

October



2022 Monthly Bible Reading

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1 1 Corinthians 1
2 1 Corinthians 2	3 1 Corinthians 3	4 1 Corinthians 4	5 1 Corinthians 5	6 1 Corinthians 6	7 1 Corinthians 7	8 1 Corinthians 8
9 1 Corinthians 9	10 1 Corinthians 10	11 1 Corinthians 11	12 1 Corinthians 12	13 1 Corinthians 13	14 1 Corinthians 14	15 1 Corinthians 15
16 1 Corinthians 16	17 2 Corinthians 1	18 2 Corinthians 2	19 2 Corinthians 3	20 2 Corinthians 4	21 2 Corinthians 5	22 2 Corinthians 6
23 2 Corinthians 7	24 2 Corinthians 8	25 2 Corinthians 9	26 2 Corinthians 10	27 2 Corinthians 11	28 2 Corinthians 12	29 2 Corinthians 13
30 Romans 1	31 Romans 2					

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Pastoral Reflection
Galatians 5, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians 1
Pastor John
(cont from last week in September)

It is important to remember that work does not always mean paid work. Many forms of work—cooking, cleaning, repairing, beautifying, raising children, coaching youth, and thousands of others—meet the needs of family or community but do not receive remuneration. Others—the arts come to mind—may be offered free of charge or at prices too low to support those who do them. Nonetheless, they are all work.

Christians are not necessarily expected to earn money, but to work to support themselves, their families, and the church and community.

Given the importance of work, Christians are to be the best workers they can be. Failure to work with excellence may bring the church into disrepute. Many Cynics in the Greco-Roman world abandoned their jobs, and this behavior was widely regarded as disgraceful.^[10] Paul is aware that when Christians evade their responsibility to work, the standing of the church as a whole is undermined. In [1 Thessalonians 4:11–12](#), Paul is evidently concerned that society is getting a wrong view of the church. In the context of the Greco-Roman world his concern makes a lot of sense, for what was happening in the Thessalonian church not only fell below society’s standards for decency, but it also made the charitable Christians look gullible and foolish. Paul does not want Christians to fall below society’s standards in regard to work, but rather to exceed them. Moreover, by failing to fulfill their proper role within society, these Christians are in danger of stirring up more anti-Christian rumors and resentment. Paul is eager that those who persecute the church should have no legitimate grounds for their hostility. With respect to work, Christians should be model citizens. By placing the idlers under discipline, the church would effectively be distancing itself from their defective behavior.

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2 1 Corinthians 2	3 1 Corinthians 3	4 1 Corinthians 4	5 1 Corinthians 5	6 1 Corinthians 6	7 1 Corinthians 7	8 1 Corinthians 8
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Pastoral Reflection

I Cor 2- 1 Cor 8

The Reverend Rani Abdulmasih

“One holy, catholic, and apostolic Church”

When we confess our faith using the Nicene Creed we say: *“I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”* Many have asked why in a Lutheran church we use a confession that states we believe in a “catholic” church? This word “catholic” is very important and it does not mean “Roman Catholic,” nor does it have a reference to a denominational identity but rather it is an affirmation of the universality and unity of the church that we believe in. When we say “catholic” we mean “universal.” The unity of the Christian Church and its existence for the sake of humanity, and all of humanity, is at the core of what Church is all about.

We believe that the church is “holy” and set apart for a special purpose. A church that has been sanctified by the blood of Jesus. We come before the Lord as sinners seeking forgiveness and redemption. It is the righteousness of Jesus that makes us holy. I love the quote that says, “the path to Jesus is not holiness, but the path to holiness is Jesus!” We cannot achieve righteousness on our own, but Christ becomes our righteousness.

And as an “apostolic” church we are founded on the confession of the apostles! They believed in Jesus, in His death on the cross for our sins, and in His Resurrection, and that He will come again to judge the living and the dead! We continue in that same faith as a Church together.

The identity as well as the unity of the Christian Church has always been under attack throughout the ages. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 says this: *“⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?”* Claiming our denominational identity can be a wonderful thing when we celebrate the various traditions, liturgies, and expressions of our faith. But it cannot come at the expense of our unity as the One Church, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Paul continues: *“⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.”*

The Church belongs to Christ alone! We are followers of Jesus, and Jesus alone! We are Christians who belong to one Savior, have one faith, and one baptism! Our unity in Christ as the Church universal is a sign of our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Our foundation is Jesus and we have become temples of the Holy Spirit: *“¹⁶ Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?”*

I pray today that you will continue to rejoice in your unity in Christ as the one body, as His Church, no matter the denomination, we claim His name above every name! Amen!

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9 1 Corinthians 9	10 1 Corinthians 10	11 1 Corinthians 11	12 1 Corinthians 12	13 1 Corinthians 13	14 1 Corinthians 14	15 1 Corinthians 15
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Pastoral Reflection

1 Corinthians 9-15

Pastor Bruce

I'm excited to be talking about Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, because it is a letter filled with wonderful advice for a church he established in Corinth; a church he loved; and a church that did some things right, but came up short on so many other things. He has much to say to us as individual Christians as well to us as members of a church. So, let's dive in!

1 Corinthians 9: This chapter begins with Paul asserting his rights as an apostle. In the early church, the 11 apostles had all spent 3 years with the earthly Jesus, and so there was some reluctance to see Paul—who not only persecuted the church, but had “only” a spiritual encounter with Jesus, as an apostle. But here's the thing—in the end, Paul says (v 12) “But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.” For Paul, the only thing that matters is preaching the gospel. He goes on to say that his freedom is for serving others, and he will do all he can to identify with anybody who needs the gospel—to the Jews, he will become like one under the law, to the weak he will speak of his weakness. Can we look past ourselves to do anything to be sure the gospel is preached through us?

1 Corinthians 10: In this chapter, Paul begins by speaking about how the sinfulness of the early Israelites serves as a warning to not be tempted by idols, or “setting our hearts on evil things as they did.” He makes the statement that (v 13) “...God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.” This statement sounds false, but if we face temptations WITHOUT God's help, then it feels that we are being tempted beyond our ability. With God, all things are possible. At the heart of our faith is our interconnectedness, which we celebrate in our communion: (v 17) “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.” Paul finishes this chapter by telling the Corinthians they shouldn't get caught up in eating this or eating that—unless it will scandalize a believer, then we should use discretion.

1 Corinthians 11: This chapter holds the earliest account of what Jesus did at the Last Supper, since it was written about 50 A.D. and the gospels were later. But Paul shares this because of abuses that are taking place when the Corinthian church gathers to celebrate communion. At that time, communion was celebrated as part of a larger “pot-luck supper,” but divisions among the community were making this supper a mockery of their Christian faith—they weren't sharing, they were beginning before everyone was there, and so this supper just accentuated the differences between the rich and poor, the haves and have nots. Paul told them to eat supper at home before they came, and when they gathered before communion, “examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup (v 28) to be sure they were worthy before God. For me, as a Catholic growing up, this developed into the practice of going to confession before going to Mass. Additionally, the strange beginning to this chapter about head coverings, led to requiring women to cover their heads and men to not when attending Mass. The meat of this chapter is for each of us to prepare our hearts before receiving communion.

October



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Pastoral Reflection

1 Corinthians 9-15 (cont.)

Pastor Bruce

1 Corinthians 12: This chapter (and the next) is among the most beautiful and quoted of all of Paul's writing. Chapter 12 returns to what Paul said earlier about how through the one loaf and one cup we are one body, and his imagery in this chapter is imaginative and memorable. There are really two things Paul talks about in this chapter:

- In the first 11 verses, Paul makes it clear that each of us have unique gifts to bring to the church, but that none of us can claim our gift is more important than another's gift, because all are given to us by the Holy Spirit. Paul goes on to enumerate those gifts of wisdom, knowledge, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues. These and other gifts are all necessary for God's saving work in the church.
- For the rest of this chapter, Paul uses the image of the human body to point out how we are all different (as he said in the first 11 verses), but a human body needs all the distinct parts to be whole. The way he has the parts of the body speaking to each other is hilarious, and yet it is the way we speak to each other in our divisions.

In the end, this chapter is about unity in diversity and has a lot to say to us today who live in such divided times.

1 Corinthians 13: I'm willing to bet that all of us have been to at least one wedding where this chapter on love was read. It's a beautiful chapter that covers the many layers of what true love looks like. As you read this chapter, examine the love you have for each other, and for most of us, we can check off some of these attributes that we easily do, and others that remain a challenge. I think it's safe to say that none of us can read this chapter and say that we have learned how to love in all these ways. This is the first account where the three virtues of faith, hope and love are listed (Thomas Aquinas called these the "theological virtues"), and although Paul says that "the greatest of these is love," the Christian life without any of these three is an incomplete Christian life.

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Pastoral Reflection

1 Corinthians 9-15 (cont.)

Pastor Bruce

1 Corinthians 14: This strange chapter is about speaking in tongues. Apparently, in the Corinthian church, those who spoke in tongues felt they were better than everybody else, and this was yet another thing causing divisions in the church. Paul himself did not speak in tongues, and was worried about what “speaking in tongues” looked like to unbelievers who were coming into the church for the first time. So, he made it clear, that not the speakers, but the interpreters, were the most important people (kind of odd, since he had just said in chapter 12 that none are more important than any other), but he’s trying to “level the playing field” by taking the “tongue speakers” down a notch. Paul ends this chapter by talking about their public worship, and how prophesy is more important than speaking in tongues. His words about women are contradicted in other places where he acknowledges the leadership of women in certain churches, but in the end, Paul wants unity among the Corinthians (and us) when they (we) worship together.

1 Corinthians 15: Our final chapter holds some of Paul’s most important writing, and that has to do with resurrection. If we think that resurrection deniers are a modern, scientific phenomenon, then just read this chapter. Try not to get caught up in the details of what the resurrected body will look like, or the order in which people will be resurrected. The heart of this chapter (and in fact our entire gospel) is this : “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scripture, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” I included this entire passage from verses 3-8 because scholars believe that most of this was probably an early creed—perhaps the earliest creed. Notice the similarity of wording to our Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed. Paul says that resurrection is at the heart of the Christian message because (v 14) “...if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” The Christian faith—especially our hope—comes to nothing without Jesus’ resurrection. As you read this chapter, ask God to increase your faith in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, which in turn, will increase your ability to preach the good news of the gospel.

October



2022 Monthly Bible Reading

16 1 Corinthians 16	17 2 Corinthians 1	18 2 Corinthians 2	19 2 Corinthians 3	20 2 Corinthians 4	21 2 Corinthians 5	22 2 Corinthians 6
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Pastoral Reflection

I CORINTHIANS 16—2 CORINTHIANS 6

Pastor Bob Knepel

Paul brings the good news of Jesus to address the ethical problems of a congregation.

I Cor.16:1-4 The offering/gathering is for the Christians in Jerusalem who are being effected by famine or persecution.

16:5-24 v.20 *A holy kiss*. This is the origin of our “sharing the peace” in worship. In the Middle East it is still common for both men & women to greet w/a kiss.

2 Cor. In this letter Paul is not stern. He publicly calls for the repentant whom he had harshly criticized for his public immorality (I Corinthians 5) to be welcomed back as a brother (II Corinthians 2:5-11).

Paul is being accused of not being an authentic apostle. The basis of this accusation was two fold. Paul had not traveled with Jesus nor with his 12 disciples during Christ’s earthly ministry and has therefore never had a face encounter with Jesus. The critics dismiss Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus as religious mania 2 Corinthians 5:13. The other part of the accusation was that Paul was pocketing part of the collection being taken up for the Jerusalem disciples. The undercurrent of that accusation runs beneath these first six chapters. Paul remains loving and Christ-centered. He points to his own life style in their plain sight and in the knowledge of the Corinthians.

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23 2 Corinthians 7	24 2 Corinthians 8	25 2 Corinthians 9	26 2 Corinthians 10	27 2 Corinthians 11	28 2 Corinthians 12	29 2 Corinthians 13
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Pastoral Reflection
2 Corinthians 7 – 13
Pastor Patricia Bromberek

There is a lot to unpack in these seven chapters and it is easy to get hung up on Paul defending himself and his ministry.

First I would like to highlight the idea of repentance as discussed in chapter 7. I found the following in notes in my Wesley Study Bible and I am quoting it because, I cannot say it better.

“Repentance first results in conversion, when by faith people acknowledge their sorrow for sin, confess it, and resolve not to sin again. But repentance involves more than confession, and it is more than a one-time event. The resolve not to sin is a lifelong habit which God graciously engenders through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.” Wesley considered the ‘repentance of believers’ bound up with the sanctifying work of God. Good works do not produce true holiness any more than they produce conversion.” Our Christian faith is a journey that brings joy and responsibility to us.

The second thing I would like to bring to your attention is Paul’s take on generosity and giving in chapter 8. Paul calls us to be give as much as we can to those less fortunate. It is interesting, because he does not ask us to give only out of our abundance, but to give as much as we can as long as we are not jeopardizing our own or our family’s well-being. He reminds us that when we give what we can, we will be given what we need when we need it. There is always enough. Paul also reminds us how much God loves a cheerful giver. In this season of hurricane devastation and the holidays coming, it is good to have a reminder to be cheerfully generous with the gifts we have been given to those in need.

The final thing that I want to highlight in these readings is God uses us in our weakness. No matter what our current situation is, there is always a way to serve God and spread the Gospel.

October



2022 Monthly Bible Reading

30 Romans 1	31 Romans 2					
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Pastoral Reflection

Romans 1-7

Pastor John

We introduce the letter of Paul to the Romans this week. Romans is widely regarded as Paul's most carefully considered, rhetorically sophisticated and theologically important writing composed near the end of his ministry and containing his mature reflections on the Christian faith.

The church in Rome which would become a church of great importance was forming from believers who had been touched by the power of the gospel. But they did not appear to have had the leadership of the Lord's emissaries –those who walked with and had been handpicked by Jesus. Paul recognized this and felt the need to articulate the whole gospel to this body of believers to prepare them for their missional calling in the world. As you read these verses, read them like you didn't know anything about Paul; because these readers did not know him.

This letter had impact on Christian history especially as a source for the Protestant Reformation. I think that for us today, this letter written to Christians in an ancient city can penetrate our hearts and minds with a beautiful and persuasive view of the power of the gospel!

God is faithful and has been all along as shown by his creation and his covenant people. Then in the gospel stories God ask finally a decisively, and the cross of Jesus. This event for Paul more than anything else displays Jesus' faithfulness to God the father. Jesus and trust in himself completely to God's will. As a result, the good news brings forth faith and hope that those who hear and respond to its elegant message. Because God is faithful, he acts in a most extraordinary way. Somehow in the scandal of the cross, he offered his own son in order to redeem the fallen world.

I think more than anything else, for me, Paul is sounding a sober warning in these verses. God's wrath is here; it is not some far off future event. Paul says that God's wrath is already at work in the world and what is effectively garbage "and draft "policy. God he says, steps aside and gives us over to idolatry, sexual sins, and depraved minds. Human sin and depravity are both its cause-and-effect. You see, we are not only punished for our sins, but we are punished by our sins. If God's salvation consists essentially of his presence with us, then his wrath consists of his absence or separation from us. The bad news is this: God's wrath is real. Without the good news of Jesus, no hope exists.