottle Fundraiser

Thank you to all who help support Christian Life Ministries. We received \$659.50 for this mission.

Church Picnic

A church picnic will be held on Sunday, September 13th, at 11:30 a.m. Pulled pork sandwiches, juice and water and tableware will be provided. Members are asked to bring a side dish and/or dessert to pass. Please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex if you plan to attend.

Sunday School Classes

Instruction in Bible history will begin on Sunday, September 13th. The children will meet in the Sanctuary at 10:30 a.m.

Confirmation Classes

Instruction in God's Word for 5th through 8th graders following the outline of the Small Catechism will begin on September 16th. On that night, we will begin with a meeting with parents and children at 6:30 p.m. Parents, watch for a letter with more details.

Wednesday Bible Class

Class will meet on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. beginning on September 16th. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Church Directory—Exciting News!

Our church has decided it's time for a new pictorial church directory. Our dates for photography will be October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Each sitting will receive an 8x10 photo and a pictorial directory. You will have the opportunity to purchase additional pictures and also Christmas cards if you want. Watch the bulletin for scheduling information starting the end of August.

Lawn Mowing

A sign-up sheet for the lawn mowing is posted in the narthex. Please consider helping out. If you have any questions about using the lawn mower or getting into the shed, please speak with Scott Claussen, Jim Buffington or pastor.

QR Code for Online Giving



Church Council Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2026

Members Present: Jim Buffington, Aaron Butenhoff, Matt Sindelir, Pastor, Justin Kannas, Michael Ziebell

MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 10:45 a.m. Opened with the Lord's Prayer.

Agenda: MMSP to accept the agenda as presented

Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the May 10, 2026 council minutes as presented

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Chairman's Report: No Report.

Elders Report: No Report.

Trustees Report:

- Parsonage mailbox was hit by a car. Person that hit the mailbox will pay for replacement.
- Trees on west border of church property are dying. Will be taken care of during fall cleanup.
- Have been getting good volunteering for lawn mowing. Thanks to all who have helped.

Financial Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the Financial Secretary's report as presented.

Treasurer's Report: MMSP to accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

Planned Giving Committee Report: No Report.

Church IT/AV Committee: Todd and Kelly met. Worked on entering files.

Pastor's Report:

- Pastor will be away June 22 – 25. Will be available in case of emergency.
- Pastor is considering taking vacation sometime in August.
- The three churches on Highway 212 have voted to combine into one church. See pastor if needing more information.

Old Business and Action Committees

No Report.

New Business

- Pastor and Aaron went to 2026 Minnesota District Convention at MLC College in New Ulm. Aaron has 12 committee reports, updates, and ministry updates if anyone is interested in seeing them. Information is also available at welsmn.org.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- July 12, 2026 after Bible class
- July 19, 2026 Voters meeting after Bible class
- August 9, 2026 after Bible class

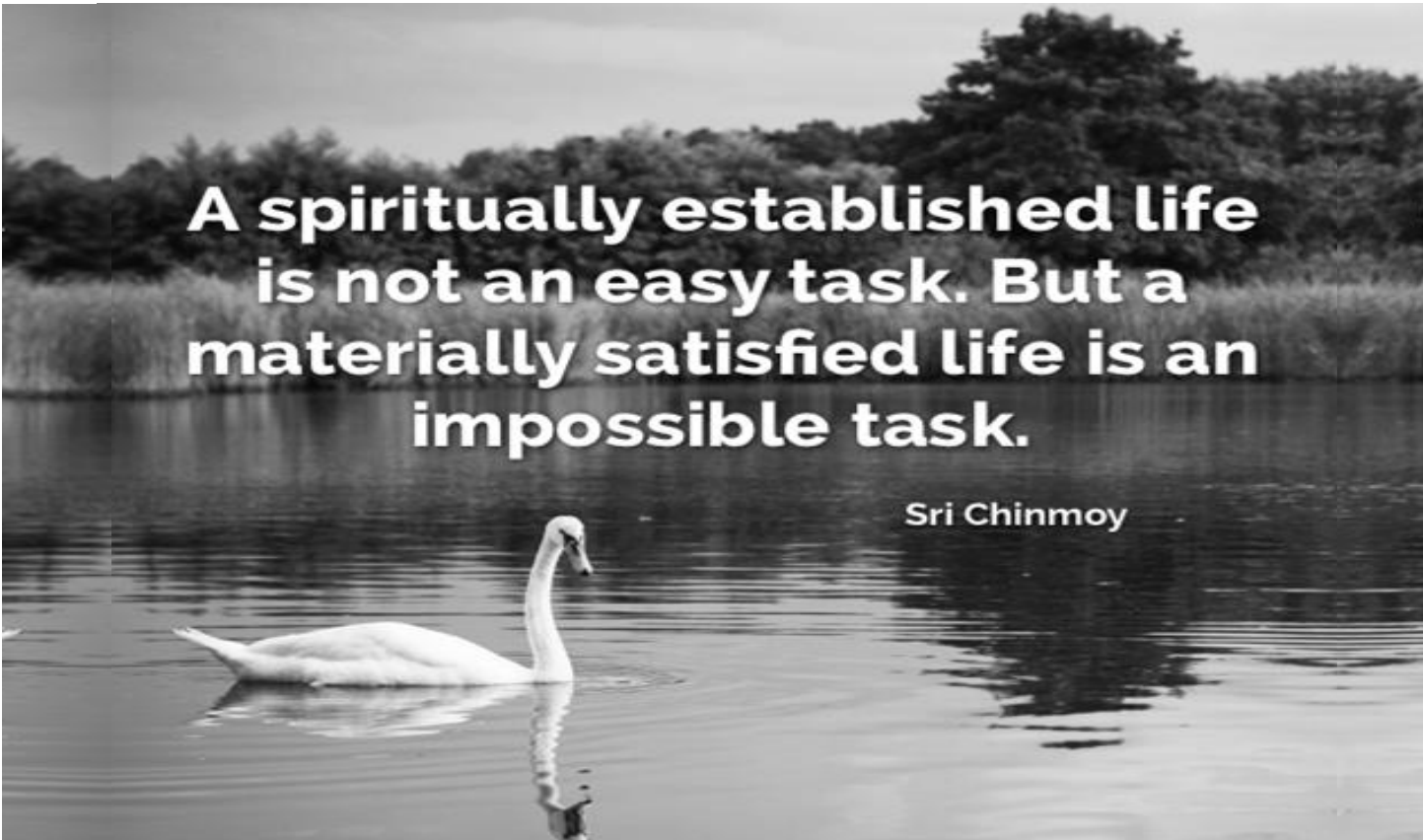
Pastor closed with blessing and the meeting adjourned at 11:05 p.m.

Respectfully,
Scott Claussen, Recording Secretary

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



**A spiritually established life
is not an easy task. But a
materially satisfied life is an
impossible task.**

Sri Chinmoy