

Pastor's Article for January 2018

The Church Year begins with Advent followed by the season of Christmas. In the liturgical calendar, it is called The Time of Christmas. Christmas does not end on December 26, it is just beginning. The Time of Christmas is twelve days through January 6, The Epiphany of Our Lord. The Liturgical church year teaches us about the life of Christ during the first half of the church year called the Festival Half, while the second half, or Non-Festival Half, teaches us about the work of the church to proclaim Christ to the world. We are in the Festival Half of the church year which shows us what Christ has done for us in His life, ministry, death and resurrection. The Time of Christmas, which teaches us God's promise of a Savior coming to earth and becoming man, is fulfilled in the birth of Christ. Dr. C.F.W. Walther (The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's first President) writes.

“What happened in Bethlehem was the fulfillment of that eternal decree of the heavenly Father. As soon as His Son became man, the unbearable burden of all humanity's sin was laid upon Him. And so, as Christ, God's sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the whole world, lay in a hard crib in the dark stable, the eyes of God looked into the future to see His Son already dying on the cross. Therefore, this atonement for sins, by which God's holiness and righteousness were satisfied and men were reconciled to Him, was already as good as accomplished.”

No wonder this season of Joy is filled with celebrating God's perfect gift to mankind, as Jesus Christ, the Savior is born! We celebrate with joy through the Christmas season, which begins December 25 and goes through January 6th because God's promises are delivered in Christ and that brings forgiveness, life and salvation through Him. His promises are considered as good as done even at His birth thus, giving assurance that His promises are as good as done now as He keeps us in true faith to life eternal.

Even as we begin January 2018, in the midst of the Christmas season, we will end January in the midst of the Epiphany season. The season of Epiphany is a “Season of Lights” emphasizing the manifestation of God, in Jesus as man. The early Christians called The Feast of The Epiphany the “Theophany,” (revelation of God). Later, Western Christians focused on God's revelation to the Wise Men or Magi (St. Matthew 2:1-12) to emphasize God's revelation to the Gentiles (the rest of the world) that all would know of Christ. The season begins with The Baptism of Our Lord as Jesus is revealed as the Savior and begins His miracles. These events in the ministry and life of Jesus are included in the church year to teach us and others about God's intervention in human history, thus His plan of salvation for the world.

What a joyful time we are in even during the darkest part of the year for us in the Northern Hemisphere, that we are given the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, our Savior! The church year helps us focus on the life of Christ and what He has done and continues to do for us. He nourishes us with His Word and Sacrament, He intercedes for us with the Father as we face the complexities and temptations of this world. He prepares a place for us that when our hour has come, or He returns, we have a heavenly home with Him by His grace.

I pray you enjoy fully The Time of Christmas and the Season of Epiphany as you are blessed richly by God's Word and Sacrament offered to you each week. Through His Divine Service in which He bestows His continual flow of grace and mercy, forgiveness, life and salvation and through the study of His Word which strengthens us and prepares us for our work in His kingdom, we receive the abundance of His love for us in Christ.

My family and I pray for God's grace for you during the remaining Time of Christmas and into Epiphany as we see God's promises carried out through our Savior Jesus Christ!
Thank you all again for your kindness, blessings and gifts and for your service to the Lord and His church as we all work together serving Him in 2018 and beyond! A Blessed New Year to all in Christ our Lord!

In Christ,
Pastor Ahrendt