

Jesus Help

Johann Sebastian Bach was blessed with incredible musical talents and gifts. He also had the gift of knowing why he could do what he did. At the beginning of many of his compositions he would write the initials JJ, which stood for "Jesu Juva." That is the Latin for "Jesus help." At the end of his compositions Bach wrote SDG. That stood for the Latin "soli Deo Gloria," which means "for God's glory alone." He started his work knowing he needed Jesus' help, and he ended his work knowing all glory belonged to God alone.

"JJ" are good initials for us to write on the calendar as we begin a new year. We need the help of Jesus. The last year should have made that abundantly clear to us.

Our old nature wants to think we can do life by ourselves. Often kids are not very old before they start asserting they can do things themselves, like feed themselves, dress themselves, and put their toys together. When the shoes are on the wrong feet and the toy doesn't work it is clear, despite what they say, they do need help.

Jesus said He is the vine and we are mere branches. As a branch can't do anything unless it is connected to the vine, so we need to remain in Christ. "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

We do not know what the new year will hold, but we do know whatever is going to

come, we are going to need Jesus' help. The challenges will be too great and our strength and wisdom will not be enough. "Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay" (Psalm 70:5).

As we put away last year's calendar we can mark SDG as Bach did to his music. The glory for any accomplishments or achievements goes to God alone. It was not our strength or skill or hard work that got us through the year. God alone deserves the praise. God alone saves us through Jesus and the cross. God alone preserves our soul and keeps us safe.

Last year was a tough year. We may wonder what glory and praise there is to give for the year. Yet even in the midst of trials and difficulties God deserves glory. As we mark SDG on the past year let us think about ways God let us see His glory. We saw it in the way He brought us through trials, the way He cared for us, provided for us and protected us. We see His glory in Jesus and His love and salvation.

Before Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb, the people were standing there mourning and wondering why Jesus hadn't healed Lazarus. "Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'" (John 11:40). In the midst of trials we still trust the promise that we will see the glory of God.

By faith we look forward to seeing His glory in this new year.

—Pastor Craig

Worship With Us

Our 11:00 a.m. in building Worship Services continue. To comply with the state regulations regarding COVID-19, everybody is asked to wear a facial covering and observe social distancing by sitting six feet apart from other families while in the pews. Free masks are available on the entryway table.

We also live stream our 11:00 a.m. Sunday worship services on Facebook Live. Devotional videos are also posted on our congregation's YouTube channel. Links to both of those sites can be found on our website: bethanyfree.com.

Men's breakfast will be Sat., Jan. 9 at 8:00 a.m. If you'd like to help prepare the breakfast, please contact Pastor Craig.



WMF Meeting

Women's Missionary Federation (WMF)
 Thursday Jan. 14 at 11:00 a.m.
 Everyone is asked to bring a sack lunch. All ladies are invited.



Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

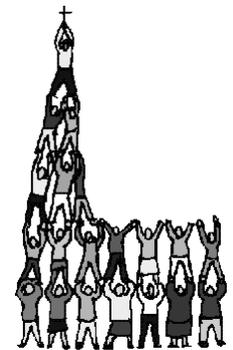
Jan. 17 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. It's a time to remember that each life – whether unborn, unhealthy, diseased or disabled – is a special creation of God to be cherished and protected. This is also a time to remember in prayer the ministry in our community of the Coast Pregnancy Clinic.



Youth and their families are invited to meet on Sunday, Jan. 24 at 6:00 p.m. We'll have some activities and some fellowship time. We'll also do some planning for attending the Free Lutheran Youth national convention that is being planned for Estes Park, Colo. July 5-10.

Annual Meeting

Our congregation's annual meeting will be Thur. Jan. 28 at 7:00 p.m. We'll think about how God has blessed us and cared for us during the past year. We'll have elections and prayerfully consider what God might have us to do in the coming year. Everybody is invited.



On Sunday Jan. 31 at 6:00 p.m. we'll have a movie night and show the film Paul, Apostle of Christ. The movie is about the life of Paul and especially his final days. It tells of suffering and persecution he faced but also how the love of Christ overcame. Everyone is invited to come watch the movie and bring a friend.

Coming This Month...



January 5 Deacons & Trustees Meeting

January 9 Men's Breakfast

January 24 Planning Meeting for Free Lutheran Youth Convention (FLY)

January 31 Family Movie Night