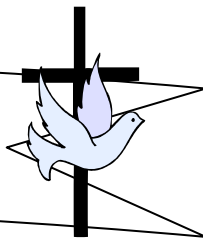


The St. Mark Messenger



Rev. Paul Schuenemann

Pat Pritzlaff, Editor

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Living a Life that Glorifies God

Johann Sebastian Bach was a famous composer of music. In our current Lutheran Service Book hymnal, he composed the tunes for 6 of the hymns. In his lifetime he composed 256 cantatas. *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* may be his most famous cantata. Nearly four centuries later, it's still one of the most popular soundtracks used as the bride walks down the aisle to meet her groom. The reason his music touches your soul is because it came from his soul. But did you know Bach's cantatas didn't originate as music, and that they were prayers before they were songs? Before he started scoring a sheet of music he would scrawl JJ – *Jesu, Juva* – at the very top. It means 'Jesus, help me.' Then at the bottom of every composition he inscribed three letters: SDG. They stand for *Soli Deo Gloria* – 'to the glory of God alone'. His life was a unique translation of that singular motive, to bring glory to God.

So also is the motive or goal of your life as a child of God. Martin Luther in his explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles Creed follows up all that Jesus Christ has done to redeem us with the sentence, "that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." Yes, secure in the mercy and love of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring glory and honor to Him as we live the blessed life. The focus of our life is no longer pleasing others or seeking glory and recognition for self. Or as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." 2 Cor. 5:15

No one can glorify God *like you*, or *for you*, because your life is an original score. *Soli Deo Gloria* is living for an audience of one; it's doing the right thing for the right reason. It's living for the applause of the nail-scarred hands. It's declaring that Jesus Christ is your all in all. As a believer in Jesus, the goal of our life in all that we say and do is to bring glory to Jesus. Just Jesus. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. The prayer for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ is summed up by Paul, "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:11-12.

Soli Deo Gloria, to the glory of God alone,

Pastor Paul

WITNESSES TO CHRIST: PEOPLE FROM HIS PASSION

This year's series paints a stunning portrait of Jesus through the eyes of those whose interactions with Jesus lead us to meditate on His Passion as recorded by St. John in his Gospel. Our overall theme is "Witnesses to Christ: People From His Passion." John tells us he wrote his Gospel: "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). This Lent, our life in Christ will be strengthened as we hear the witness of those who were present as part of Jesus' journey to the cross. Along the way, we'll meet villains, such as Barabbas and Pontius Pilate; sinners, such as Peter (who denied Jesus three times), Mary Magdalene (who was possessed by seven demons), and Judas Iscariot (who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver); as well as others. Join us on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. for the good food and fellowship of Soup Suppers hosted by the various Church Boards. Then learn from the Witnesses to Christ in the 7:00 p.m. Worship Services. On Ash Wednesday, you will have the opportunity to receive the mark of the ashes in the service. Invite and bring along a friend or neighbor to join us this year during Lent.

February 22: Ash Wednesday, John the Baptist

March 1, Midweek of Lent 1: Mary, the Sister of Lazarus and Martha

March 8, Midweek of Lent 2: Malchus

March 15, Midweek of Lent 3: Peter

March 22, Midweek of Lent 4: Barabbas

March 29, Midweek of Lent 5: Pontius Pilate

April 6, Holy (Maundy) Thursday: Judas Iscariot

April 7, Good Friday: John, the Gospel Writer

Sunday, April 9, Easter: Mary Magdalene