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'I Fix Pumps'

Essay by the Rev. Lou Hesse



One of the parishioners in my church used to be deeply bothered by what he was "doing for the Lord." After high school, he had enrolled in college with the intent of becoming a pastor. Sadly, that college did its best to disabuse him of his pastoral ambition by regularly hammering on his home-taught values and conceptions of the Christian faith. He began to doubt his giftedness for ministry, eventually returning to his hometown and working in his family's electrical and pump repair business. After a time, he decided to strike out on his own, opening an independent pump repair enterprise. But there was still something nagging at him — a sense of a call to serve the Lord in some way.

He came to me at the time with his frustration, wondering if perhaps he should go to Africa to supervise drilling wells and creating domestic water supplies for poor communities. The married father of four, he was established in the community, a leader in the local church, and an all-around upstanding citizen.


When he mentioned this possibility under the umbrella of "serving the Lord," I replied that he had always been serving the Lord. He regularly served the needs of his neighbors, providing them with services that they did not have the means to accomplish themselves. I pointed out to him that if I had a pump in a well malfunction on a 100° day when I had 4,000 hogs on feed, there was nothing I needed more than a qualified pump repair man. And indeed, he had helped me through several of those occasions in the past.

Our Lutheran doctrine of vocation has often been cited as the second great insight of Martin Luther regarding Christian faith, with the article on justification by faith alone rightly holding pride of place. In medieval times, vocational superiority was reserved for monks, nuns, and priests. Everyone was to recognize the supremacy of those lifestyles

and works in the community. Building on the insights of St. Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, Luther insisted on the dignity of all kinds of works for the benefit of the neighbor. Luther described vocation as the "mask of God" behind which God operates to bring needed blessings to all of humankind.

Luther is quite entertaining in his comparisons as he drives home the point that things done to serve the neighbor are, in reality, things done by God, through people, to serve the neighbor. He would make comments like "a Christian shoemaker is not one who makes shoes with little crosses on them, but a shoemaker who makes shoes that fit well" and "a milkmaid who makes sure that my little children have milk on their morning table does a better work than a thousand monks on their knees praying."

My own thoughts on vocation gained greater clarity at the time I graduated from Iowa State University. Dr. Haynes, an old bachelor prof who had advised hundreds of students over his long career, asked me what I was going to do now that I was graduating. My response was, "I am just going home to farm." Dr. Haynes gently rebuked me that I was not "just" going home to farm, but that I was going home to engage in one of the oldest and most important tasks — putting food on the table of a hungry humanity in a cost-effective, healthful, and ecologically sound way. I have never forgotten his admonition, and have found it to be completely consistent with Luther's thoughts on vocation. It is a worthy task which I continue to enjoy, even as I also now serve in a pastoral vocation.

At the end of the day, "Well done, good and faithful servant" applies to a lot more tasks in addition to preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. The last few times I have heard my parishioner speak on what he does, he brightens and says, "I fix pumps." 

Lou Hesse of Moses Lake, Washington, is pastor at Living Word Lutheran Church.

Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



PSALM 2:7-12

Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot
in vain?

The kings of the earth
set themselves, and
the rulers take counsel
together, against the
Lord and against his
Anointed, saying, "Let
us burst their bonds
apart and cast away
their cords from us."

He who sits in the
heavens laughs; the
Lord holds them in
derision. ...

"You shall break them
with a rod of iron and
dash them in pieces
like a potter's vessel."

Of the 53 parts of George Fredrich Handel's oratorio "The Messiah," 11 are based on psalms. Immediately preceding the Hallelujah Chorus — arguably the best-known of the work — are four pieces for bass, tenor and chorus which are Psalm 2:1-4,9.

Sandwiched between the soprano's "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15) and "Hallelujah! The Lord omnipotent reigneth" (Revelation 19:6), Handel gives us the "How dare they!" and the comeuppance of Psalm 2 — "Why do the nations so furiously rage together? Why do the people imagine a vain thing? ... Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Psalm 2 was composed for the coronation of Davidic kings, and beyond this specific application, it is fulfilled in the Anointed One — Jesus, the Messiah, whose kingdom reaches to the ends of the earth.

Rather than seeking freedom and self-rule, says Psalm 2, seek refuge and blessing in the Lord.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Read the Psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for your own personal devotions or in a short Bible study session with group discussion.

1. What is the inevitable outcome when "kings of the earth" and "the rulers" (v. 2) set themselves against the Lord and against the Son? How long might it take before this outcome is seen (v. 5)?
2. Compare Psalm 1:6 and Psalm 2:12. What are the two themes of these introductory psalms? How does each psalm address them?
3. What foreshadowing of Matthew 28:18 is seen in Psalm 2:7-8?
4. Read Isaiah 45:9, Jeremiah 19:11, and Luke 20:18. Compare with Psalm 2:9. How do pottery and other "made" things hold up in the face of the anger of their maker (or Maker)? Is this another inevitable outcome, or are there alternatives (v. 12)?

PRAYER

Lord God, send your Spirit that we may see human vanity for what it is and not set our faith in our own and other human counsel. Guard our hearts and minds against evil and grant us understanding to know right ways. Help us always to seek refuge in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The author of this installment, **Karen Nelson** of Bertrand, Nebraska, is general editor of Connections Online and owner of Karen Nelson Editing and Design.

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World Mission Prayer League



Ministry Partner Focus by Leslie Urie

LEARN MORE

Discernment

Young adults who may be wondering if this is a community that might welcome them in their faith-walk as they discern God's mission call on their lives can apply and live in community for up to a year in the Discipleship House of the Prayer League.

In Prayer

To help members know how to pray and what to pray, there are print resources, online aids, and prayer events. Staff are ready and want to encourage church fellowships how to grow their effectiveness in praying for the world.

Contact

WMPL has offices in the U.S. and Canada. Learn more at wmpl.org.

There is a beautiful contemporary hymn that asks some pertinent questions for 2025: "Do you feel the world is broken? Do you feel the shadows deepen? Is all creation groaning? Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst?" ("Is He Worthy?" by Andrew Peterson, 2018).

For decades the praying members of the World Mission Prayer League have sought God's heart for the world as an answer to these questions. Prayer has been described as "our working method" and that is most certainly true! Members come from urban and rural landscapes, mega-church and house-church settings. But the World Mission Prayer League is not just a group of pray-ers. It is a group of God-called go-ers as well. Specifically, "We are a praying community committed to knowing Christ, sharing the Good News and ourselves with those who do not know him, and discipling and mobilizing believers world-wide."

Prayer League workers have a heart to follow God's leading into some of the most difficult places that the good news has yet to reach. They do that through humanitarian efforts, medical outreach, business, and discipleship opportunities. They do that all with an eye toward God "supplying all our needs." They go to Asia, Latin America, and Africa.


For decades there has been a small group of global workers living among the Samburu people in Kenya. Seeds of faith were planted but the

"... sharing the Good News and ourselves with those who do not know him ..."

ground was dry and thirsty, and it wasn't until 2024 that baptisms began to occur — in the hundreds! Pray now for mentors for these young believers.

A vision of healthcare for the poor women and children of Dinajpur District in Bangladesh grew into a 150-bed general hospital that since 1983 has provided health care for the community. The work among the Santal people joined the Prayer League in this important medical work.

One of the hardest places to staff for any length of time was where the brave single women medical workers far outlasted most couples and families. Christian Hospital Tank staff have cared for, and prayed for, many in the precious name of Jesus, but the seeds there are on very dry and hard soil. Pray for this work located in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan in Central Asia.

We invite you to join us in prayer, to sign up for the newsletter, to attend an online event, to form a prayer team, to become an inquirer. If you feel the world is broken, but believe there is a Light within our midst, we would love to have you join us as the World Mission Prayer League. 

Leslie Urie of Seattle works remotely as the Program Lead for the Prayer Mobilization program for the World Mission Prayer League.

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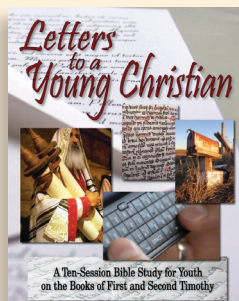
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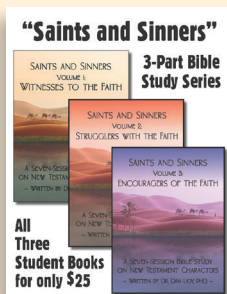


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YOUTH PICK

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STUDY SERIES

The three-part "Saints and Sinners" series by Dan Lioy, PhD, is a set of New Testament character studies designed to enrich your understanding of life with Christ and encourage you in discipleship. [Item A-5040, \\$25, solapublishing.com](#)

THIS MONTH'S UNEXPECTEDLY AWESOME RESOURCE

Holy Families! is a daily devotional for use in the home and free for everyone to use.


Written by Kelly Hanson of Eaton, Ohio, and Rev. Dr. Steven King of Graham, North Carolina, and produced by Sola Publishing, Holy Families! was initiated by the North American Lutheran Church and funded through a generous grant from Thrivent in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.

The Holy Families! online resource has a wealth of information and activities for use in family devotions, prayers and faith formation.

Visit holyfamillytime.com to find child-parent learning tools, including worksheets and activity

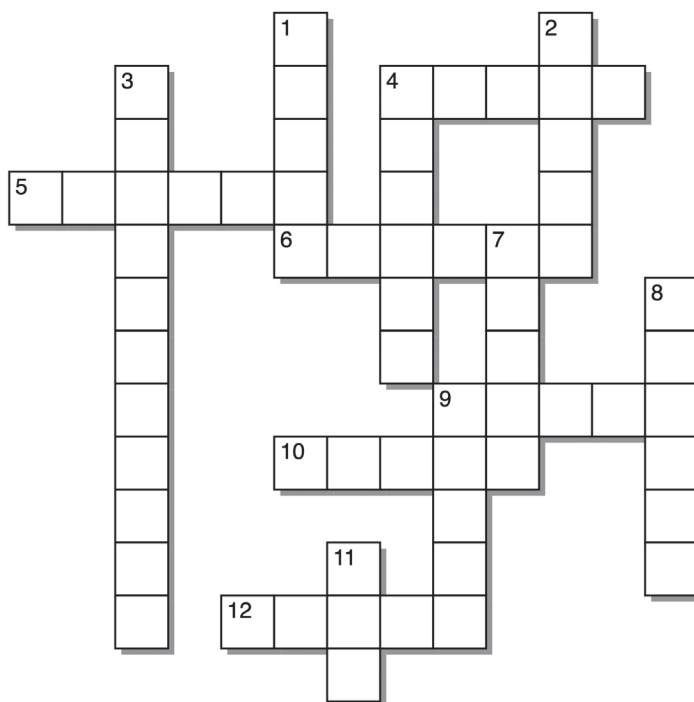


ideas that could be used for home school, as well as resources for vacation Bible school, youth group meetings, confirmation retreats, scavenger hunts and much more.

Holy Families! content refreshes daily and can be integrated in a church or organization website. Contact Sola Publishing to learn more. 

... AND A GAME

Playing in print? Test your knowledge of Lent with this crossword puzzle. Reading Connections Online though your browser? Try this [jigsaw puzzle](#) from Rev. Mark Ryman.



Across

- 4) He carried the cross.
- 5) Color of the season.
- 6) The "good" day Jesus died.
- 9) He denied the Lord three times.
- 10) He betrayed Jesus with a kiss.
- 12) Focus of the season.

Down

- 1) He said to Jesus, "Remember me."
- 2) Number of days in Lent.
- 3) What comes after "I'm sorry."
- 4) The season that comes after winter.
- 7) What's left after burning.
- 8) Place where Jesus prayed.
- 9) They used these in Jesus' parade.
- 11) Who Jesus died for.