

Cross



Words

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How can I be happy when the future is so uncertain?

“Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.”

Matthew 13:16



Every generation talks about the “good ole days.” As we embark on a new year, many people would be more than happy to go back to the “good ole days” of years ago.

Today, stock market swoons, foreclosures, and unemployment are all too common. Grumbling and complaining occur as many people find it difficult to provide for their personal needs. These things, along with other personal struggles, may make us long for the “good ole days.”

Amidst all the turmoil, even when nest eggs crack and portfolios decline, we can still move forward with certainty that all of our needs will be met. Why? Because Jesus has met all of our true needs and promises to provide for our future!

Jesus came into the world so that we can be happy every day with the kind of joy that only he can provide. He blesses us—makes us happy—by the powerful things he accomplished in our place: he lived a perfect life as our substitute; he died on the cross to win forgiveness of sins for each of us; and he won the victory over sin, death, and the devil by his triumphant resurrection from the grave.

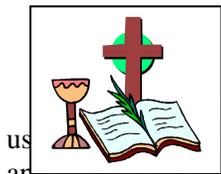
God tells us about all these blessings in the Bible. In his written Word, God’s plan for our future is laid out, and we are informed how Jesus fulfilled God’s saving will for us. Jesus said, *“Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears*

because they hear.” Our Savior teaches us that we can be happy as we give attention to God’s love as it is described and explained for us on the pages of Scripture.

Jesus’ work is not limited to the spans of generations; it is a gift to all people for all time. God’s faithfulness to his world of people has remained the one constant since he created all things. Trusting in his love, we can overcome concerns we have due to personal circumstances. We can be truly happy because we see in the Bible how our Savior gave his life for us and how he is now preparing for us an eternal home in heaven, the place of unbridled joy.

God invites everyone to hear the good news of Jesus and celebrate the wonderful message of salvation. With that confidence, we do not have to look back to the “good ole days” for a sense of happiness but rather look forward to the eternal happiness that awaits us in heaven—all because of God’s great love for us in Jesus!

Useful symbols for real truths



The mark of the church is the gospel proclaimed in Word and sacraments. The Word of God, our precious Bible, is a book of words; it uses language to tell the story of God’s love for man. The Bible’s story is a real story not a symbolic one.

Sacraments, instituted by our Lord, use physical elements that convey God’s love for us. Holy Baptism uses the washing away of sin, and the Lord’s Supper uses bread and wine to show Christ’s sacrifice of body and blood. But the sacraments are tragically misunderstood if we make them to be merely symbolic of gospel truth—they are gospel.

As we consider symbols for the Word and sacraments, keep in mind that the actual Word and sacraments are not symbols of something else.

An open book is the best symbol for the Bible—open to show that it is used and accessible to all people. Another good symbol for the Word of God is a lamp. This image was first used by the writer of Psalm 119:105. The law is commonly represented by two symbols: two tablets of stone for the Ten Commandments (One to Three on one tablet and Four to Ten on the other) and a scroll for the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Bible. Although we have no corresponding symbol for the gospel, a useful symbol is the one for the office of the keys. Two keys on a ring remind us that Christ gave his church the power to forgive the sins of penitent sinners and to retain the sins of impenitent sinners (Matthew 16:19).

The baptismal font itself can be a rich source of symbolism. For example, its shape may signify different concepts (circular for eternity or octagonal for rebirth), and its placement can be symbolically important. When placed in the front of church, the font reminds the congregation of Baptism’s central place in church life. When placed in the entry, it signifies the beginning of a Christian’s life of faith. The font is also a clear reminder of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the congregation of believers, even when a baptism is not being performed. The other common symbol for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the picture of a shell with three drops of water below it, the drops representing the Trinity.

We commonly symbolize the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, by a picture that shows the chalice and a wafer. In this picture, the wafer is above the bowl of the chalice. Lutherans have often placed the letters I. N. R. I. or I. H. S. on the wafer to show Jesus Christ’s real presence in the bread and wine. The other common symbol for the Lord’s Supper is a picture of bread or wheat combined with a bunch of grapes. Real truths expressed symbolically.

God’s Goals for Your Roles

by Pastor Mark Jeske

This is the next part of a continuing series, that presents some thoughts about your life from our wonderful God. It is intended to help you see yourself more and more as a priceless creation, expensively redeemed by Christ, powered up by the Spirit, and able to change and grow and improve the way you treat other people in whatever roles God has called you.

I. Husbands and Fathers (Part3)

Good Fathers Discipline in Love

Women love emotional sharing. Sometimes their husbands drive them crazy because they just don't seem to feel anything or want to talk about things of the heart. But, ladies, there is a huge upside here. Men can discipline without melting emotionally. They can insist on right behavior even when the kids think they are too cool, too busy, or too smart to have to endure this clearly unnecessary hardship.

Happy is the family where there is a man who knows how to show tough love. God's view? *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it* (Hebrews 12:11).

Because God made males less emotionally vulnerable, they can ignore the squawking and woofing that always erupts from immature youth and not take it personally or cave. Isn't it a pleasure to be with children whose dad has spent the energy and time to discipline them when they were young? Paging all dads—your family needs your loving discipline!

DEALING WITH GETTING OLDER IN THE NEW YEAR

With the beginning of a new year, it's common to think of getting older. Aren't some of the people we admire the most those who grow old gracefully? Any idiot can complain about what age does to the human body – sight and hearing fade, memory fails, hair falls out, the chin gets baggy and clothes shrink. Nobody wants to hear about your operation or what how age has made your life more difficult.

What we really need are inspiring examples of how God's people use, to the glory of God, the unique powers and insights that come with maturity. We need stories of how people overcome physical limitations to do great things for other people.

Leave being beautiful and strong to the young people. We older folks just want to be useful. We would like to be respected for the sacrifices we have made for the next two generations. We would like our words of wisdom to be listened to because we have earned the right to be listened to. And we want to finish the most important work of all – passing on our faith.

Let's make this resolution – to stop whining about getting old and to do the important work the psalmist encourages us to do. *Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation* (Ps 71:18)

What would Happen If We Treated our Bible Like Our Cell Phone?

- *if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?*
- *if we flipped through it several times a day?*
- *if we turned back to get it if we forgot it?*
- *If we used it to receive messages from the text?*
- *If we treated it like we couldn't live without it?*
- *If we gave it to our kids as gifts?*
- *If we used it when we traveled*
- *If we used it in cases of emergency?*

Humm? – where is my Bible? – What are my priorities?

One more thing, unlike our cell phones, we don't have to worry about being disconnected because Jesus has paid the bill.

