



MAY/JUNE 2018

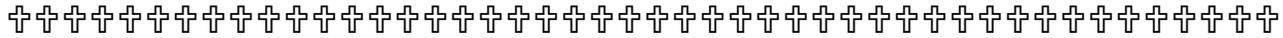


St. John's Lutheran Church
Burt, Iowa 50522
Phone: 515-924-3344
www.stjohnsburt.org

Oh that you would read the heavens and come down
that the mighty mountains might quake at your presence...
Be not so terribly angry, O Lord,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.
Isaiah 64: 1,9

Rev. Thomas Cowell
Pastor
Phone: 515-924-3388

"Telling the good News about Jesus-In Burt, Iowa, and the World"



Whistling While You Work: Graduation Day and God's Plan for Your Life According to the Book of Ecclesiastes

The month of May is the month of graduations. Graduation day is a big deal. It's a big deal for the students who worked hard to complete their classwork and pass their tests. It's a big deal for parents and grandparents who are proud of their child's accomplishments. Graduation day is a day for celebration, but it can also be a time for personal reflection – both for the ones graduating and for the ones looking back to their own graduation day. It's at times like this that we ask ourselves hard questions like: "Have I done enough? Are my accomplishments good enough? Could I have done more?" For Christians these questions can easily turn into: "Have I done enough to please God? Am I doing what God wants of me? Am I following God's plan for my life?"

Questions like these can lead one into despair. The answer to any "am I doing" type of question in relation to God will always have a negative answer. No, you are not doing enough for God. No, you will not please God if you do more. No, you will never know that you are following God's plan for your life by looking at what you are doing.

If you don't believe me, just ask King Solomon. If anyone could ever suppose he did enough to please God it was Solomon. Solomon was the smartest, richest, greatest king of his day. Solomon was the best at everything he did, from building houses and vineyards, to acquiring flocks of sheep and concubines. Yet here is what King Solomon concluded of all his great works:

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. (Ecclesiastes 1:2-11)

Solomon answers his own question "what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" with a definitive: "absolutely nothing." Instead of wondering if he did enough or was good enough, Solomon cuts to the chase and concludes that those questions just don't matter because with enough time all his works would come to nothing. But does that mean that we work for nothing? If the works of our hands are here one day and gone the next does that mean we should just give up, quit trying, stop working altogether?

Interestingly, the answer Solomon provides in the book of Ecclesiastes is no, you shouldn't stop your work! If you read the book of Ecclesiastes carefully you come to find that Solomon's opening question, "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun" is more of a riddle than a rhetorical question. The answer to the

P
A
R
I
S
H

M
E
S
S
E
N
G
E
R

riddle is this: yes it's true that in the end man gains nothing from the work of his hands... and that's just fine. For as difficult as this is for our hyper-capitalist minds to process, Solomon leads us to see that the reason we work is not primarily to produce or accomplish anything. Rather Solomon says:

Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. (Eccl. 5:18-20)

According to Solomon we work because we have been blessed by God with work to do. God has given us all a certain lot in this life by which we can put food on our table and help out our fellow man. Our only God-given instruction, or we could say plan for our life, when it comes to our jobs is to eat and drink and find joy in our work every day.

Whether your job makes you a whole pile of money or you're a mother whose job doesn't pay at all, whether you have a doctorate degree or just finished high school, whether you work in the big city or on the family farm, God is pleased with the work you are doing because God has given you that work to do as a gift. If someday you decide to get more education or get a different job God will be pleased with you then too, provided you see that work as a gift from His hand and you find joy in doing it. Now, this doesn't mean you're not going to have bad days and hard days and days not quite filled up with joy, but we are living in a sinful world after all. The point is that your worth as a human being and the value of your accomplishments isn't measured on what you can or cannot do. Your worth is measured by God and how He chooses to bless you, especially by how he blesses you through the forgiveness of Jesus when you forget to see your life and work as a gift from Him. This means that if you are living and working according to God's commands and promises and finding joy in the gifts God gives you then wherever you are or whatever you are doing you are following God's plan for your life.

Therefore don't get too worked up this graduation day about measuring your accomplishments or about asking if you've done enough. Just celebrate the day and the degree and the education it represents as a gift from God. Graduation day is one special day in the midst of all the days that you do the work our Lord has given you to do. "For there is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find joy his work. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God (Eccl. 2:24)."

Pastor Thomas Cowell
Easter, Anno Domini 2018



MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 - Boyd Shipler
- 4 - Christian Bierstedt
- 5 - Emily Loken
- 6 - Michail Aaron
- 7 - Phillip McFarland
- 7 - Mary Melick
- 8 - Meghan Burbank
- 8 - Rosann Shipler
- 9 - Steve Madsen
- 11 - Reid Briggs
- 13 - Kim Koestler
- 19 - Jesse Fitzgerald
- 20 - John Bowman
- 20 - Angela Strait
- 27 - Terry Briggs
- 27 - Michael Eimers
- 28 - Barbara Thilges
- 29 - Roger Evans
- 31 - Jacob Fox

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 8 - Taylor Lynn Parsons
- 9 - Brooklyn Griffin
- 9 - William Griffin
- 9 - Joan Koestler
- 14 - Caelum Blocker
- 16 - Dean Larson
- 16 - Gordon Oleson
- 17 - Alasha Heneen
- 17 - Mary Lou Marlow
- 17 - Gail (Sue) Person
- 18 - Jim Struecker
- 22 - Jacob Haase
- 25 - Shirlee Alt
- 26 - Carolyn Faber
- 28 - Jillian Bowman



SPECIAL SENIORS

Joan Koestler - June 9

Kids of the Kingdom Preschool

Kids of the Kingdom finished up their 2017-2018 school year. Although we may have been small in numbers we accomplished so much through the year! We thank the church community with all your involvement in the various fundraisers by Kids of the Kingdom. Looking forward to another year of preschool!

Kids of the Kingdom preschool will once again be in session for 2018-2019. Jessie Parsons will be our teacher and we are taking applications for enrollment for 3 & 4 yr. olds. Contact Jessie at 515-320-0501 or the church office at 515-924-3344.

Ladies Aid

St John's LWML met April 5 at 1:30 for the LWML Day of Prayer. Mission Grants was led by Pastor Cowell with members reading Mission Grant Stories.1

1. Mercy Meals of Siouxland, Sioux city, Iowa
2. Mercy HOUse fo Women and Children, Flint, MI
3. LCMS Ministry of Armed Forces, Operation Barnabas
4. Tanzania Sewing Center
5. Mission Central, Mapleton, IA
6. Lutheran Childrens Books, worldwide
7. Christian Hope Through Mass Media, LHM, Egypt
8. NOLA 4H, New Orleans - post Hurricane Katrina

Pastor Cowell gave a prayer after each story. We concluded with the Lord Prayer. The offering was for missionary Mike Paul in Taiwan.

The secretary and Treasurers reports were given. A thank you note from the Kossuth County Care Team was read.

The college students were remembered with gift certificates.

Bev Skadburg gave a report on the Zone board meeting at Immanuel Lotts Creek. The Spring Rally will be at St. Pauls in Garner. The speaker will be a staff member at Waldorf. Esther volunteered to do May birthdays. The birthday song was sung for Esther Christensen. Meeting closed with the table prayer. Hostess was Mary Shiplier-Oleson.

Caradene Parsons - secretary



Confirmation April 29, 2018

Christian Michael Bierstedt

Born: May 4, 2004
Baptism: June 6, 2004
at St. John's Lutheran Church,
Burt, Iowa
Parents: Michael and Amy Bierstedt
Sponsors: Jess and Chevelle Hutchinson

Confirmation Verse:

If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."
1 Peter 4:16

Nicholas Ray Christensen

Born: January 23, 2004
Baptized: February 29, 2004
at St. John's Lutheran
Burt, Iowa
Parents: Clark and Allison Christensen
Sponsors: Dan and Suzanne Bryan

Confirmation Verse:

"Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith." 1 John 5:4

Cameron Michael Haase

Born: April 5, 2002
Baptism: April 21, 2002
at St. John's Lutheran Church
Burt, Iowa
Parents: David & Lisa Haase
Shelley Haase
Sponsors: Jim and Beth Cejka

Confirmation Verse:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

Alasha Jean Heenan

Born: June 17, 2004
Baptism: October 17, 2014
at Presbyterian Church
Lone Rock, Iowa
Parents: Chris and Amanda Heyes
Joshua David Heenan
Sponsors: Tery Kinseth, Cody Holldorf
Debbie Meyer, Karmen O'Rourke

Confirmation Verse:

"Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day." Psalm 96:2

Jay Michael Heinen

Born: October 12, 2003
Baptism: November 2, 2003
at Immanuel Lutheran Church
Lotts Creek
Parents: Chad and Jill Heinen
Sponsors: Stacy Vaske
Shane Heinen

Confirmation Verse:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." Hebrews 12:1

Gabrielle Michael Kelly

Born: November 23, 2003
Baptized: December 14, 2003
At St. John's Lutheran
Burt, Iowa
Parents: Tony and Stefanie Hatten
Patrick Kelly
Sponsors: Kevin and Sara Converse

Confirmation Verse:

"The Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lord, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God." Deuteronomy 10:17

Our Graduate

Aly Bierstedt
North Union High
School
June 1, 2018 at 7 pm

