



In the Hands of the Refiner

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Meditation Upon the Things of God

INTRODUCTION

During Lent we give more time for Scripture reading, prayer and meditation so that our spirit is purified and enriched by God, the life giving food of our inner life. Then the Holy Spirit who resides in our spirit can smoothly guide us. Good works and words will flow from the inner self which is purified and strengthened by Jesus Christ through repentance, the Word of God, and the Sacraments.

1. Our text commands Christians that they engage in meditation:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things." Philippians 4:8

The word translated "meditate" means the habit of thought. We are responsible for what we think and must hold our thoughts to godly and holy standards.

2. The practice of "meditation" by Christians is not something you might hear frequently discussed

- a. It may be that some Christians are simply not aware that they are commanded to "meditate"
- b. It may be that some believe "meditation" belongs solely to the Eastern religions like Hinduism or Buddhism

3. Yet Paul clearly teaches us to "meditate on these things", and "meditation" is certainly a Biblical subject:

- a. Isaac meditated in the field at eventide - Genesis 24:63
- b. Joshua was charged by God to mediate "day and night" - Joshua 1:8
- c. The "blessed man" in Psalms 1 is one who meditates - Psalm 1:1-2
- d. David became wiser than his teachers through meditation - Psalm 119:99
- e. Paul commanded Timothy to "meditate on these things" - 1Timothy 4:15

4. But some questions may come to mind:

- a. WHAT does meditation mean for the Christian?
- b. WHY should we be concerned about making time to meditate?
- c. HOW should we meditate?

I. WHAT IS BIBLICAL MEDITATION?

WHAT MEDITATION IS NOT

1. The kind practiced by many Eastern religions
 - a. Like Hinduism, Buddhism, or Transcendental Meditation
 - b. Where the object is to experience truth, peace, or being, that is "inexpressible"

Christ Lutheran Church

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 Christ Lutheran
Church Duluth

 Christ Lutheran
Church Duluth

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President: Ouitdee Carson
V.P.: Carolyn Lofald
Treasurer: Sandy Carlson

Every Month:
Wednesdays:
4 PM Confirmation
5 PM Youth Bible Study
6:30 PM Adult Bible Study

Mary Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 9:30 AM (Postponed until
further notice)

Esther Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 10:00 AM

Dorcas Circle
Second Tuesday of each
month at 1:00 PM (Postponed
until further notice)

Lutherans for Life
Second Sunday of each month
at 6:30 PM (Postponed until
further notice)

Council Meeting
Second Thursday of each
month at 6:30 PM



Wednesdays in March at 6:30 PM
Join us for Lenten Bible Study:

March 3 "Return from Betrayal" John 18:1-11

March 10: "Return from False Witness" Matthew 26:57-68

March 17: "Return from Denial" Luke 22:54-62

March 24: "Return to the Kingdom of God" John 18:28-38

We will offer coffee and pre-packaged snacks for the attendees.

We will wear masks and be six feet apart.

Holy Week Services (In the Sanctuary)

Beginning Monday, March 29, 2021:

Holy Monday - Midday Prayer Vigil Psalm 121 @ 12:00 PM

Holy Tuesday - Midday Prayer Vigil Psalm 124 @ 12:00 PM

Holy Wednesday - Midday Prayer Vigil Psalm 126 @ 12:00 PM

Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday) - Worship & Communion @ 6:30 PM

(also on Livestream)

Good Friday - Tenebrae Service (The Liturgy of the Shadows) @ 6:30 PM

Holy Saturday - Midday Prayer Vigil Psalm 16 @ 12:00 PM

Resurrection Sunday - Celebration & Worship 9:30 AM

(also on Livestream)



The Father Daughter Ball was held virtually this year. It was the 25th anniversary of the event. If you would like to watch the program, log onto their website - fatherddaughterballduluth.org and click on the link.

2. The kind practiced by "Christian mystics" such as Quakers, and others often found among Catholics and Protestants
 - a. These meditate in order to "experience" God, or to receive some revelation from God
3. Both Eastern and "Christian mystical" meditation usually attempt to empty the mind so as to find or receive truth within (i.e., a "subjective" form of meditation)

B. HOW DO WE MEDITATE UPON THE THINGS OF GOD?

1. To dwell or contemplate on some truth or reality already revealed (i.e., an "objective" form of meditation)
2. To be more specific, the man "after God's Own heart" is one who meditates on:
 - a. The Lord Himself - Psalm 63:6
 - b. His wonderful Works - Psalm 77:12
 - c. His revealed Word - Psalm 119:15,23,48,97-99,148
3. To put it in the words of the apostle Paul, we are to meditate on "things"...
 - a. Things that are "true, noble, just pure, lovely, of good report"
 - b. Things that are of any "**virtue**", and are "praiseworthy"
4. The PURPOSE of such meditation is...
 - a. To nourish man with his understanding of God and His revealed will (not to seek for some previously un-revealed truth)
 - b. To give man spiritual joy and strength through such nourishment - cf. Psalm 1:1-3; Is 40:28-31

So there is a very real difference between "Biblical meditation" and that commonly practiced by many religions!

- 1) Christian meditation dwells on that already revealed in creation or inspired revelation
- 2) Whereas other forms of meditation are seeking some new truth to be revealed

Understanding the difference, why is Biblical meditation so important?

II. REASONS TO MEDITATE UPON THE THINGS OF GOD

A. IT IS A SOURCE OF JOY AND STRENGTH

1. This we have already seen from such passages like Psalm 1:1-2; Isa 40:28-31
2. This alone should motivate us to meditate more often

B. IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR "TRANSFORMATION"

1. The goal of the Christian is to become more like Christ - cf. Romans 8:29
2. This requires a "transformation" - Romans 12:1-2
3. But notice that this is possible only by "renewing the mind" - Romans 12:2
4. This "renewing" is possible only when we "set our minds" on proper things
 - a. On things above
 - b. Not on things on the earth - Colossians 3:1-2
5. Only then, when our minds are "set on things above", will we be successful in completing the "transformation" which includes "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man" - cf. Colossians 3:1-2 with Colossians 3:5-14

C. MANY CHRISTIANS MEDITATE ON THE WRONG THINGS!

1. They "mind the things of the flesh", which leads to "death" and "enmity with God" - cf. Romans 8:5-8

(continued on page 4)

2. Yet even those in the world understand that you cannot be a spiritual person if you "dwell" on carnal things
a. "Recent studies conducted by a Stanford University research team have revealed that 'what we watch' does have an effect on our imaginations, our learning patterns, and our behaviors. First we are exposed to new behaviors and characters. Next, we learn or acquire these new behaviors. The last and most crucial step is that we adopt these behaviors as our own. One of the most critical aspects of human development that we need to understand is the influence of 'repeated viewing' and 'repeated verbalizing' in shaping our future. The information goes in, 'harmlessly, almost unnoticed,' on a daily basis, but we don't react to it until later, when we aren't able to realize the basis for our reactions. In other words, our value system is being formed without any conscious awareness on our part of what is happening!"

(Seeds Of Greatness, Denis Waitley, p. 47-48)

b. "You are what you watch and think." (ibid., p. 45)

c. "If a sixty second commercial, by repeated viewing, can sell us a product, then isn't it possible for a sixty minute soap opera or 'smut-com', by repeated viewing, to sell us a life-style?" (ibid., p. 47)

If Christians are going to succeed, they must set their minds (or meditate) on "the things of the Spirit", or on "things above, where Christ is!" Only then can they with God's help "put off the old man" and "put on the new man".

III. HOW TO MEDITATE UPON THE THINGS OF GOD

A. REMEMBER, YOUR MIND IS AFFECTED BY CASUAL CONTEMPLATION!

1. The first step to proper meditation is to be selective in what you watch and read
2. Fill your mind with positive and spiritual thoughts if you really want to:
 - a. "renew the mind"
 - b. "be transformed"
3. It doesn't have to be restricted to the Bible, as Paul said: "Whatever things..."
 - a. There are novels, movies, television shows, etc., that fall into the category of possessing "virtue" and being "praiseworthy"
 - b. Seek the advice and counsel of other Christians as to what is "of good report"
4. So first let your "casual" contemplation be discriminatory!

B. HEED THE COUNSEL OF THE PSALMS

1. Make the Bible your primary focus for meditation - Psalm 1:2
2. Read it contemplatively every day - Psalm 1:2; 119:15
3. Read it with a prayer in your heart - cf. Psalm 119:18
4. As you read, occasionally read it aloud to yourself
 - a. The Hebrew word in Psalm 1:2 means "to mutter"
 - b. Reading slowly and audibly helps to focus one's mind on the words
5. As you read, you might ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. Is there some truth I should know from this verse?
 - b. How does this passage affect a previously held conviction?
 - c. Is there something I should stop doing in light of this verse?
 - d. Is there a practice I should change?
 - e. Is there a habit I ought to begin?
6. To put it another way: "Hold the Word of God in your heart until it has affected every phase of your life...this is meditation."

CONCLUSION

1. In Psalm 19:14, we find David praying:

"Let the words of mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
"O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

(continued on page 5)

2. What Paul commands us to do in our text ("meditate on these things") is the means by which we can assure that our meditations will be acceptable in the sight of our Lord!
3. If you are not a Christian, or an erring one, then there are some things in particular upon which you ought to meditate:
 - a. What is your standing in God's sight?
 - b. What would happen if you were to die today?
 - c. What do you need to do to be found in the grace of God?
 - d. Why delay any longer?

May God grant you a blessed Lenten season full of reflection, repentance and renewal!

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Gary

March Maintenance Report

Our custodian, Gary, continues to keep busy with cleaning and disinfecting for us. He is very conscientious about our church and our health.

We have green painters' tape on the wood arm rests of the pews and green tape on the cushions as an indicator of where to sit so we can socially distance. This has been working very well.

The Boiler technicians have replaced the three zone valves that had failed. We still noted a lack of heat in the sanctuary. After doing some investigating, we noted that the exhaust fan in the upstairs janitor closet was running; this in turn was pulling the warm air out. The note with the warning "not to use" during the winter had been removed or may have even fallen off over the years. There is now a new note on the switches and by turning these switches off, we now have good heat! We were also schooled on the two heaters in the narthex by the technicians. These do have switches on the inside walls that can be turned off and on, but each of them also has its own thermostat so they can be set and left to run as needed which we will now do. We have been advised to set all the thermostats at one temp and to leave them be. We currently have them at 70 with the cold snap.

Our custodian has been keeping an eye on the pipes under the kitchen sink for us – letting the water trickle and keeping the cupboard doors under the sink open when the temperatures plummet. We may wrap those pipes on the outside wall with some insulation to help avoid having them freeze. The kitchen heater is working well and Gary and our dear secretary Judi installed some cardboard up in the big kitchen exhaust fan to help keep the cold out. There is a note on the switch to not use with the cardboard in place. This has helped a lot to keep the kitchen warm. Our double door refrigerator has failed, showing 47 degrees. A technician from Gartner came out and found a freon leak in the

evaporator coil. The trustees approved that repair. That refrigerator was purchased in 2017.

Our heated slab continues to work well, but on really cold days, it will shut down to concentrate more heat to the building. It only comes on when the sensor notes there is snow. All these safety gizmos are amazing!

We were also blessed to have our dear Glen Nelson make a "Watch your Step" sign to place on the cone at the back entrance of church! Thankful for his gifts!

The heat tape on the roof over the front entry is working great. Peterson Excavating has been plowing and sanding for us when needed. We had the banks pushed back by the field so we do not have a water issue as we did last year when the run off came into the garage. We share the plowing expense with the dental office through our agreement with them.

At the parsonage, we had a leak on the cold water shut off for the washing machine and that was replaced. We will install a water inlet valve for the washing machine as that is leaking on occasion also. The heater in the storage room under the garage is working well now since being fixed and Sue would like to tidy up that room up so they will be able to use it for their storage and some foosball when Pastor and Sue have company. We are still waiting for the window repairs to be completed when the weather warms up. Sue shared how nice the lower level of the parsonage works out when her grandkids come to visit.

We thank Jim for his willingness to shovel and keep the walks and entrances cleared. Looking forward to Easter and hoping we will all be able to celebrate together!

God's blessings,

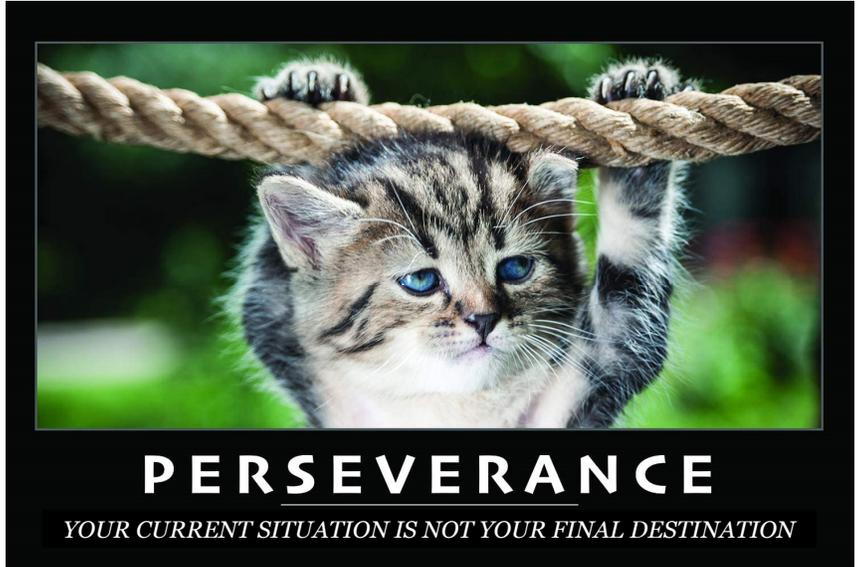
Carolyn

Dear CLC Family and Friends,

ENDURANCE TRAINING

March is here and we can feel spring in the air, especially after that intense cold snap in February. We have been looking forward to a new and better year in 2021; but as we approach the first anniversary of the pandemic shut-downs last March, things have not returned to normal as we hoped. Are you feeling sorrow, frustration, or uncertainty? Do you look at the trouble in the world and wonder how much more you can take? Are you war weary?

In the midst of all this trouble, Our Heavenly Father is calling us to endure just His people have done before. He will encourage us with His love and comfort us in our troubles, but He also disciplines us through trials to refine us. Now is the time to press in and fight the good fight of faith. Don't give up! The peaceful fruit of righteousness is at the end of this struggle. Here is Hebrews 12:1-17.



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, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

We see that God uses struggles as endurance training, and our perseverance produces godly character. Take a few minutes to also read Hebrews 11 to meet the "great cloud of witnesses" who are powerful examples of endurance and faithfulness. God's grace helped them persevere in trouble, and He will do the same for you.

SPRING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES!

CONFIRMATION CLASS ONLINE WEDNESDAYS AT 4PM WITH PASTOR GARY

CLC YOUTH BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS AT 5PM WITH SUE

We're studying the Book of Romans at the parsonage! Invite a friend :)

"RETURN TO THE LORD" WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30PM

Join us Wednesday evenings during Lent as Pastor Gary shares profound and transformational Biblical teaching designed to point us to the Lord and build us up in our most holy faith!

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER FRIDAYS

All women are invited to grow in faith and prayer together with the devotional Bible study "Beloved Apprentice." Copies will be provided at no charge. I will be hosting two times each week:

IN PERSON STUDY Wednesdays at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall

ONLINE Tuesdays at 6:30pm by email invite on Google Meet

You are welcome to attend either study or both - whatever works best for your schedule. Invite a friend! Call 320-815-1561 with your email, to ask questions, or to request a ride.

CLC FOOD SHARE

Thank you for your generous donations and volunteer service for the CLC Food Share. We will continue sharing groceries with school district families the third Wednesday of every month. In March we will start including a mini VBS-in-a-Bag gift for early elementary students. We are also working on an email invitation that includes resource links for parents and fun, educational links for elementary and secondary school family members. March grocery packing is Tuesday 3/16/21 at 6:30pm. Food share distribution is Wednesday 3/17/21 from 11:30am - 12:30pm. Wear green for St. Patrick's Day!

In Christ's love,

Sue

320-815-1561

suedesha@gmail.com

MARCH MISSION OF THE MONTH



**SPIRITUAL
ORPHANS
NETWORK**

Spiritual Orphans Network connects North American believers with indigenous Christians living in former communist and Soviet bloc nations.

As a sending agency, Spiritual Orphans Network (formerly East European Missions Network – EEMN) has placed career missionaries in Poland, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, Albania, and Turkey. We also strive to equip the indigenous Church and lay leadership to serve as missionaries within their own culture. Each summer, short-term mission teams serve with these long-term missionaries and ministry partners. Additionally, SON staff and representatives teach and preach at conferences and conventions throughout the year, all over the European continent and throughout North America.

Please prayerfully consider a donation to this month's chosen mission. You may make checks payable to Christ Lutheran Church. Thank you for your support in our mission "*To know Christ and to make Him known.*"



Beloved Apprentice - IN PERSON

Our in person Bible Study will now be Wednesdays at 10:00 am in Fellowship Hall starting 2/24/21. I have extra study books for new folks. See you in the morning!!

Beloved Apprentice - ONLINE

Our online study will be Tuesdays at 6:30 pm on Google Meet. Start date is Tuesday March 2nd. An invite will be coming soon!

Financial Update

January 2021 Income \$10,615.24

January Expenses \$12,060.47

*Monthly income was under expenses by
\$1,445.23*

January Mission: The AALC—\$1,050.00

*For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:21*

Happy Birthday!

<i>Sue DeSha</i>	<i>March 4</i>
<i>Carol Sogard</i>	<i>March 25</i>
<i>Laviere Johnson</i>	<i>March 26</i>
<i>Florence Kubiak</i>	<i>March 30</i>

PLEASE PRAY FOR....

*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
James 5:14*

Our Pastor & the Leadership of the Church
All of our students from pre-school to college
Our Country, Military & Police
The teachers and students at all schools
Mission of the Month:
Spiritual Orphans Network (SON)
(formerly East European Missions Network)

Persecuted Christians throughout the world
The steadfastness of our faith
Lutheran Vicar Mwavu Ronald and his 2 churches:
St. John's Lutheran Church,
Nankandulo, Kamuli, Uganda
St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Buluva, Namendwa, Uganda

THOSE WITH HEALTH NEEDS:

Bob Johnson	Jane McLean	Ruth Peterson
Mary Jenny	Norma Johnson	Ruth Dahl
Kathy Stevens	Katie Lund	Carol Schramm
Tom & Marlene Stauber	Susan Johnson	Florence Kubiak
Diane Malander	Judy Stocke	Evelyn Johnson
Dennis Peterson	Carol Johnson	Eli Miletich
Mark Malander	Carol Sogard	Donna Swanson & Family
Laviere Johnson	Barb Hanson	Darlene Saaf
Linda Anthony	Brian MacDonald	Del Sandberg
Carol Ziemer		

If there are any people who have been accidently overlooked, please contact the church office. We apologize for any oversights.

There will be no funeral service for Don Johnson. Laviere will be in North Carolina with her daughter for March and April. Condolences may be sent to
Laviere Johnson
c/o/Julie Wander
PO Box 610
Fairview NC 28730



Our sympathies to the family and friends of Jean Sundstrom who passed away Wednesday, February 3. Condolences may be sent to:
Robin Johnson
3909 Okerstrom Rd
Hermantown MN 55811

There are no funeral services planned for Yvonne Terry who passed away January 23.

Sunday services are livestreamed on our Facebook page:

Christ Lutheran Church Duluth at 9:30 AM

You can also log onto our website clcduluth.org



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth