

"Essentials"

Text: Luke 24:44-53

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21

Dear Fellow Christians, it is a disconcerting fact of life that no private citizen in our country owns their own home, regardless of whether or not it is paid for. If you doubt that, stop paying your property taxes and you will be convinced, since your city, county, or state will then own your house. On a happier note, as a member of this congregation you do actually own the church and parsonage since, as a church, we are exempt from property taxes.

While this seems wrong somehow, we can live with it. We put up with it partly because we really have no choice but also because we *can* live with it. It's not essential to our survival that we exist under a different system – and that's what we're reexamining this morning, essentials.

We tend to hear a lot about catastrophes today, almost on a daily basis. Yet think about the various "catastrophes" you hear about on the news, social media, or in your day-to-day conversations and you'll find some interesting insights. First of all, the definitions of what constitutes a catastrophe vary wildly. Is it really a catastrophe when a company is allowed to extract the oil we need to function from a place no one will ever see? You'll also notice that "catastrophes" are only possible because of prior blessings. A billionaire, as an extreme example, might refer to the fire that destroyed his superyacht as a catastrophe. Others might hold the opinion that the real catastrophe was spending \$250M on a boat.

There are, of course, true calamities, as when lives are lost and families left destitute by natural disasters or crime. Yet the basic truth, again, is that we stand to lose much only because we have been given much. It is only God's grace and blessing that makes loss possible. Should we then praise God for the riches of the past or blame him for the trials of the present?

In all of this we not only recognize God's hand, we seek also to recognize the lessons he would have us learn. The first, of course, is to regain a sense of the magnitude of his blessings. Yet along with that is the reminder of what is and is not really necessary in life. In this area we all need work. Consider Job's reaction to the great loss he suffered: **"The Lord has given; the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord!"**

As we are blessed by our God with ever greater material wealth and comfort, one of the inevitable consequences is that we lose track of just what in life is truly essential. We lose more than just a sense of history with the passing of the years; we lose perspective and appreciation. How, for example, can we possibly formulate in our minds just how little is really necessary for this life when we all have so much? How can we accurately assess just what really does constitute the bare necessities of life, and what then is all just extra? This morning we seek to establish some sort of realistic understanding of what really is essential, but not just in the way that immediately comes to mind. The Word of God that will instruct us is found recorded in Luke's Gospel, the 24th Chapter:

ESV Luke 24:44-53 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ ¶ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is God's Word. May the same God who gave us these words fill us with proper reverence for them, that each time we hear them we may gain the gifts he desires to give us. To this end also we pray, **"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord; your Word is truth!"** Amen.

Whenever we hear talk of "essentials" our minds tend to think in physical terms – the basic necessities to sustain life. We tend to rather glibly boil it all down to food, clothing, and shelter. Yet almost the very instant such words leave our mouths, if we are honest, you and I would have to admit that that is not what we would actually consider bare necessities in the real world. In other words, I can't imagine anyone here today that would find it easy to be content and well-satisfied with food, clothing, and shelter.

Yet there are times, aren't there. Times when the distractions and complexities of life make us want to back up the rollaway dumpster and shovel it all in. Sometimes God forces the issue. The sheer volume of "stuff" beyond the basic essentials can get to the point that it no longer serves us, *we serve it*. Even the unbelieving world around us can get to that point, but Christians really ought to get there sooner, and with more consistency. It is difficult in the extreme to avoid getting owned by that which we supposedly own. Perhaps more than at any other time in history, Americans face the very real danger of being buried by our possessions. We are in danger of allowing what we have to determine who we are.

The solution is *sometimes* to downsize and *always* to refocus. We know that, of course, but we need to be reminded. More than that, we need to actually *act* on those reminders.

Yet as important as that is, we are here to focus on infinitely more critical essentials. Our faith and religion face similar challenges, and it is into these essentials that we are drawn by our text for this morning. With rather startling simplicity, our text clears away all of the religious noise and confusion and focuses our attention on that which is refreshingly basic: ***"Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'"***

Did you notice how Jesus here talked of essentials? Interesting when you stop to think about it, isn't it. He said simply that it was written, therefore it had to be – it was essential. According to Jesus' own words it was necessary therefore ***"that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead."*** The most obvious question that ought to occur to us is *"Why would Jesus consider his own death to be necessary?"* Necessary for whom? Certainly not for Christ himself, who lacked nothing in the perfection of heaven prior to his incarnation (where he took on human nature). Nor was God under any *obligation* to provide some sort of corrective action for what sinful mankind had ruined. The only possible answer is that Jesus considered it essential not for himself but for *us*, sinners. We know that to be true, of course, but it is certainly attention-grabbing to hear Jesus speak of it that way. Here we find a window into the love of our Savior God, for although he enjoyed the perfect bliss of heaven, and although he would have been perfectly justified had he allowed us to be punished with hell for our sins, he nonetheless regarded our salvation as a necessity that he himself had to

supply. ***"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us..."***

Not surprisingly, when God decides that something is necessary, he always provides for that necessity. In this case he did so by sacrificing himself. Amazing. By our sin, man created what *God* then regarded as an essential action on his part, and he fulfilled that necessity by suffering and dying for our sins.

Our Lord in our text then completed the simple, beautiful picture of the Christian faith when he went on to tell us that ***"repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations."*** If you ever find yourself wondering what "bare spiritual necessities" looks like, here you have it. This is the basic substance of the Christian faith. By the law, mankind is crushed by his sin, leading to ***"repentance,"*** and the gospel of ***"remission of sins"*** is then proclaimed to every repentant sinner.

Did you happen to notice the complete lack of any qualifiers in Jesus' statements of fact? No one is left out. All are to repent, and all who repent are to hear the proclamation of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Repenting of your sins, forgiveness is also your own personal possession in Christ Jesus, because "repentance" isn't just feeling bad about what you've done. It includes looking to Jesus to fix the problem – to satisfy your debt of sin.

These are the simple truths that Jesus taught when he ***"opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."*** Some would think that having provided this special insight and wisdom, the Lord would then have talked of weightier, deeper matters with his disciples. Hear this well: there *are* no weightier, deeper matters – not as far as salvation is concerned. The simple truths outlined by Jesus represented the bottom line – that which was *and is* essential for mankind to be saved. For you to join the rest of the saints and angels in the eternal joy of heaven, you need nothing more than ***"repentance and remission (forgiveness) of sins."***

The message of our text could not come at a better time. Christian churches seem to be obsessed with throwing everything of substance overboard in a mad rush to mold their faith into the image of the world around them. "Christianity Lite" would be too gracious a description for what they are trying to create, since some of the very first things to be tossed overboard are exactly what our Lord emphasized in our text: ***"repentance and forgiveness of sins."***

Sin, for example, has been assigned new names like "choice," "recreation, "lifestyle." It has been profoundly trivialized in an attempt to make something like **repentance** obsolete. Without sin, repentance is nonsensical and unnecessary.

Again, the core problem with throwing any Christian doctrine overboard is not only that it distorts the truth of God's Word, it immediately immerses mankind into a labyrinth of strange and distorted arguments and rationalizations. Often the first thing to be lost is the simple, basic **"repentance and remission of sins"** message of truth that we read in our text for this morning. Man becomes too busy, too engrossed in the social gospel and in righting the various social ills of his society to bother with that simple truth that can save his immortal soul.

There is no end to such distortions and errors. If, for example, you make up your mind that man essentially brings himself to faith by "deciding for Christ," you will naturally (and wrongly) twist every applicable passage to fit your preconceived "theology." If your "theology" convinces you that infants can neither sin nor believe, even clear and easily understood passages will take on an unnatural meaning. If your "theology" tells you that you are able to pay for your sins by your own good works, even those clearest of gospel passages suddenly take on a perverse and distorted image. Personal opinion must never be permitted to distort divine truth – which is what God has delivered to us in his Word. No "belief system" must ever be allowed to distort the truth of God's Word.

True Christianity never does. It is not that the Scriptures lack complexity and depth. We should expect nothing less than great wisdom and insight from the omniscient Creator of heaven and earth. Yet the basic truths that are needed for salvation are given to us in childlike simplicity.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."
"Repentance and remission of sins" – the essential truth by which we gain eternity.

We live in strange and dangerous times. Do not allow the devil, the world around you, nor even the old Adam within you to distract or lure you away from the simplicity of salvation by God's grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. That is the message of life eternal. That is the essential truth. Everything else will pass away. This alone will remain. Repent of your sins, trust Jesus alone for forgiveness, and you *will* be saved. Amen.

^{ESV} **Acts 1:4-11** And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ ¶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:15-23** For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

^{ESV} **Luke 24:44-53** Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ ¶ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Sunday after Ascension – May 17, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 367 (Melody of 343)

"Alleluia! Sing to Jesus"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. (Blue Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Acts 1:4-11) The wisdom that God demonstrated in the plan for our salvation dare not be underestimated. Since man could be trusted to provide nothing positive, God himself did the providing. Not only did He send His Son to pay for our sins, He also knew that without the Holy Spirit, mankind could not understand and accept the saving truths of the gospel. From first to last our salvation is a gift from our God.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 146 (Page 109)

The New Testament Lesson: (Ephesians 1:15-23) As we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus, we are here reminded of the power and glory that has been returned to Jesus when he returned to the glory of heaven at His ascension. What a comfort it ought to be to know that the One who rules over all principalities and powers here on this earth is, even now, our ally.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Blue Hymnal page 5)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 372 (Stanzas 1-4)

"A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 22:44-53 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Essentials"

The Offertory – (Blue Hymnal page 7)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 372 (Stanzas 5-6)

"A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 371

"On Christ's Ascension I Now Build"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (35) Average (38)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Tues-Thur	-10:00 a.m.	– WCDC in Cheyenne
Saturday	-10:00 a.m.	– ILC Graduation
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Chad Seybt is considering calls both to Living Hope of Appleton, WI and St. Luke's of Lemmon, SD. Pastor David Pfeiffer is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire, WI. Pastor Stefan Sonnenfeld has returned the call to Holy Cross of Phoenix, AZ. Teacher Stephen Krause is considering the call to Faith Lutheran School of Markesan, WI. Pastor Ben Libby is considering the call to Mt. Zion of Detroit, MI.

WCDC – Pastor Roehl and two delegates (Mark and Mick Johnson) are scheduled to attend the West Central Delegate Conference in Cheyenne this week, leaving Monday and returning Thursday.

Church Council Notes – All members of the Church Council met on 5/12. April offerings were \$1,166 below budgeted needs and are now \$4,770 below budgeted needs YTD. Trustee Coordinator Mark Johnson is preparing an updated project list. Holy Communion will be celebrated only once in June (6/14). In keeping with the recommendations of our insurance carrier, security cameras will be installed on the church property. Next Council meeting: Sunday, June 21st.

ILC Graduation – Graduation ceremonies at Immanuel Lutheran High School and College in Eau Claire, WI are scheduled for this Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

CLC Summer Camp – Registration is open for this year's camp. To register go to <https://youthcampclc.wixsite.com/camp/register> or email questions to youthcamp.clc@gmail.com.