

Epistle of St. Paul

January 2017

Blessings for 2017 in the name of Jesus Christ who came to save us!

I've encountered dozens of suggestions for New Year's resolutions from advise columnists in newspapers, from the radio airwaves and discussions about what people are resolved to do in 2017. One writer concludes her advice giving with the final suggestion: **"believe in something bigger than yourself** because research shows that **people who have connected with a spiritual belief cope much better in difficult times."** We Christians already know that clinging to the cross is how we celebrate the great times and cope with the not so nice times. Matthew's gospel offers the best and constant resolution for all Christians. In Matthew 6: 19-34 Jesus is telling folks who gathered to hear the Sermon on the Mount that they need to orient themselves towards God. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth [v 19], **where your treasure is, there your heart will be** [v 21], don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." [v 34]. The heart of this instruction to orient our lives to God is because we need so strive first for the kingdom of God. Our campers learn a song that I hope remains in their hearts forever, **"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."**

We need to constantly orient our lives towards God by what we do and say and think. That is why we have weekly worship, Sunday school classes, bible studies and many service ministries. The discussions surrounding our worship and learning and ministries involve the struggle we have orienting ourselves always towards God and God's will for us and help us connect with God's will for us.

We usually begin worship with confession because we know that we are not seeking the kingdom of God but seeking the kingdom of material wealth and social status. This past year what we heard on the political trails did not reflect what God's kingdom is and what God wants us to be as servants of Jesus Christ.

During 2017, do more to get connected with God. This year we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the reformation. Throughout the year I will share with you some interesting Luther quotations. In my German travels last May, I searched for a book of sayings by Martin Luther *in English*. Here is some food for thought by Luther: "This is the way with the Holy Scriptures: when you think you have learnt everything in them, you must need to start again at the beginning." Please begin this year by believing and acting on the hymn we sing during Christmas season, "Come and worship Christ the new born king." Connect and reconnect with the faithful folk at St. Paul. Invite family and friends to worship and fellowship, to Sunday school and Bible study. When we seek first God's kingdom, life has a new orientation and priorities fall into God's perspective.

I look forward to being with you as together we connect with Jesus in 2017.

Shalom, **Pastor Bev**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My thanks to all who assisted during our busy Advent and Christmas season. My thanks for your generosity of time and talents. My thanks to the diligent work of our council and all who pitch in to be helping hands doing God's Work. My thanks to all who showered me with cards and gifts. God has called me to St Paul and it has been my joy to serve as your interim pastor.

Shalom, Pastor Bev

