

Jesus Alone at the Center

What do you think of when I say the word "church?" We often think of a building with very specialized furniture like a lectern and pulpit, things that are not in the average home. How do we go about improving "church?" Do we just dust the furniture and sweep the carpet? Jesus reminds us that external change alone is meaningless if it does not put Jesus back at the center of our life.

We at St. John put a lot of emphasis on externals. By itself that is NOT a bad thing. But if the reason for why we do the things we do does not directly connect us to Jesus, we must ask, have we missed the center meaning of everything we call "church?"

Sometimes, changing externals does give us the opportunity to renew Jesus as the center and focal point and to help us keep Him there—with no distractions, no additions and nothing else added to keep us from really seeing Jesus — and Jesus Alone! That is the *whole* point of what "church" is all about!



Say, next Sunday, I remove all the furniture in the front of the church? No altar, no pulpit, no lectern, no candles — nothing — just a bare sanctuary with only that large cross in the center. How would you react? Would you be able to worship? Would you walk out and leave? We cannot rely on externals as the primary source of our spiritual life. Listening to Scripture being read or passively hearing my sermons is NOT enough to help one have Jesus ALONE at the center of our lives. Relying primarily on our "church" gatherings on Sunday will only give us the bare minimum for our walk with Jesus. How are you being sustained throughout the week? How are you continuing to grow up in Christ to reach His full stature?

Preaching & Teaching – September 23rd

To help us all "grow-up in Christ," I will begin "Preaching and Teaching" on September 23rd. In addition to our Sunday morning time together, I provide preparation packets the week before that time of preaching and teaching, so that you have already read the text and wrestled with application questions on that portion of Scripture. You are not coming in "cold" that Sunday and hearing the text for the first time. In the preparation packets are also other articles, taking you deeper into aspects of that text, to further your growth in the Word of God.

On Sunday, I provide you with a sermon outline that takes apart the text of Scripture and puts them into bite size pieces for us to handle, understand and take to heart. Part of that outline will also give us exercises to do or challenging personal evaluations that provide us directions for our personal prayer. This way we fulfill what James said, "Be not hearers of the Word only, but also doers of the Word of God."

Beginning in September, we will embark on a 5-week study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, using as a theme "What It Means to Follow Jesus?" My goal in that first study is to really place Jesus at our center — Him and Him Alone! In November, we will participate in a 4-week study on people who have failed in their walk with God. We will look at the lives of the Samaritan Woman, Abraham, Miriam, and Peter. To accomplish all of this, our services on Saturday and Sunday will again be 90 minutes long. While some will complain, my purpose in this is to fill you up with the teachings of God's Word and to challenge you to take what you have learned and put it into practice.

But Saturdays and Sundays are not the only days when we can grow in understanding God's Word. I will be offering a variety of Bible Classes and Special Teaching Events for our members and any guests to grow up in Christ. These include:

Sunday, November 18th, at 7 PM

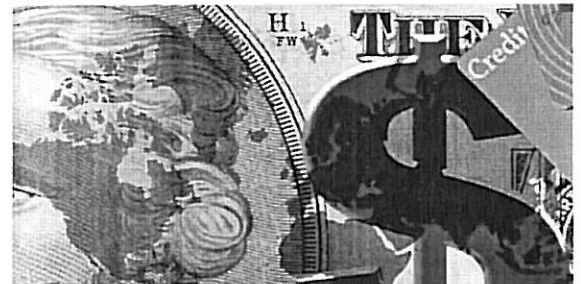
Does the Bible have anything to say about money and possessions and how we are to use it? You may be a little *SHOCKED* to find out that the Bible has lots to say about money and how our use of this blessing may even keep people from going to heaven. Jesus said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven..."

Pastor Jim will teach on what the Bible Says About Money. Come and find out. You will be glad you did!

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MONEY



Special MUSIC

Zion Lutheran Church
2062 E. 30th Street
Cleveland

Sunday, September 9th @ 3:00 p.m.

Benefit concert with the free will offerings to benefit capital repairs to the church and school buildings.

Social hour to follow the concert.

Dear members of St John,

Nancy Jo and I thank you for your generous gifts and kind words on the occasion of our Farewell Party. A delicious meal and dessert is always a fine way for friends to gather. My prayer for you is that you would always gather together for fellowship but in an ever expanding circle of friends as you encourage each other to reach out to and care for the people of Elyria.

Please pray for us, as we seek Father God's plan for the next step for our lives. I am currently on the Call lists of two different churches.

One in Walled Lake, Michigan and another in Norfolk, Nebraska.

With an opportunity developing to serve at Luther Memorial School--as a caregiver to the families of the school with the intention of sharing Jesus and starting to worship together--there are a variety of possibilities for God to work with. In the mean-time, I will be getting out the brushes and rollers and doing some painting jobs while deciding where to sign on as a substitute teacher.

Once again, thank you for your demonstrated love as we say "Auf Wiedersehen" because Christians never really have to say goodbye.

Peace,
Michael <+>

We appreciate
your gifts