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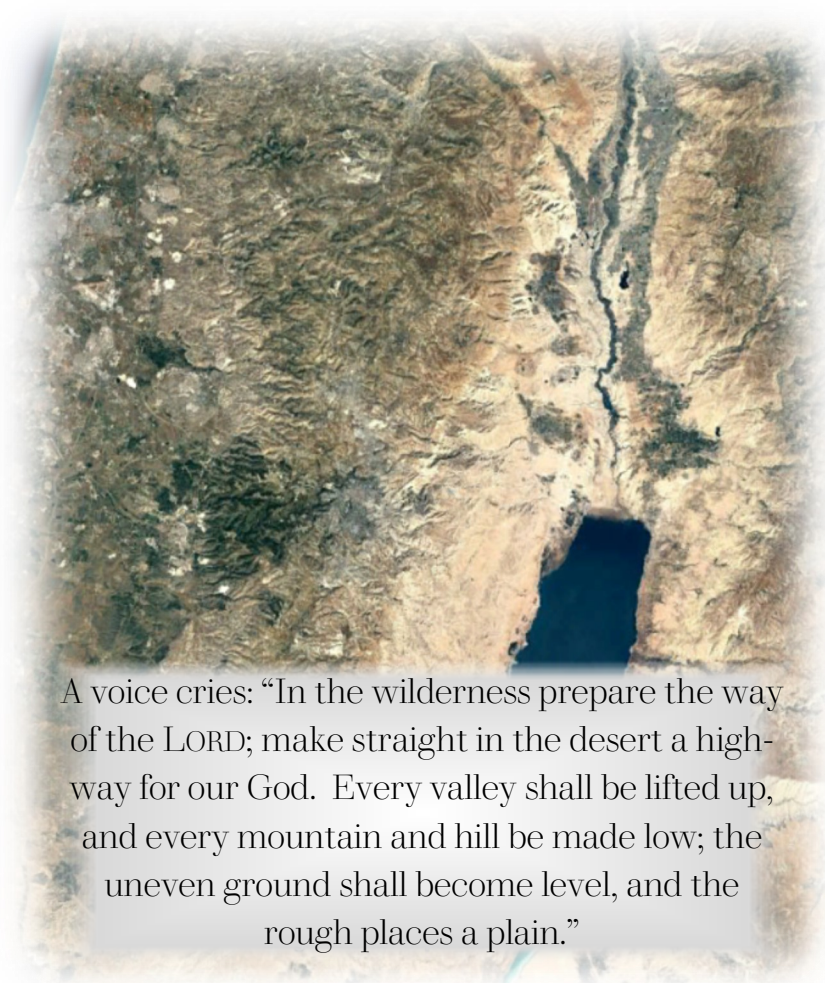
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Additional Material

Missionary material is found at prayercards.lcms.org
Cover map from Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies
stretches over the Promised Land with the Mediterranean Sea on
the left and the Dead Sea and Jordan River on the right

The Word of the Lord Grows

Forty Day Lent Devotions



A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way
of the LORD; make straight in the desert a high-
way for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low; the
uneven ground shall become level, and the
rough places a plain.”

March 2-7

Acts 11:19-30

Matthew 8:5-13

2 Kings 5:1-14

Acts 6:1-7

Genesis 12:10-20

And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

The 1927 Yankees were so chock-full of All-Stars that their lineup was called the “Murderer’s Row.” Antioch’s first-century lineup was the churchly equivalent: “Redeemed Row.”

The fact that the name “Christian” first fell upon the church in Antioch reveals that people had noticed and were talking about the new things happening among Christ’s people. Antioch’s church took a major step in bringing the Gospel to Gentiles. Antioch organized and sent out missionaries around the world. There the Spirit sent prophets to warn about a famine, confident in a generous response of care for others.

How did Antioch become this powerhouse? Jewish Christians were exiled from their homeland. This was heart-breaking. Losing your home is miserable enough, but for Jewish followers of Israel’s true Messiah, there was added sorrow. God’s people continued to reject their Lord and their salvation.


You could imagine that these Christians in exile might be angry or despairing. You could imagine that when word of a worldwide famine came, they would be fearful. They had already lost so much; they needed to take care of themselves. Instead, though, they trusted that their Good Shepherd had been leading them through this all. That they bore the cross, following Him, is not just the sign but the cause of the All-Star church.

“Redeemed Row” may sound a rhetorical reach, except that these saints who bore the cross kept rising. They bore exile and rose to found a great church. They bore scorn from their homeland and rose to find new brothers and sisters among the Greeks. They bore famine and rose to found their cup of grace overflowing. Redeemed in Christ, they will rise to eternal glory.

- Rev. Daniel Guagenti

We pray

Fill us with the zeal of Your Spirit, never turning from the cross, confident You are turning all to good, raising us through eternity. Amen.



Pray for

REV. CHARLES AND DEBORAH ST-ONGE
AREA FACILITATOR
 SERVING THE LORD IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION



Rev. Charles and Deborah St-Onge serve the Lord through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In his role as a regional area facilitator, Charles helps strengthen Christ’s work in the Cayman Islands, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. He assists with theological education and evangelist and deaconess training. He also opens new fields and ministries and develops and expands existing ones. When not helping in this work, Charles serves as the mission pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, working with French-, English- and Chinese-worshipping communities.

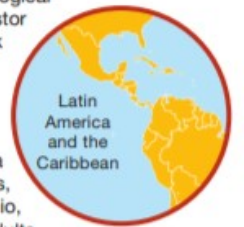
Charles was born in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in engineering. He received his Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. He also holds a Master of Theology in Science and Religion degree from South African Theological Seminary (based in Bryanston, South Africa). Charles served as a pastor in Philadelphia, Pa., and Houston, Texas. He is the author of the book “5 Things You Can Do to Appreciate Science and Love the Bible” (CPH, 2013). Charles is also a frequent guest on the Issues, Etc. radio program.

Deborah was born in Middletown, Ohio. She has a bachelor’s degree in music education from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and a master’s degree in music education from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Deborah has taught music and music education in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Indiana, preschool-aged children through adults. She is currently serving as a full-time mother and volunteering when she can.

Charles and Deborah have two daughters, Olivia and Sophia. They both attend public school in Quebec, studying in French and English and sharing the Gospel with their classmates.

Pray for the St-Onge family as they serve in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Pray for Charles and his safety as he travels in this region and for Deborah and the girls while he is away. Pray for all missionaries, wherever they are serving, that the plans of the Evil One to frustrate Christ’s work may not discourage them, but that the Gospel would be freely preached to all people of all tribes and languages on earth. Pray for continued financial provision for the St-Onge family so they may continue to serve. Give thanks the St-Onge family is serving God’s children in this part of the world.

- **BIRTHDAYS:** Charles – Dec. 31, Deborah – Oct. 11, Olivia – Aug. 9, Sophia – Jan. 13
- **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY:** Aug. 12
- **HOME DISTRICT:** SELC
- **SUPPORTING DISTRICTS:** Ohio and Texas



- **Pray daily for Charles and Deborah** — and how you can support and tell others about their ministry. Visit lcms.org/stonge
- **Learn about LCMS international work** at lcms.org/international
- **Support and adopt an international worker.** Call 888-930-4438.

March 6, 2020

Read Genesis 12:10-20

But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai.

If you think of the Scriptures as the biographies of moral heroes, Genesis 12 should make you think again. Not for the first time, Abram (later to be Abraham), lies about his wife and passes her off as his sister. He does this, not to protect her, but to protect himself: “Say you are my sister, that it may go well with *me* because of you, and that *my* life may be spared” (Gen. 12:13). Behold Abram, chosen of God, throwing his wife under the bus.

If this Word of the Lord is not meant to hold up Abram as a moral example, then what *is* it meant to teach us? For one, it reminds us that interactions between the people of God and those outside the household of faith are fraught with risk. The people of this world do not play by God’s rules. What else would we expect? We ought to think through how we will handle certain situations before they arise. That way we will, Lord willing, be more courageous than Abram when the time arises.

Second, it is often impossible to avoid difficult moral situations. We have been called by our Lord to be in the world but not of it (John 17:15-16). As individual Christians, and as the church, we cannot avoid Pharaoh and his ilk. They do not have the mind of Christ as we do. It is up to us to provide a good moral witness. In the words of pseudo-Dionysius, we share a common table but not a common bed.

Most importantly, we ought to trust that the Lord will work His good and gracious will in all circumstances. Who knows how He will afflict Pharaoh and give us an opportunity to share the Good News of reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ? We too fail to keep God’s law. Our righteousness is not found in our morality but in Jesus’ sacrificial death at the cross.

- Rev. Charles St-Onge

We pray

Gracious Father, prepare us for our encounters with Pharaoh, and cause us to be good witnesses to Christ in all circumstances. Amen.

Read Matthew 8:5-13

March 3, 2020

Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word....

Many early hearers of Matthew’s Gospel would have shuddered a bit when they heard about the Centurion. The Romans were the vile oppressors, and a Centurion would have been the highest ranking Roman there. He would have been in charge of maintaining order. So imagine the surprise of the people around Jesus when this Gentile oppressor comes and asks Jesus to heal his servant. The nerve! Why, Jesus ought to just strike this centurion down with a worse disease!

The first surprise is that Jesus offers to go with the centurion—to his house! Good Jewish folk didn’t enter Gentile homes. Why, there might be pig’s blood or worse in there! You could be defiled for days or weeks from what you might touch. But Jesus just boldly offers to go. However, this centurion knows the Jewish community. He knows that Jesus entering his home would be a scandal. So then comes the second surprise.

The centurion understands Jesus and His authority. The centurion instructs his servants, and they do things. The centurion also obeys his superiors. So he asks Jesus to simply speak, trusting that there will be healing, for the centurion knows the power of His Word. And Jesus speaks, and the servant is healed.

God’s Word is power. His Word of forgiveness and life often comes to people we wouldn’t expect. No one would have expected this centurion to believe, and yet Jesus marvels at his faith. Likewise, we shouldn’t be surprised at the people whom the Spirit brings to faith, even people we’d never expect. The Word of God goes forth, and many from east and west are brought into the Kingdom, even such unworthy people as us!

- Rev. Eric Brown

We pray

Heavenly Father, may Your Word have free course throughout the world, that many would be given the gift of faith and be brought to share in salvation with us. This we pray in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.

March 4, 2020

Read 2 Kings 5:1-14

If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him.

While many are familiar with Naaman and his miraculous healing, most probably do not recall how he ended up in Israel looking for Elisha. That all came about because a young girl shared her confidence in God to someone in need. The child had been kidnapped by the Syrians during a raid of Israel. Separated from her family, surely resentful towards her captors, the girl served faithfully. Furthermore, she kept faith in the true God, speaking of Him freely to her master's wife. Her witness planted the seed of faith in Naaman's soul that flourished as it was watered by the evangelism of Elisha the prophet.

This unnamed child of Scripture provides an example in vocation that continues to teach us today. Often, we may find ourselves serving in jobs or capacities that are not our first choice. While we may not be enslaved as that child was, the circumstances and needs of our family may prevent us from "moving on" to something more desirable. Yet, no matter where we are or what we are doing, it is good for us to remember what our chief calling is as God's children – to be a shining light of God's love in a world filled with the darkness of disobedience and death.

The Son of God took on flesh and entered our world in order to serve and save us. He has given us the task to continue in His stead. We have the gift of eternal life, freely bestowed upon us. Now, we enter the world, through our daily callings and vocations, to bring that message to those in need. As Jesus has loved us, so now we love our neighbor, providing for both their physical and spiritual needs.

- Rev. William G. Sabol

We pray

Gracious Lord, You came among us so long ago to love us to the end of the cross. Create in us the joy of Your resurrection, that we may be witnesses to those around us through our words and deeds. Amen.

Read Acts 6:1-7

March 5, 2020

The word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly.

God's Word cannot be stopped. God's Holy Spirit will continue to grow faith whenever and wherever the seeds of the Gospel are sown, and the early church is such a wonderful example of that happening. A few chapters before this passage, Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin for speaking about Jesus (Acts 4:1-22). Ananias and Sapphira lied about how much they earned in the sale of a piece of property which caused a great fear to come upon the church (Acts 5:1-11). And now the members of the early church were struggling with a complaint from the Hellenists and the daily distribution for the needy. And yet, God's Word continued to spread throughout Jerusalem and more and more people continued to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

The church today faces challenges that are similar to the challenges of the early church. There is opposition from people outside the church. We face struggles with those who do not agree with our message and don't think it should be shared. We have struggles within our walls as well. Church members don't always act in brotherly love towards one another. There are difficulties and disagreements for how church resources should be allocated, and strong opinions can often lead to hurt feelings and controversy. But God's Word will not be stopped. The Holy Spirit will continue to grow faith whenever and wherever God's Word is shared. So we can continue to firmly trust that God is in control and boldly share His Word with the world around us.

- Rev. Benjamin Micheel

We pray

Lord of the Church, send us out into the world with Your Gospel message and the boldness we need to continue to share it with others. Help us to continue to trust that Your Word will not be stopped, no matter the obstacles that are placed in front of it. In Jesus' name. Amen.