

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church – Oconomowoc  
Pentecost 9 – August 6, 2017  
“Thanks for the Gifts”  
Romans 9:1-5  
Rev. John Kelling, Emeritus

*Use this insert for home study of the text for today,  
and for personal assessment of your faith*

We take so much in life for granted. Our lives move at warp speed (yes, even for Seniors) and by the time we catch our breath on a past event, we are already actively moving on to something new. We hardly have a chance to reflect and celebrate the past moment. As a Christian, I think this is God's doing. Martin Luther says “*we live, and move, and have our being*” – everything guided and directed by our loving, heavenly Father. That means that **all** the events of our life are directed by God for our well-being. Yes, God does sweat the small stuff! Being “retired”, it's nice to have the time to stop and reflect on all that is happening in my life, but you don't have to be retired to do so. It's a matter of taking the time to do so. Stop and smell the roses in your life!

Let me help you focus in and smell the roses of God's gifts to you...

We all receive gifts from others from time to time.

- How do you respond for the gift?
- Do you analyze the giver's motives in giving it?
- Do you give an honest response to your thankfulness?
- How does the use of the gift remind you of the giver?

Think about the possessions of your life.

- What proportion did you obtain for yourself?
- Does the value of “your” gifts outweigh those received from others?

At some point our gifts & possessions lose their value.

- Is there a change in your sentimental attachment to the gift?
- What do you do with the unwanted gift?

Goodwill - re-gifting - or trash?

Think about the gifts God gives you.

- How does His gifts compare to the ones “you” obtained?
- How do we value the gift?
- Does the gift have a “lasting value”?

God blesses us with far more than we need or want. That’s because He loves us, and promises to provide for us. His gifts may not be on our wish or want list, but His gifts are **always** the right ones for us. It’s all in how we perceive and use the gift. Faith focuses our hearts and minds on the true intent of the gift and the Giver. When we realize it is **always** for our good, how can we think negatively or question the intent? Sin clouds and distorts our focus, and leads us to reject and resent the gift. Sinful human nature does not allow us to see the “lasting value” of the gift, nor cherish it as personally ours. There are those things (gifts) which God gives to us for earthly survival. Those are personally selected for each of us. Those “creature comforts” are readily seen, accepted and used without question. But His things (gifts) for our spiritual survival aren’t always understood, and may cause us to set a value for the gift.

- Have you ever questioned God’s gift at the time, and realized its true value later on? (maybe after it’s gone)
- Have you ever felt guilty trashing or re-gifting something God gave you? (yes, we all have done it!)

Some people give gifts with the hope of getting one back in return. Some people give gifts with hope of receiving high praise for their thoughtfulness.

- What do you think God expects in return?
- How does God want us to view and cherish His gifts?
- When might God approve of re-gifting our gifts to others?
- How can we best receive and use God’s abundant gift-giving to us?

***Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One,***

***Give thanks because He’s given Jesus Christ, His Son.***

***And now let the weak say “I am strong”,***

***Let the poor say, “I am rich”,***

***Because of what the Lord has done for us.***

***Give thanks! Give thanks!***

***-To God Be the Glory -***

# **BACK-TO-SCHOOL ALL CONGREGATION WORSHIP SERVICE**

**August 27<sup>th</sup>**

**10:30 am in the Sanctuary**

**(This will be the only worship service that weekend.)**

During this special Worship Service, we will ask God to bless the upcoming school year and have a special *blessing of the backpacks service* in which ALL school-age children (St. Paul's and all other schools) will have the opportunity to have their backpacks blessed.

The worship service will be followed by our annual picnic which will be a fundraiser for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders to earn money for their South Dakota trip in fall of 2018.

**If your last name begins with (please bring):**

**A-L**  
Side Dish

**M-Z**  
Dessert



Please join us for an enriching experience at the  
**2017 St. Paul's Marriage Retreat.**

November 10 - 12, 2017

***Celebrating the Journey with Christ:  
On the Same Page***

**Cost per couple:**

\$350 (**Early Bird Special**- If booked and paid **prior to 8/31/17**.  
The first 20 to register are also guaranteed Lake View Rooms)

\$375 (If booked **after 9/1/17**)                      Final Registration 9/18/17

This low cost includes 2 nights stay and a Dinner Buffet for two on  
Saturday night!

**Where: Blue Harbor Resort**

725 Blue Harbor Drive, Sheboygan, WI 53081

[www.blueharborresort.com](http://www.blueharborresort.com)    [www.visitsheboygan.com](http://www.visitsheboygan.com)

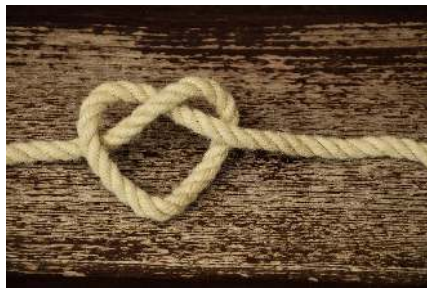
**Registration Form:** Please find this on [www.splco.org](http://www.splco.org).

**Questions? Email:** [stpaulmarriage@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulmarriage@gmail.com)

**Call or Text:** Linda Hertneky @ 651-206-8497

Angie Scharnell @ 920-285-1264

*A Cord of Three Strands is not Easily Broken*  
*Ecclesiastes 4:12*



***To help keep costs down there are Sponsorship opportunities!  
Sponsors will be recognized in the Epistle, Bulletin and at the  
Retreat. Thank you for supporting the Marriage Ministry!***

- Refreshment Breaks (3) - \$200
- AV and Conference Materials - \$250
- Sponsor a couple - \$375
- Friday Night Social Hour - \$500