

The Grace Family Weekly Message

25 March 2021



Please join us for worship, with communion, on Palm Sunday, the 28th of March, at 10:00 AM (Worship takes place in the Grace parking lot; details on

EASTER WEEK SERVICES AT GRACE. Maundy Thursday at 7:00 PM; Good Friday at 7:00 PM; Easter Vigil--a virtual service on Saturday; Easter Sunday at 10:00 (*details on page 3*).

This Week: Prayer Concerns (see pages 3); **make plans to participate in Grace's Easter week services** (see page 4); **Support the 2021 Lenten Special Offering (ELCA Good Gifts)** (see page 5).

Grace's **Weekly Messages** are distributed by email and regular mail to all members of the Grace Family to keep you informed about worship services, church activities and benevolence programs. To add someone to the distribution list, send their email or mailing address (*copies are mailed to those who do not have email*) to the Church Office (graceelc@gmail.com) (or mail it to: Grace Lutheran Church, 19225 W. Witty Road, Elmore OH 43416).

This week's Lenten Bible study is the fifth in a series of studies about events in Jesus' ministry that are recorded in the Gospel of Mark, designed to help us better understand the Kingdom of God that Jesus introduced at the beginning of his ministry (see page 7 for an explanation of this year's Lenten Bible study series at Grace).

A BIBLE STUDY ON THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT—LOVE IS THE WAY

Mark 12:28-34a (NIV)

²⁸*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”*

²⁹*“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

³²*“Well said, teacher,” the scribe replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

³⁴**When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”**

You've probably heard the expression, "let's get back to basics." In this dialogue between Jesus and a Jewish scribe, the two agree on what the basics of both the Jewish faith and living in the Kingdom of God are. Jesus' days between when he entered Jerusalem and his crucifixion were highlighted by sharp disagreements with the "**chief priests and teachers of the law**" (Mk 8:31) that led them to demand his execution (Mark 15:11). This particular scribe, however, was impressed with how Jesus had answered Pharisee trick questions, so he asked a well-intended question, "**what is the most important commandment?**" He could have pointed out that the Jewish teachers had over 600 commandments on their books, so it was a valid question. Jesus' answer echoed two classic texts in the Old Testament:

- Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the Great Shema. "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your will.**" In citing this as the greatest commandment, Jesus also affirmed the most sacred statement of faith in Judaism; and
- Leviticus 19:18. "**You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against other people, but you shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.**"

The scribe said he agreed with both of Jesus' answers. For a Jewish scribe and Jesus to agree on something was a big deal—that was like getting Chuck Schumer and Mitch McConnell to agree on something today!

The scribe's concurrence appears to have been based on Hosea 6:6, where the prophet conveyed God's message that "**I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God instead of burnt offerings.**" For this, Jesus praised him, "**You are not far from the Kingdom of God.**" Jesus was teaching that in the Kingdom knowing and loving God is more important than performing religious rituals; that loving our neighbors is more important than strict worship practices.

The question for us then becomes how do we love God? One of the clearest answers to this existential question is in Matthew 25:40 where Jesus taught, "**whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**" And how do we love our neighbors? The most memorable answer to that question may be in Luke's version of this same encounter (Luke 10:25-37) where Jesus agreed with "**an expert in the law**" that to inherit eternal life you must "**love the Lord your God with all your heart...and love your neighbor as yourself.**" When the scribe asked, "**who is my neighbor,**" Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbors are anyone in need. When love for those in need and our neighbors is the way, we too will be "**not far from the Kingdom of God.**"



The Good Samaritan; St. Wenceslas Church, Naumburg, Germany

WEEKLY NEWS AND EVENTS AT GRACE

- ◎ **DRIVE-UP WORSHIP ON SUNDAY.** Palm Sunday worship, this coming Sunday, the 28th of March, will take place in the church parking lot, starting at 10:00 AM. Pastor Jaci and Church Musician Bobbie Bean will conduct the service. Communion will be served. This week's Gospel reading is Mark 14:1-15:47. **WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING ALL MEMBERS OF THE GRACE FAMILY TO WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY! VISITORS ARE ESPECIALLY WELCOME!**

- **Attendance and Offerings Last Sunday.** 66 persons attended worship last Sunday. The offering total was \$3,069. Thank you to all who attend worship and contribute their much-appreciated offerings.
- **Offering Envelope Instructions.** The offering envelopes distributed to Grace households for March and April include envelopes for regular weekly offerings as well as a series of envelopes labeled LENTEN OFFERING and special envelopes for MAUNDY THURSDAY, GOOD FRIDAY and EASTER. Offerings enclosed in the LENTEN OFFERING, MAUNDY THURSDAY and GOOD

FRIDAY envelopes will be credited to the **ELCA Good Gifts Fruit-Tree Farm project**, the Lenten Special Offering for this year. Offerings in the regular and EASTER envelopes will be credited as regular offerings. Checks with special designations are, of course, credited to that purpose.

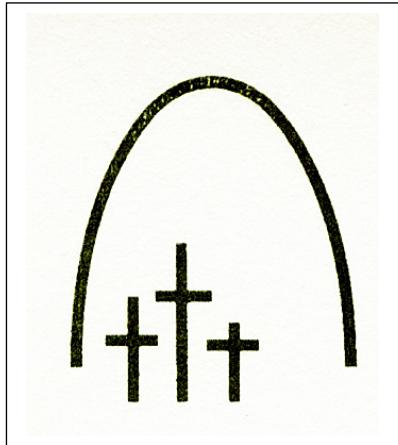
- **Lenten Evening Prayers.** The fifth in the series of five Wednesday evening Lenten Prayer Services at Grace took place yesterday evening, the 24th of March. 27 persons attended. Pastors in the Synod's North Central Conference took turns providing messages. Last night's worshippers heard a message from Pastor Matt Musteric, St. Peter, Blackberry.

- ◎ **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers:

The Family of James Glaser, The Family of Bob Shaffer, The Family of Corrie Albright, The Family of Herbert Bouyack

Bethany Collier, Delbert Weng, Vera Hille, Earlene and Dan Van Etten, Scott Taylor, Brian Richardson, Jenny Lehman, Jody Angelone, Ruth Avers, Jim Slotterbeck, Ron Dangler, Shirley Buhrow Jen and Steve, Bob and Marge Griffin, Jeanne Haar, Jim Flick, Sandy Duty, Josh Hunker, Jeff and Laryn Wheeler, Peggy Michel Noftz, Stephen Andrew, Bertha Marquardt, Dean Crandall, Kelly Troyer, Arnold and Donna Foss, Mitzi Paule, Nadine Crisologos, Joan Dietrich, Sandy Cutchall, Cheryl Hoot, Dick and Ruth Hammel, Reed Oestreich, Heather DeWitz, Grace members who reside in nursing homes and members of the Grace family and their colleagues who serve in the Armed Forces. If you know of someone to add to the prayer list, please inform Pastor Jaci or the Church Office.

- ◎ **EASTER WEEK WORSHIP SERVICES.** The Grace Board of Worship and Pastor Jaci are planning the following worship services through Easter Sunday:



- **Communion:** Communion will be offered this Sunday, Palm Sunday, 28 March. Beginning in April, communion will be celebrated during every Sunday worship service.
- **Palm Sunday**, 28 March. Sunday drive-up worship will include the distribution of palms and communion.
- **Maundy Thursday**, 1 April at 7:00 PM. Drive-up worship with communion and the stripping of the altar.
- **Good Friday**, 2 April at 7:00 PM. Service of the nails.
- **Easter Vigil**, 3 April. Easter Vigil will be a virtual service (no drive-up worship). A link will be available to access the virtual Easter Vigil service.
- **Easter Sunday**, 4 April. Drive-up worship with communion.



- ◎ **Deacon Schedule.** Deacons: Please check your mailboxes at the Church for the April/May Deacon schedule. Deacons scheduled to serve in upcoming worship services are:
 - 28 March, Sunday: **Joan Eckermann & Pr. Dave Wietelmann**
 - 1 April, Thursday (Maundy Thursday): **Mark & Jennifer Haar**
 - 2 April, Friday (Good Friday): **Randy Jacobs & Gary Anderson**
 - **4 April, Easter Sunday: Deb & Jeff Boos; Jean & Merlyn Weng**
- ◎ **Grace Lutheran Scholarship Program.** Grace has a Scholarship Fund that provides scholarships for high school seniors who are selected to receive them. Graduating 2021 seniors who are members of the Grace congregation are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Anyone who wants more information about this program should contact Karen Hammel. An application form may be requested from the Church Secretary.
- ◎ **COUNCIL MEETINGS.** The most recent, 24th virtual (Zoom) Council meeting was held on the 11th of March. Agenda and action items were reported in the 18 March Weekly Message. The next Council (Zoom) meeting will be on Thursday, the 8th of April.
- ◎ **Bell Tower Restoration.** The Board of Property and Grace Council have now approved a proposal from Chime Master Bell Systems to restore Grace's Bell Tower to its original operating condition at a cost of \$5,100. Since this is over the Constitutional limit of \$5,000, the Council has called for a Congregational Meeting after worship on the 18th of April to consider this proposal. The Grace bell tower was originally erected near the sanctuary in 1980 and was subsequently moved to its present location in 2001 when the Fellowship Hall and educational rooms were built. The bell played memorable roles in many Grace worship services but in 2016 it was

disabled by lightning. Original estimates for restoration were unacceptably high and no action was taken until now. Several members have expressed their desires to restore the bell and the new bid of \$5,100 appears to be reasonable; funding is available from the Memorial Fund. We will provide more information about this project as the meeting date approaches. Until then, anyone with questions or comments should contact Steve Simkus or Gary Anderson.

④ **Call for Volunteers.** The Grace Board of Education is looking for new members who would like to help provide support for Grace's Christian education programs. If you are interested, contact Nancy Pries.

④ **Board of Worship Meetings.**

- **Congregational Life.** Will meet on 22 April.
- **Worship.** Will meet (via Zoom) on 15 April at 7:00 PM.

④ **OPERATION OREO.** Please keep all of the military in your prayers, but especially: SGT Stephen Simkus and Cadet Julian Sanchez.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to Operation Oreo to help offset the cost of shipping and also the contents of the Goody boxes -- Just mark "Op Oreo" on the memo line of your check.

If you have a name to add to our list or if you have any questions about Operation Oreo, please contact Jennifer Marquardt

④ **Call Committee.** The Grace Call Committee's most recent meeting was a virtual (Zoom) meeting on the 25th of February, when it began a final review of Grace's MSP before it is forwarded to the Grace Council.

④ **Lenten Special Offering Project.** The Board of Witness and Mission selected the ELCA Good Gifts Fruit-Tree Farm as Grace's special Lenten offering project for 2021. Fruit tree seedlings can be gifted for \$10 each, when donations total \$150 they will buy another fruit tree farm. Based on past Lenten contributions the Board set a goal of raising \$900 to donate six fruit tree farms but there have already been enough contributions to buy more than ten fruit tree farms and the Lenten Special Offering program will continue for one more week, through Good Friday. Members can make their Lenten Special Offerings when they attend Lenten Mid-Week services, or they can donate Lenten Special Offerings along with their regular weekly offerings (*use the LENTEN SPECIAL OFFERING envelopes or write "Lenten Offering" on the memo line of Lenten Offering checks*).

④ **ELMORE FOOD PANTRY.** The Grace food item for March is 13 oz. boxes of "Smashed Taters." The Elmore Food Pantry, which is hosted at Grace, is open on the third Friday and Saturday of each month from 9:00 AM until noon. Anyone who wishes to drop off food items at the church should bring them to the church (*leave them inside the north door*) during the following hours when the church office door is open:

- **Monday and Wednesday: 4:30 to 5:30 PM**
- **Tuesday and Thursday: 6:30 to 7:30 PM**
- **Saturday: 9:00 to 10:00 AM**

- Sunday: 9:30 to 10:00 AM

◎ **REGULAR BENEVOLENCE ACTIVITIES:**

- **Millers Receipts.** Members of the Grace Family who shop at Miller's New Market Grocery in Genoa should continue to keep their receipts and give them to Marilyn Crandall who will redeem them for Grace (or send them to 9591 W Moonlight Bay Lane, Oak Harbor OH 43449).
- **Amazon Smile Fundraiser.** Amazon purchases earn cash contributions for Grace Lutheran Church if you enroll in the Amazon Smile program and name Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elmore OH, as your designated charity. Log in with this address: smile.amazon.com/ch/34-1219970. If you use the Amazon Smile program and designate Grace as your charity, 0.5% of your eligible purchases will be donated to Grace. Donations received through this program are divided evenly between Operation Oreo and the Piecemakers.

Our prayer: Merciful God, teach us the way of love, for you, and for our neighbors.

GRACE CONTACT INFORMATION		
PASTOR	COUNCIL PRESIDENT	CHURCH OFFICE
Pastor Jaci Tiell pastorjaci@iell@aol.com 419-215-8370	Gary Anderson dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com 419-607-3036	Joyce Bruntz graceelc@gmail.com 419-862-3630

NOTES ON GRACE'S 2021 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

Ash Wednesday, February 17th, marked the beginning of 40 days of Lent. These six weeks, which end with the Easter Vigil on the 3rd of April, have special meaning for Christians everywhere. This year, covid pandemic restrictions prevent the Grace family from having traditional soup suppers and Lenten Bible studies. In place of those group studies, **Grace's Weekly Message** Lenten meditations are short Bible studies designed to help us better understand the Kingdom of God that Jesus introduced when he began his ministry.

According to Mark (*Mark 1:15, also Matthew 4:17*), Jesus' first recorded words after he returned from his wilderness trial were, “**the Kingdom of God has come near** (*is approaching*), **repent** (*change your ways*) **and believe** (*have faith in*) **the good news** (*Gospel, God's Word about His grace and mercy*).” These Lenten studies look at Mark’s accounts of transformative events in Jesus’ ministry. Those events give us clues about the Kingdom of God that Jesus brought “**near**.” Each study will also ask what being a child of God in the Kingdom means for us. This series will lead us from Ash Wednesday to the proclamation we look forward to hearing during the Easter Vigil, “**Alleluia, Christ is Risen!**”

The events and scriptures featured in this year’s Lenten study are:

18 February. **Introducing the Kingdom of God**, Mark 1:12-15

25 February. **Feeding the Five Thousand**, Mark 6:30-44

4 March. **The Transfiguration**, Mark 9:2-10

11 March. **The Little Children and Jesus**, Mark 10:13-16

18 March. **Jesus Enters Jerusalem**, Mark 11:1-10

25 March. **The Greatest Commandment**, Mark 12:28-34

1 April (Maundy Thursday). **The Last Supper**, Mark 14:12-26

You may want to read these scriptures in advance to prepare your own thoughts about the Kingdom of God that Jesus introduced to us.