

# The Newsletter

Zion Lutheran Church & School  
Hastings, Nebraska  
April – 2019

## If you can't say something nice... repent!

Throughout the years of my pastorate here at Zion, I've encouraged members here to speak to each other out of love for each other. I think I've even used this column to encourage people, when speaking to others, to say (at least in their minds if not aloud) "Because I love you..." and then say what they have to say.

I've come to realize, however, that some have interpreted that to mean, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." The result has been that many people stifle their thoughts and bite their tongues, not sharing what's really on their minds, thus giving a false understanding of how things really are.

Dear friends in Christ Jesus, during the month of April we begin a brand new season of the church year, Easter! Lent continues into April, until on April 21, we shed the penitential restraints of the Lenten season and break forth with the holy joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead! And we'll continue to celebrate that resurrection for seven more weeks.

Actually, every Sunday of the church year is a little Easter, in which we celebrate Jesus' resurrection. So we never stop celebrating it. In fact, is there a day that goes by that we don't celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead?

You see, the Lenten season that we're in right now is a prolonged example of what we baptized Christians go through daily. It's called returning to our baptisms in contrition and repentance.

Just as we began the season of Lent in sorrow and contrition, acknowledging our sin, we come to God daily in sorrow and contrition, acknowledging our sin. In Lent, that acknowledgment of sin culminates in seeing Jesus on the cross, suffering and dying for that sin. And as I just said, on Easter we shed the penitential restraints of Lent and break forth with holy joy celebrating the resurrection.

And the same thing goes for our daily return to our baptisms. How does Luther put it in his Small Catechism? (*Baptizing with water*) indicates that *the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and*

*repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

The proof text for that doctrine is Romans 6:4 "*We were therefore buried with Him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*"

That new life, of course, will manifest itself in love for God and love for our neighbor in the various activities we participate in daily, including our interactions and conversations with each other.

But what if it doesn't? What if I find myself unable to speak to my neighbor in love? When that happens, you need to ask yourself why that is. What sin is standing in the way? What particular sin is preventing you from saying what needs to be said in a loving way?

Are you the sinner whose sin against your neighbor is preventing you from speaking in love? If so, read Matthew 5:23 and heed Jesus' words about being reconciled with someone who has something against you.

Are you the one who has been sinned against? And is that what's keeping you from speaking to your neighbor in love? Then look at Matthew 18:15-18, and heed Jesus' words about gaining your brother or sister.

And in all of this, return to your baptism in contrition and repentance, knowing that your refusal to love your neighbor is a sin... a sin that Jesus suffered and died for... a sin that Jesus rose from the dead for... a sin that drowned and died in the waters of your baptism... a sin that you died to. And now, raised to new life, don't bite your tongue and stifle your speech. Speak to your neighbor... in love.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Warneke