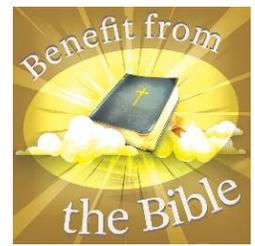




Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Truth — Forgiveness — Assurance — Peace — Guidance

Everyone Is Invited to Benefit!



January 28, 2024

Dear Members of Bethlehem,

Greetings in Jesus' name!

I missed seeing you at Bethlehem this past Saturday / Sunday; therefore, I'm writing to you. (For our members who are unable to attend, I understand, but I still want you to keep reading with an open mind.) It would be easier for me to not write, but I chose to write because I love you, I care about you, I want God's best for you!

You may have missed attending because you are ill (may the Lord heal you soon) or out of town (I hope the Lord blessed your trip), or you may have decided that someone or something in your life is more important than Jesus. Whatever your reason, I urge you to keep reading.

If there are multiple people in your household who are Bethlehem members and missed attending this past weekend, please urge them to also read what I wrote. Thanks!

Since you are currently on the Bethlehem membership list, I have an official / spiritual responsibility for your soul. Consider this passage: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). I'm here to help you! Please keep reading...

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**This information was shared with all who attended on January 27 and 28**

**Dear Bethlehem Members:** I have some VERY IMPORTANT THINGS to share with you!

As you read and think, keep this in mind: For me, many years ago, I thought I was a Christian and heaven-bound, when, in fact, I was hell-bound and didn't even know it☹️. The same can be true for anyone. I cannot change you, but the Holy Spirit works through the Bible to open our spiritual eyes and change our lives, so I am begging you to be open to what I have written. I so much want you to ☺️be saved, ☺️know you are saved – based on the Bible, and ☺️be filled with amazing peace and joy!

The members of Bethlehem tend to fall into one of these three categories:

**Faithful** – That word describes an important core group within our congregation. The faithful ones do most or all the following: they ➡attend every week (unless they are ill or out of town), ➡give generously toward the work of God's kingdom, ➡serve according to their abilities, and ➡keep learning and living the Bible. These words from **3 John** help to express my feelings: "...I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (1:3-4). Thanks so much! God bless you!

**Struggling** – That word describes some of our key members. I think the struggling one's desire to ➡attend every week, ➡give generously, ➡serve,

and live as Christians, *but they are probably being pulled in many directions*. If you are in this category, please carefully consider this advice:

- Compare your life in Christ now with years ago (*church, Bible class, living for Christ*): Are you growing (great, keep going) or declining? Over the years, I have seen many drift away☹. Jesus said: “...most people's love [for God] will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12). **Don't be in that category!**
- Jesus said: “...seek **first** [God's] kingdom and His righteousness...” (Matt. 6:33). We are all tempted to put common sense, family, job, sports, etc. first. **Let us repent and listen to Jesus!**
- Jesus said: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny** himself, and **take up his cross daily and follow Me**” (Lk. 9:23). We certainly want to follow Jesus all the way to heaven; so, wherever necessary, **let us repent!** May our lives consistently show our saving relationship with Jesus!

**Failing** – Unfortunately, that word describes many on our membership list. I do not know anyone's heart, *but I am familiar with their church-connected actions*. This phrase is true: *Actions speak louder than words*. When we say, *but do not do*, we reveal our state of deception. Think about these verses:

- “...prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). Some hear and don't do☺; others don't even hear☹. If that is you, *be open to God's word!*
- “There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).
- Jesus said: “...unless you repent [sorrow and trust], you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).
- “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

What do we all need on a regular basis? We desperately need to ★hear God's word, ★be sorry for our sins (**which includes stopping them**), ★trust anew in Jesus for eternal life, and ★cooperate with the Holy Spirit to move us into the category of the faithful as noted above. Since Jesus will come “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2), *let us be ready!*

Not sure? Let's talk: 440-292-5915, Pastor

**Lent is beginning soon; Ash Wednesday is on February 14. See the schedule below.**

- For the Season of Lent, we will be following a booklet covering all the events of Holy Week in the Gospel according to St. Mark.
- We plan to distribute the booklet on February 10, 11, and 14; *please join us to receive your copy.*
- If you cannot attend, but want a copy, please request a mailed copy.
- *I hope to see you soon and often!*

#### **Lent and Easter Sunday Schedule**

**Ash Wednesday (2/14):** services at 11 & 7

**Every Weekend:**

- Saturdays: class at 3:00; service at 4:00
- Sundays: service at 9:00; Bible Class and Sunday School at 10:30

**Every Wednesday, except Holy Week:** services at 11 & 7

**Every Wednesday, except Ash Wednesday:** free meals at 12 & 6

**Holy Week (3/24 – 3/30):**

- Holy Thursday: services at 11 & 7
- Good Friday: services at 11 & 7
- Holy Saturday: **NO BIBLE CLASS**; service at 4:00

**Easter Sunday:**

- Service at 9:00
- Free Breakfast at 10:30