

A message from Pastor Gross.....

Temptation, Testing, and Sacrifice

“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering” — Genesis Chapter 22, verse 2, NKJV

Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. — Mark 1:12-13, NKJV

The Lenten Season, as we learn from the very first Sunday lessons of these Forty Days, has certain themes. First, the distinction between Testing and Temptation. St. James correctly states, “God tempts no one.” Without distinguishing tempting from testing, this seems untrue when we compare Genesis 22, called “The Sacrifice of Isaac,” by some. Others call it “The Temptation of Abraham,” to compare this event with Christ’s Forty-Day Temptation by Satan in the Wilderness.

Basically, a Temptation is an incitement to sin. As James says, God tempts no one. That is, He never encourages us to sin, nor places us in any situation that would easily or obviously lead to sin. There are three forces that tempt us to sin, says Dr. Luther: The Devil, the World, and our Sinful Flesh. This ‘Unholy Trinity’ ever, only, and always encourages us to sin. Satan pays cash bonuses, I like to say. The Devil rewards sin. Just look at all the political and criminal corruption. Satan rewards the World and sinful human flesh for sinning. Every Temptation makes it easy to sin, and encourages people to sin. Still, St. Paul says, “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

God does test us. His tests encourage us to choose to do His Will, to truly love our neighbor (not corrupt ‘love’ as humanity sinfully defines it), and keep His Holy Commandments. In the process, God gives us strength, hope, love, and greater ability to follow His Will and His Ways when we pass the test. If we fail, God’s love and forgiveness are still here for us. Then we repent, turn back to Him, appeal to Christ and His Holy Spirit for more strength to try harder next time. So God’s tests always succeed in two ways. First, if we succeed in the test we are stronger to fight sin in future, and help other believers to do the same. Second, if we fail under God’s Law, we return to cling even harder to the Gospel of God’s Mercy. In tears of penitent sorrow for our sin, we rejoice when God’s Love in His Son again succeeds in turning us again away from sin and the World’s ways. Then by Grace through Faith we have even more ability to defeat the Devil, World, and our sinful flesh the next time.

Hand-in-hand with our daily life of both Testings and Temptation, comes Sacrifice. This is obvious both in God’s Test of Abraham and in Satan’s Temptation of Christ. Abraham’s Test was whether or not he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac. He thought he was going to offer him as a human sacrifice like the pagans did.

This upsets many observers, thinking God is cruel even to put the thought in Abraham's mind. As I explained in my Lent One sermon, we must see God's true purpose. He was revealing what He Himself would do 2000 years later on that same mountain: sacrifice Christ, "His Son, His only Son, whom He loved." In Abraham & Isaac, God prophesied what He was to do there on Golgotha.

Christ Himself in His role as "Angel of the Lord" (better translated as "The LORD the Messenger") put a stop to Abraham's sacrifice of "his son, his only son, whom he loved." Most important, Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac, to give him back to the LORD from Whom the patriarch had received his long-hoped-for son. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us Abraham's hope:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.—Heb 11:17-19 NKJV

So, the successful test involved Sacrifice. Much more than when Christ defeated Satan's Temptation, an even greater Sacrifice was involved. God our Father would not stop the sacrifice of His Son, His Only Son, Whom He loved, when the Romans laid a wooden Cross upon Him, The Lamb of God, on the way to Moriah / Golgotha. When the Roman soldiers raised their hammers to nail Jesus to the Cross, God did not shout from heaven to stop the sacrifice. This was what God was predicting 2000 years earlier when He had Abraham & Isaac do a 'pre-enactment' of Christ's own Sacrifice.

Christ was again tempted as His enemies mocked Him: "Come down from the Cross if you are God's Son! He saved others! He cannot save Himself." Christ overcame the Temptation by Sacrifice. Indeed, if He were to save us, He could not save Himself. Neither could His Father save Him, though Jesus was "His Son, His Only Son, Whom He loved." God His Father did not save Him, because He wanted to save you and me.

So also during the Lenten Season you are faced with Temptation, Testing, and Sacrifice daily. Maybe you have sacrificed something for Lent: a favorite food, hobby, or habit, in self-denial. A Temptation may force you to surrender something so you will not sin. A Test from God may suggest a sacrifice to strengthen your faith, or to help a loved one or some other person in need. In any case, God your Father remains merciful for Christ's sake. As the Lord tests, and defends, you, it is so He can keep you safe in His love, which is always yours for the sake of your Crucified & Risen Savior, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen! — Pastor Gross <><



Call Committee Update

Just a update on the status on the call committee, We are currently waiting for information from the District Office. We were told that it may take a few weeks for them to gather information for us. Once we receive their list of Pastoral candidates, we will review the candidates information and move forward from there. The committee members are Sue Matzat, Debbie Edie, Stephanie Goebel, Nate VanZeLe, and Brad Mahler (Chair). Please keep us and Zion in your prayers as we move forward in this process.

Technology Assistance Needed

Help is needed with recording the services, both audio and video. Anyone from Junior High ages and up that would like to help, please let Brad Mahler know. Training will be provided to anyone that wants to help. A schedule can be worked out if needed.

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LWML CID District Convention

The LWML CID District Convention will be held on April 26th and 27th at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Rock Island, IL. All ladies are invited to attend.



LuHi Auction

The 34th Annual Lutheran High School Auction will be held on April 19th. The theme this year is Roaring Twenties. Appetizers and desserts will be served. There will be a cash bar. Tickets are \$50 and can be ordered from LuHi at 217-546-6363. Join in the fun, food, and bidding, and support our Lutheran High School in their mission to provide students with excellent academics in a Christian setting.

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Easter Service & Breakfast

Divine Service on Easter Sunday will be at our new time – 8:30 A.M. Following the service, the Stewardship & Outreach Committee will host our annual breakfast. Donations of coffeecakes, Danish, Muffins or donuts are needed to complete our meal. A sign up sheet is posted on the kitchen door.

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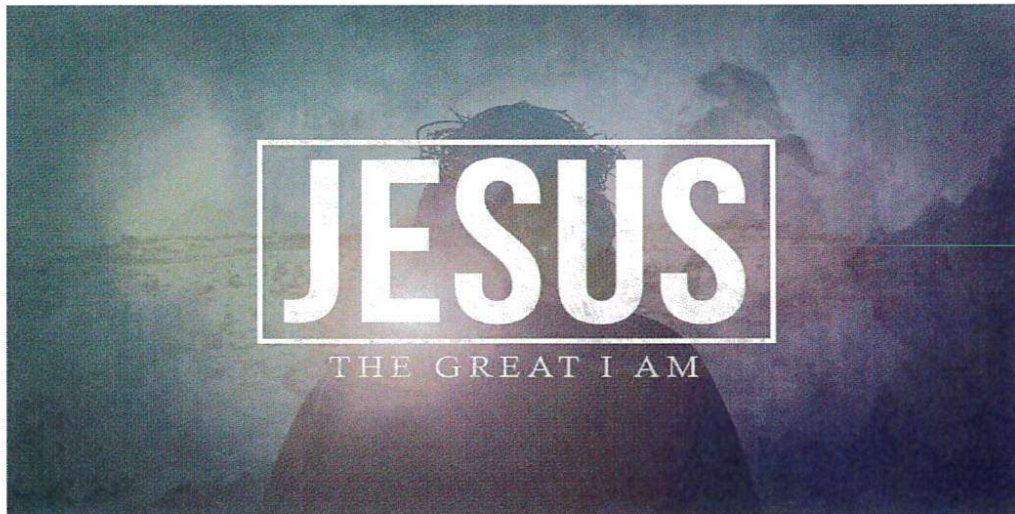
Midweek/Holy Week Lent Services Schedule

Wednesday March 6 6:30 P.M.
Wednesday, March 13 6:30 P.M.
Wednesday, March 20 6:30 P.M.
Maundy Thursday, March 28 6:30 P.M.
Good Friday, March 29 6:30 P.M.

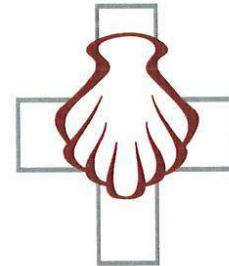
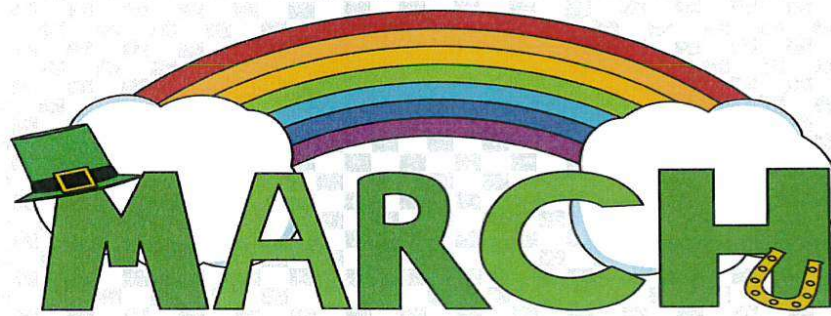


Zion Lutheran Church Lent 2024

Guest preacher: Rev. Jeff Harter, Chaplain at
Concordia Village Springfield



- † **Ash Wednesday February 14 –**
Matthew 16:13-20 Who do you say I am?
- † **Wednesday February 21 –**
John 8:58 I am the I AM
- † **Wednesday February 28 –**
John 14:1-6 I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- † **Wednesday March 6 –**
John 15:1-17 I am the true Vine
- † **Wednesday March 13 –**
John 10:7-10 I am the Gate for the sheep
- † **Wednesday March 20 –**
John 10:11,14-18,27-30 I am the Good Shepherd
- † **Maundy Thursday March 28 –**
John 6:35,53-56 I am the Bread of Life
- † **Good Friday March 29 –**
John 8:12 I am the Light of the World



Birthdays

Dick Shull	3/9
Merle Theilen	3/11
Janet Parkes	3/12
Addison VanZeLe	3/15
Eloise Edwards	3/23
Aiden Chipol	3/25

Baptism Birthdays

Lea Manuel	3/3
Megendael Hibtes	3/3
Christina Gleason	3/4
Jessica Shull	3/7
Elias Morgan	3/11
Kendra Theilen	3/11
Alberta Kindhart	3/15
Teresa Albsmeyer	3/16
Isaac Rennecker	3/16
Lincoln Edwards	3/20
Henry Edwards	3/20
Eloise Edwards	3/20
Colbie Stremsterfer	3/21
Rich Albsmeyer	3/22
Jim Krone	3/26
Carol Kiel	3/29
Shirley Theilen	3/31



Wedding Anniversaries

Norman & Michele Stremsterfer	3/1
Janet Parkes & Robert Slosar	3/2
Lee & Stacy Stremsterfer	3/27

***Non-Perishable Food Drive
to benefit the Pleasant Plains
Helping Hands Food Pantry***



***Now through Easter Sunday, March 31.
Donations can be left on the designated table
in the Parish Hall.***



The Camp CILCA Lowdown

March, 2024

217-487-7497 / camp@cilca.org

4124 Camp Cilca Rd.

Cantrall, IL 62625

SAVE THE DATE:

- **March 2: *Free Pancake Dinner***
 - All are invited to this free “thank you” dinner to the community for everyone’s support.
 - 10am-1pm
- **March 30: *Spring Work Day***
 - Help get camp ready for the warmer weather. Many hands make light work. 8am-12pm. Lunch will be provided.
- **March 31: *Early Bird Discount Ends!*** Sign up before midnight to save 10% off every week of camp!
- **April 14: *Annual Banquet*** This year’s speaker will be Mary Kate Zander, the Executive Director of Illinois Right to Life. ***Tickets are \$40 and must be reserved by April 10 by calling 217-487-7497 or emailing camp@cilca.org.*** Find out more at cilca.org/annual-banquet.
- **May 29: *First Day of Summer Camp!*** Registration is OPEN for to 2024 camping season. Sign up today for a summer full of adventure in God’s creation!

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Summer Programs 2024

The Central Illinois Lutheran Camp Association (CILCA) exists to foster and strengthen faith in Jesus Christ and fellowship with others in a unique outdoor setting. CILCA strives to reconnect Christians to Christ and Creation.

JOYFUL HEARTS

Campers of all ages with developmental disabilities experience the joys of the outdoors during a 4- or 2-night stay. \$360/*\$180

- Full Week: June 2-6
- Half Week: June 2-4* or 4-6*

BOLD SPIRITS

4th- thru 6th-grade campers experience 5 nights of Camp CILCA. \$360

- Session I: June 9-14
- Session II: July 7-12

DAUNTLESS SOULS

6th- thru 8th-grade campers gather for a screen-free week of life-changing outdoor adventure. \$360

- Session I: June 16-21
- Session II: July 14-19

FAMILY CAMP *New!*

Parents and children of any age are able to enjoy 4 days and 3 nights at camp with their family. \$500 for up to 5 family members + \$80 for each additional person.

- Session: July 24-27

We need you!

9th-graders and up, serve as a Junior Counselor or Joyful Hearts volunteer and enjoy camp absolutely free!

- Joyful Hearts Volunteer - June 2-6
- J.C. Training - May 28

GENERATIONS

Campers age 4 thru 4th grade are introduced to camp with a 1-night stay with a parent or other adult. \$70 per person

- Session I: June 14-15
- Session II: July 5-6

AQUA WEEK

4th- thru 6th-grade water-loving campers will enjoy a full week of water-based activities. \$360

- Session: July 7-12

ART, DRAMA, ATHLETICS & SURVIVAL

5th- thru 8th-grade campers choose one track—Art, Drama, Athletics, or Survival*—for the week & are led by experienced instructors. \$375

- Session: June 16-21

*SURVIVAL WEEK *New!*

Grades 6-8 learn fire starting, outdoor cooking, shelter building, sleeping under the stars, and more. Each day will teach and develop a new skill useful to surviving outdoors. Limited to 10 campers. \$375

- Session: June 16-21

PATHFINDERS

1st- thru 4th-grade campers break out on their own with a 2- or 3-night stay. \$155/*\$180

- Session I: May 29-31
- Session II: June 30-July 3*
- Session III: July 21-23

NIGHT OWL

6th- thru 8th-graders experience camp while staying up all night and sleeping all day. Enough said! \$360

- Session: July 14-19

INTREPID HEARTS

High school students enjoy the rejuvenation of God's creation through a week or half week of camp. \$360/\$180* (half)

- Full Week: June 23-28
- Half Week: June 26-28*

DAY CAMP *New!*

Grades 1-8 come for the day Monday – Friday. A daily lunch is provided. \$150/week.

- Session: Every week June 10-July 26

Register Today!

Find in-depth details on each camp & register* at:

WWW.CILCA.ORG

*\$75 deposit due at time of registration
Registration is according to the grade most recently completed.

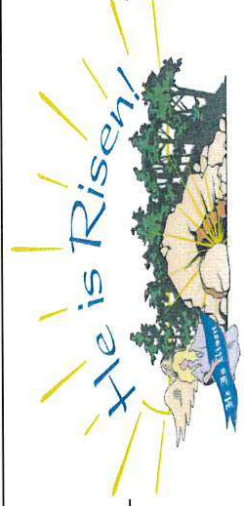


Camp CILCA exists to strengthen and foster faith in Jesus Christ and relationships with others in a unique outdoor setting.

Find out more at www.cilca.org

MARCH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Divine Service 8:30 A.M. Sunday School & Adult Bible Study follows Divine Service Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.	Stewardship & Outreach 6:00 P.M.		Midweek Lent Service 6:30 P.M.			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Divine Service with Communion 8:30 A.M. Sunday School & Adult Bible Study follows Divine Service Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.			Mary Martha Guild 2:00 P.M. Midweek Lent Service 6:30 P.M.			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Divine Service 8:30 A.M. Sunday School & Adult Bible Study follows Divine Service Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.			Midweek Lent Service 6:30 P.M.	Elders 5:30 P.M.		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Palm Sunday Divine Service with Communion 8:30 A.M. Sunday School & Adult Bible Study follows Divine Service Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.		Church Council 6:45 P.M.			Good Friday Service 6:30 P.M.	
31	1	Notes: Elder Brad Mahler				
Easter Sunday Divine Service with Communion 8:30 A.M. Breakfast following Divine Service						



*Zion's Newsletter
March, 2024*

*Zion Lutheran Church
Rev. Jeff Gross, Vacancy Pastor
525 North Cartwright
P.O. Box 167
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677*

(217) 626-1282



*Divine Service 8:30 A.M.
Sunday School 9:45 A.M.
Adult Bible Study 9:45 A.M.*

LCMS

*Email: zionpp@casscomm.com
Website: www.zionpp.net
Facebook: Zion Lutheran Church PP*