

**February 24 – March 2, 2019**  
**By Rev. Norman Peterson**  
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**Sunday, February 24, 2019**

CUSTOMS

Text: Luke 4:14

***“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went into the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day.”***

This very simple statement is the first verse in the story of how Jesus was received when he spoke in his home town of Nazareth. It is a familiar story and yet how often have we heard this verse and not given it any consideration. Yes, Jesus entered the synagogue in the town where he had been raised, *as was his custom*. Going where the people of faith came together, as was his custom.

Customs are things we do regularly. Our lives are filled with customs. Have you ever considered the many customs in your life? Things we do, almost without thinking. Since a child I was taught the custom of prayer before meals and prayer at bedtime. This is a custom I still observe. I know there are other times of prayer that can be, for me, more intentional, but these times are ... customs.

Yes, I must admit that at times, going to worship on Sunday is a custom as well. Perhaps the same is true, at times, for you. Over time I have discovered, certain customs are quite valuable, even when we don't expect it. When I enter worship and hear the words of grace coming in unexpected ways, I am blessed. God speaks to us in and through the community of believers. God transforms us as we join our lives with others in praise and worship.

Customary, to worship regularly? Yes, customary and good. A blessing for all who gather in God's name.

Let us pray. *Lord, we come to you this day, individually or in communion with others, asking that you accept our worship and praise. Pour out your spirit upon us that by your grace our customs may be filled with meaning and joy. Empower us with your presence that we may live today and every day as your children, seeking to live by your guidance and sharing the joy of your love with all whom we meet. Amen*



**Monday February 25, 2019**

STILLNESS

Text: Psalm 46:10a

***“Be still, and know that I am God.”***

“What’s on the agenda for today?” It seems that when I wake in the morning this is one of the first things that comes to mind. “What’s on the agenda...?” I enjoy fixing things. I enjoy going outside and doing things. So, what is on the agenda for today. Even asking that question implies that I am in control. But I am reminded often that this is not true. I have heard it said, “If you want to make God smile, tell God your plans.”

True, certain things need to be on the agenda. We all have schedules. I have come to believe it is not, however, my agenda that matters most. The first thing on my agenda should not be my agenda. I have come to believe the question should be, “What is on God’s agenda?” What is it that I am called to do? What is it that you are called to be about today?

At times, I believe, we can become so caught up in our own agenda that we are unable to answer the question, “What is God’s agenda?” It is at these times when the words of the Psalmist speak, “Be still, and know that I am God.” I need this on my agenda every day, at the top of my agenda. In the stillness, God can speak to me, to you. In the stillness, we are blessed.

*Let us pray. Lord, we fill our lives with many activities. You fill our lives with meaning and purpose. We now come asking that you empower us with your Spirit that we may still the business in our lives and be open to your agenda. Guide us by your Spirit in our lives today and throughout the days ahead to be about the work of your kingdom. Amen*



**Tuesday February 26, 2019**

HEAR OUR PRAYER

Text: Psalm 55:1

***“Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication!”***

Hymn # 752, Evangelical Lutheran Worship

*“Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying, send us love, send us pow’r send us grace.”*

It is a hymn of few words and yet is so powerful. Our musician’s group plays at worship monthly and when we do, this hymn is sung as a response to each of the prayer petitions. At first, I needed to learn my part on guitar for this portion of the worship. After a few times, I noticed I was not only focusing upon the music, but also focused more intently upon the prayers offered. This thought led me to wonder how many times in worship I have joined with others saying “Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer” or a similar phrase.

We speak these words together in worship. We read similar words throughout scripture. Yet we pray always trusting that God hears our prayers. I have come to believe that when we pray, in worship together or as individuals, we come trusting that God will not only hear our prayers but will answer our prayers.

“Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.” “Lord, listen to your children praying, ...”. These are words declaring our trust, inviting God to guide our hearts and minds in such a way that our prayers are offered in such a way as to be worthy of reception.

*Let us pray. Gracious God, we come to you as trusting children. We come asking that you hear our prayers and by the power of your grace fill us with your love. Give us we pray, eyes to see your hand at work in our lives. Give us, we pray, ears to hear your word speak to us. Give us we pray, your grace empowering us to be about the work of your kingdom. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.*



**Wednesday February 27, 2019**

## INVITATION

Text: John 1:45-46

*‘Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”*

Rev. Daniel H. Sandstedt is a name that few of you will recognize. I never knew him as a pastor although he served two parishes in his career. After this he became a chaplain, then director of chaplaincy at Augustana Hospital in Chicago. Rev. Sandstedt later became a professor and director of field education at Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg until his death in 1987. I knew Rev. Sandstedt was a gentle, caring, soft-spoken man who smoked a pipe and always had time for the questions I would ask him from the time I was a little child until the early years of my ministry.

I never called Rev. Sandstedt pastor or chaplain, or professor. To me he was always “Uncle Dan”. He wasn’t really my uncle; he was the husband of my mother’s cousin Arlene. Still, from early on we knew them as Uncle Dan and Aunt Arlene.

One afternoon as our family had come to their house for a visit, I asked him if we could talk for a few moments. He agreed and I told him I felt called to the ministry but was not sure if this was a path I should take. “I don’t know if God can use me.” I said. He paused, took a puff on his pipe, and said “Norm, why not pursue this? Go to seminary and see. If God is calling you there will be a place for you. If not, you’ll know soon enough.” No sermon, no recruitment speech, simply invitation. Invitation to “come and see.”

May 23, 1976, I was at the Lutheran Church in America Illinois Synod convention in DeKalb. As I knelt before Dr. Paul E. Erickson, the synod president, “Uncle Dan” stood behind me holding a red stole. I remember the feeling of his hands on my head along with Dr. Erickson’s hands which had just placed the stole on my shoulders. I’ll never forget that feeling.

Years later, after Uncle Dan had entered the Church Triumphant, Aunt Arlene asked me if I would like one of his two sets of stoles. She mailed them to me and as I opened the box I noticed the smell of his pipe tobacco. Each year on All Saints Day I would wear his white stole. In time, I noticed the tobacco smell was gone but the memory of Uncle Dan remains.

Who are those special people of faith in your life? Those people who influenced you and supported you on your faith journey? Take time to remember them today in prayer and thanksgiving for the gift they have been and continue to be.

Let us pray. *“We give you thanks this day for those who have guided us in our faith journey. We remember those who have gone before us in faith whose lives continue to influence our lives of faith and service to you. Keep us ever mindful that we too are called to touch the lives of others in ways that encourage and support their journeys of faith. Amen.”*



**Thursday February 28, 2019**

## WALKING WITH GOD

Text: Genesis 5:21, 24

***“When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. ... Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”***

I have read an article referring to the dash on headstones between the date of birth and the date of death. It refers to the span of life that we each are given. It invites us to consider what this “dash” would say about our life. Yes, there will be a number that it represents. The number of years we have lived. It will also represent what we have done with those years.

What will our “dash” say about us? What will my “dash” say about me? As I thought about this I remembered the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis which begins, “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” The list of descendants that follows takes us from Adam to Noah. Near the end of this list we come across Enoch. The conclusion of Enoch’s portion of this genealogy reads, *“Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”*

What a wonderful statement of a person’s life. *“Enoch walked with God.”* Each one of us is on a walk with God. Through baptism we were baptized into the life of Jesus Christ. Each day we awake renewed in the power of our baptism. We know we walk with God daily. We know what

the “dash” means in our life. We walk with God, now and forever. What a gift this is to each of us.

Let us pray. *Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that you have called us your sons and daughters. We give you thanks that you invite us daily, by the power of the Spirit, to align our footsteps with those of Jesus Christ. Guide us today that we may journey faithfully. Guide us today to be faithful in our sharing of your love and grace to all whom we meet. Amen.*



**Friday March 1, 2019**

## WATCH

Text: Luke 2:8-11

*“And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”*

I was 19 years old when my father and mother bought a “mom and pop” resort on Fence Lake on the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation. Dad was 55 and needed to retire early from his career as a mail carrier due to health issues. He would retire in September so mom and I would operate the resort the first summer. So, having been raised in Chicago, I was in for quite a culture shock moving into a home where the two nearest towns didn’t even have a stoplight. I tried to look on the bright side and decided maybe I would get to see a deer. We moved and I began watching.

After a month, I met a local my age and Buzz and I became friends. He asked how I liked it up here and I told him I was still getting used to it. I mentioned how I had been hoping to see a deer but so far, no luck. Then one day, as we were going somewhere in his car, he said, “Norm, look, an eagle!” I looked up and sure enough there was a beautiful eagle soaring against a blue sky. After it went out of sight, I asked him, “Buzz, do you watch for eagles?” “No” he replied, “I just watch.”

The shepherds were watching their flocks, and although that had done this countless times, I trust they were doing so actively, alertly. Watching for any threat to the well-being of their flock. Watching for any one of them straying away. Not simply gazing out blankly, but actively watching. They never expected to see what they were about to witness and yet, they were watching.

God blesses us daily with the good news. God comes and is revealed to us in so many ways. We are called to be watching, actively watching for the many ways God’s grace comes to us.

Let us pray. *Heavenly Father, you call us to be people of expectation, actively watching for your presence revealed to us in ways we never expect. Fill us with your grace and empower us to see through eyes of faith. We invite you to open our eyes anew each day, that we may see your presence and your will for our lives and for your creation. Amen.*



**Saturday March 2, 2019**

### LOOKING BACK

Text: Exodus 3:10-12

***“Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.”***

God was speaking to Moses from the burning bush. Moses was called by God to set the people of Israel free from bondage in Egypt. Moses was unsure of this whole idea. Then God said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.”

God is calling Moses to step out in faith and that he will know what he is doing is of God .... when the people are set free and he returns to the mountain. That’s the sign, when you look back you will know. The same is so often true for us. We are called to step out in faith and then, looking back we can see the hand of God at work.

Saturday, the last day of our week. A good time to pause and look back. Where do you and I see the hand of God at work in our lives this past week? Where do we see the hand of God at work in our lives this past month? We do well to look back and see where God has been at work when we step out in faith.

Let us pray. *Eternal God, you call us daily to live lives of faith. You call us to step out trusting in you to be with us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may faithfully respond to your call. Give us the eyes of faith that, in looking back, see your hand at work in and through us. Empower us to continue our faith journey, inviting others to know the freeing power of your grace and truth. Amen.*

