

MIKTAV NUN (LETTER 14)

Dear Reader,

St. Jerome in one of his many memorable quotes indicated that *Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ*. This truth must be viewed in a very serious light and be disconcerting as too much is at stake here if this apply to me. On the other hand, it must motivate us to renew our efforts to learn more of Christ, by spending time with the Bible. We need to know what is at our disposal; in particular the blessed promises that we can be sure will come to fruition. The promises of God can be a real source of hope, comfort and joy if we claim them for ourselves. May we do just that.

This newsletter is constructed around the theme of promises; God's genuine ones and those which are useless emanating from human beings who do not have our best interest at heart. May God protect you from these.

Thanks for the inspiration for this newsletter from the Rev Jacques Grispe, Dean Dinale, Rev. Martin Louw, Merle Teise, Anna Absalom and the faithful participants of the Pre-Pentecost prayer sessions.

Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter.

1. WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Not one of all the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass (Jos.21: 45).

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God (1 Cor 1: 20).

During one of our reflection sessions on the Holy Spirit last week, we touched on the promise that Spirit makes us Children of God and Heirs (Rom 8:14-17). “Heirs” implied heirs to the kingdom of God, heir to heaven. A discussion however ensued: if that is the case, why are we not sure where we will spend eternity? Why do we doubt the promises of God? Lutherans should pride themselves of the knowledge that they are saved by *grace* through the *faith* they have in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They should know that this is their and everyone else’s only ticket to heaven. On top of it is for free, within everyone’s reach.

It is then disturbing that congregants still look upon and to themselves –their good works- and then realize I am not sure if I will make it to heaven, as my life does not attain to the high standards set by God. I do not have enough good works to exchange for my entry to heaven. They do not realize that a free gift have been extended to them when Christ realized this dilemma and substituted Himself for us on the cross of Calvary. Or maybe they know, have heard it so many times, and yet do not associate this blessed gospel with themselves.

It is my wish that you settle this question in your mind and accept this and other promises of God. Furthermore engage others and make sure that they know, accept and live by the promises of the faithful and unfailing God.

God in Jesus promised us hearts that are not worried, disconcerted about the future, but hearts that accept that He went to prepare a place for ME and He will come again to take me home. May the Peace of God shower you today and everyday!

2. WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT ALL THESE?

{Reflections on the current national and international news events will be mirrored by/in the Word of God to console, direct and challenge (where needed).}

Sadly, one of the positive outcomes of the World Cup will be an awareness that is long overdue- that of Human trafficking. Whether we say this is blown out of proportion at present or that unnecessary fears and scare tactics are being used, the reality is human trafficking is real and it is a criminal offence. Apparently these threats on South African soil was so limited, or so secretively done that our legislation are not in place to deal with such an offense adequately.

Today however we need to spare a thought for those victims that are and will be lured, captured and exploited in this vicious scheme of exploitation. We need to be aware that various tactics are used where innocent victims are promised high pay or high profiled jobs and the chance to see and experience places they can only dreamt of. These false promises to people so desperate to escape their current impoverished circumstances might be like manna from heaven. However, what seems to be a chance of a lifetime ends up in a nightmare that you and I cannot fathom.

Why do these things happen? How can one human being do this to another? I think the legacy of slavery and human oppression are still playing a role here. The conscience can be conditioned to such an extent that due to personal pain, hatred, fear, threats, survival it refuses to love anymore. We are here to do with human beings and with spiritual forces that have no reckoning (or knowledge) for human beings created in the image of God anymore. Their shortsighted goals of amongst others, material gain cause them to throw all their values and sympathy overboard.

May God have mercy and break these chains for many in South Africa and around the globe. May we do what is possible within our means. Be vigilant, report suspicious incidents, and take care of your loved ones and that of your neighbor. Do not turn a blind eye but try to feel for those trapped in this ruthless abuse. Needless to say: do not partake or support these exploits. It might seem as harmless as going to clubs where women need to entertain through dancing.

May God have mercy on all His creation and restore His intended order.

3. JOY WITH THE SORROW.

We praise God for His manifold promises that state: It is still possible(Luk.18:27); I forgive you (1 Joh.1:9); I will supply all your needs(Phil.4:19); I am able (2 Cor.9:8); I have not given you a spirit if fear(2 Tim 1:17); I will direct your steps (Prov 3: 5,6);etc.etc.

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To those whose heart mourn today

God says: I will never leave you or forsake you (Heb 13: 5)

4. CHESS (NEE CHURCH) MOVES: BISHOP TO...

{All the movements of the Bishop (and deans), where they sow, plant, water will be made known so you can pray to God for these ventures at your Prayer groups and during Worship services}

The Church Council of ELCSA, that is, the meeting between all the Dioceses, met from the 22- 26 May in Johannesburg. This body is sustaining the unity in ELCSA, whilst also being responsible for streamlining action in all of ELCSA so that all Dioceses act uniformly.

Decisions from this Council are binding to all members and press releases or statements to the media a reflection of the stance of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

We pray that our Bishop and his delegation had fruitful discussions and that all our matters were positively resolved or accepted. We pray that we will get an overview of the meeting for our next newsletter.

5. WHAT ABOUT.... FOCUSING ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

Take time individually or as a group to research the various promises of God. It is good to read the Bible for yourself, but you do not need to reinvent the wheel. Others have already embarked on this venture and can save you lots of hours. Use the books available, the internet sites, etc. Simply bring these together for discussions and sharing. Arrange the promises into different themes. Talk about them successively in small groups over some weeks. Memorize the promises –take sizable amounts, do not scare people off. May you experience the power and presence of God in a mighty way as you call on God through His promises.

6. SPOTLIGHT ON.... WORSHIP DURING THE WORLD CUP

Worship is feared to be dwindling during June and July due to the Soccer spectacle. This can be a challenge, but need not necessarily be the case. We are presented with opportunities too, if we open our mind and eyes to the situation that is before us.

Before we reflect on this, we need to realize that worship is not limited to the hour or so on a Sunday morning and on a Wednesday. Worship properly performed is a 24/7 exercise and there is no sphere where God does not or should not reign supreme. Thus, where we find ourselves at a given moment that is where we need to reflect our God and Saviour and His principles.

We have graciously a theme for the next Sundays that everybody is crazy about. Utilize the various aspects of the game, and her rules, her facets, her officials, the crowd, whatever and bring that to the Bible to see whether they are compatible with the Word and rules of God. Innovate the liturgy, bring props, dramatize scenes, and pray for the successful nation building efforts, whilst calling on God to stem the tide of evil and crime!

During this World Cup time, we have the opportunity for building the unity of the congregation by watching the soccer together. Think about the fundraising possibilities – and you do not need permission from any authority! Congregation too big, well then subdivides in the various leagues or peer groups and have a ball!

Whilst we're at it play a game at the church or local sport field whilst you wait for your favorite match. Compete with other congregations in the Fraternal –not only does it revive friendships, but the old stars can see if they still have the skill with the ball and get a cheer from the girls. Of course it can be vise-versa too- a women's match will be super.

The youth, the Sunday school, the manne, families, let your minds go and be creative these weeks. Make friends, invite strangers, show hospitality – be there; be on the BALL, don't let the churches be closed!

7. WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Tell us about your plans as a congregation for the World Cup. How do you plan to interact in the congregation and your parish? Are you happy for the break from school? How can you keep the kids creatively and safely busy? Share your stories and suggestions. The **Message Board** is waiting to capture your views and discussions (and on anything else!) Handy spiritual books are up for grabs for the ones posting the most creative views! Your efforts here can just stimulate others (even internationally to embark on your suggestions and enhance the lives of many!)

8. INVITATION

This is a call to all our readers out there irrespective of the home language. Do share your books with us that you are reading, especially those you have found to be edifying.

We are called upon to assist one another and one way may be to encourage one another to take up a good book. Please submit your book reviews to the webmaster or me and we will make sure that others are blessed the way you were by some books. The reviews need not to be very long: Give us the name of the book and author, the publisher and year of publication. Then give a concise overview, special insights, stimulations or things that disturbed you or challenged you to change your life. State why you would like others to read the book too. Thanks in advance.

WISHFUL THINKING

What's right isn't always popular... and what's popular isn't always right. Please encourage others to subscribe to our newsletter which aims to inform, stimulate, to involve and to grow the visitors to our site. It is still my wish to hear from you. Please volunteer to contribute to any of these regular features. You also need to tell us your needs and whether these regulars are sufficient and cater for your expectations. Any other brilliant ideas will be gladly accommodated. Eagerly waiting to hear from you.

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