

AGAPE 2023 (#5)

(SPECIAL EASTER EDITION)

Rev. M. Zeuch

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
110 years proclaiming Christ in Bridgeland!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

My wife and I used to have good friends here in Calgary who, to our sadness, moved away to the U.S. last year. The couple has two girls which we saw grow up with our own kids. My wife used to babysit them for a few years since we came to Calgary! One of these years, they came up with the idea to host a big Easter egg hunt at their place around this time of the year. They had a beautiful property in Bearspaw. On the first year, they invited a few friends, and we felt really blessed to be among them. The second year, it became bigger. Every year, the Bearspaw egg hunt became a bigger event with more and more invited guests, including neighbours. There were lots of kids, lots of food – all generously offered by this family. And the Zeuch family was always there – it became a yearly tradition!

At church we used to offer the egg hunt as well on Easter Sunday. We plan to bring back this tradition this year! But we don't want the kids to meet the Easter Bunny. We want them to meet the Lamb.

WHAT DOES A LAMB HAVE TO DO WITH EASTER ANYWAY?
Some countries in the northern hemisphere often associate Easter with bunnies, baby chicks, and lambs leaping through spring fields filled with flowers. It's completely cute but not completely accurate. The picture of the Lamb that best represents Easter doesn't really resemble the bulletin board decorations of most kindergarten classrooms.

GOD PROVIDES THE LAMB

From the beginning to the end, God's word gives us glimpses of what the Lamb looks like. Travel back with me to the book of Genesis (Chapter 22), where we meet Abraham, who believed God and followed him from one land to another, holding tight to the promise that he would be the father of nations. But he had to be a father first.

He and his wife waited years. Time ticked by slowly as years turned to decades, and when the promise was finally fulfilled, Abraham was "as good

as dead," according to Hebrews 11. But the promise was fulfilled nonetheless. Abraham had a son, and he treasured him.

So, imagine how he felt when the Lord asked him to sacrifice his son, his only son, the one for whom he'd waited.

But Abraham obeyed for the same reason he'd left the town of Ur: he believed.

We hear his faith in the words of reply he made to his son's simple question. Isaac asked, "The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham simply said, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering."

And God did. He stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, and "Abraham looked up and there in a bush he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering **instead of** his son." (Genesis 22:7-14)

There was still a sacrifice, but it was a lamb instead of Isaac. God provided a substitution.

Easter
It's not about
the bunny...
It's about
the

Lamb.

THE LAMB TAKES AWAY OUR SINS

Many years later, Abraham's descendants were still following. Sometimes in faith; often in fear. God led them by day and by night. He gave them his law and told them to live by it.

Still, they sinned so they needed sacrifices. God's law required different sacrifices for different sins. He gave Moses detailed instructions about how his people were to approach him and when they were allowed to do so.

Before Aaron could enter the holy place, blood was shed to sanctify him.

There was no sanctification without sacrifice.

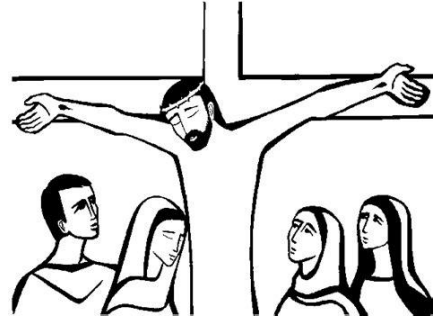
The sin had to be removed; it had to be taken away.

So, back then, the priest would actually confess the sins of the people over the head of a goat and send it out into the wilderness, sending their sins away with it. (Leviticus 16:20-22)

The sins of the people were gone, but the next year, they had to do these same things all over again.

THE LAMB DIED ONCE FOR ALL

After all, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed



once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:1-4)

Isaiah realized the need for permanent perfection, for real redemption. He prophesied that God would provide just that when he wrote, "*he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" (**Isaiah 53:5-6**)

You see, hundreds of years later, God again provided the sacrifice for sin, and like the priests of Moses' day, he placed all our sins on the head of the one who would take them far away. That's why Easter is not about the bunny. It's a celebration of the Lamb, the Son of God sacrificed for our sins.

We sometimes lose sight of that in the midst of dying eggs and filling baskets. We lose sight of it at other times, too.

Times when we should live like those who've been forgiven, rather than those who don't know the love of the Lamb, which is why Peter wrote, "**For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**" (1 Peter 1:19)

Because we are forgiven. "For by one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." (Hebrews 10:14)

That is certainly something to celebrate, isn't it?

THE LAMB IS COMING BACK

“Christ was sacrificed once for all to take away the sins of many, and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:28)

What happens when the Lamb comes back? There will be a celebration like none we’ve ever seen. We get a glimpse of it in Revelation 5, when “the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priest to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth!’” (Revelation 5:6-10)

And that, my friends, is what Easter really is about.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)

Adapted by P. Zeuch from mississippimom.com

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MARK IT ON YOUR CALENDAR!



Apr 6 (Thurs): Holy Thurs evening service with Communion 7 p.m.

Apr 7 (Good Friday): German worship 9:30 a.m. / English worship 11 a.m.

Apr 9 (Easter Sunday): The resurrection of the Lord. Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m. Easter egg hunt for kids after the service!

Apr 13 (Thurs): Elders meeting @ 7 p.m.

Apr 16 (Sun): Second Sunday of Easter. Pastor is away. Reading services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m. **There is no communion!**

Apr 19 (Wed): We resume our Bible studies on zoom @ 7 p.m.

Apr 22 (Sat): Calgary Circuit Convocation @ Foothills Lutheran Church

Apr 22 (Sat): Memorial service for Marian Williams at our church @ 2 p.m.

Apr 23 (Sun): Third Sunday of Easter. Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

Apr 26 (Wed): Bible Study on zoom @ 7 p.m.

Apr 27 (Thurs): PPC meeting @ 7 p.m.

Apr 30 (Sun): Fourth Sunday of Easter. Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

Apr 30 (Sun): Online Bible Study in Portuguese

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, SAINT MATTH'S!
OUR 110th ANNIVERSARY



St. Matthew Lutheran Church is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year with thanksgiving to our God. We are so thankful to our Lord for his presence, His providence, and His blessings, nourishing His people with Word and Sacraments all over those years! Get to know what happened and where we came from. "Thus far has the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). Here are some highlights (continuation from last issue) of our rich history, in chronological order:

- 1973 (March) New office and house.
- 1981 (Sept) Jeffrey Oshwald serves as Vicar until 1982.
- 1990 (Oct.) Rev. Gutsche serves as pastor until 1995.
- 1991 (May) Reinhard Dittmer served as a vicar until April 1992.
- 1992 (Oct) Markus Nietzke served as a vicar until August 1993.
- 1994 (July) Rev. Dreger serves as pastor until 1998.
- 1996 (Sept.) Rev. Hetzel serves as pastor until 2002.
- 1998 (July) Renovations started on parking lot, basement extension, heating system and the Lift (elevator).
- 1998 (Sept.) St. Matthew Church is designated as an historical building (site).
- 1999 (Jan.) Rev.Smallwood serves as pastor until March 2008.
- 1999 (April) Renovations started in the spring of 1998 are completed.
- 2001 (Oct.) Nuer Services at St. Matthew begin.
- 2002 (Dec.) Communion is offered every Sunday at St. Matthew.
- 2003 (June) Nuer worshipping at St. Matthew are catechized and confirmed. The Nuer children are baptized.

More to follow on our next edition of AGAPE!

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I hope you enjoyed this edition. If you want to read the previous Agapes, just go to our website and you will find all editions there. May God's love (Agape) reach you and your family this Easter!

In His service,
Rev. Markus Zeuch

Calgary, April 6, 2023

Visit our website: www.stmatthewlutheranalgary.com
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