



CROSS-WORD



**A blessed and safe
Independence Day
to everyone!**

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Enlarged Hearts

If you've ever heard of an "enlarged heart," you likely know that is not a good symptom for your body to have. Technically called cardiomegaly, the Mayo Clinic will tell you that an enlarged heart is caused by damage to the heart muscle or any condition that causes the heart to pump harder than usual. Whether it's from a heart condition present at birth, a heart attack mid-life, or some other cause, an enlarged heart is not good. Another condition you've probably heard of before is a clogged artery. Also known as atherosclerosis, this is caused by a buildup of plaque on the inner walls of arteries that can narrow arteries and restrict blood flow. Sometimes doctors may simply prescribe lifestyle changes such as "eating healthier" (wait, what's wrong with bacon???), exercising more, or adding or adjusting medication. Other times, more serious procedures need to be done, such as stent placements, bypass, or angioplasty. Yes, clogged arteries with restricted blood flow are not good either.

In one of our recent epistle lessons, the Apostle Paul shared words with the Corinthians encouraging their hearts to be "widened" and that they wouldn't be restricted. After describing the paradoxical lifestyle of the apostles (e.g., treated as impostors, yet are true, as unknown but well

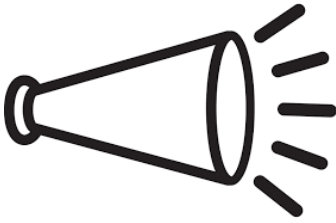
known, as having nothing, yet possessing everything, etc.), he makes this appeal to the Corinthians, so that they do not “receive the grace of God in vain.” (2 Cor. 6:1), saying: “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children), widen your hearts also” (2 Cor. 6:11-13). Paul is talking about a health condition, not with the physical heart, but the spiritual one. And in this case, an enlarged heart is a good thing! It’s one that is compassionate, full of mercy, grace, and forgiveness. It’s one that looks not only to one’s own interests but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). An enlarged heart (a widened heart) exhibits “Love” that “is patient and kind; is not envious or boastful; is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way and is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. A widened heart led by love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Is there such a heart and such a love? Unfortunately, we live in a day and age (has it ever *not* been this way since the fall?) where it’s all about me: my church, my family, my life. My choices, my rights, my desires. What else could you expect in a world that promotes consumerism, a devil that deceives us into believing that’s the main reason we’re here, and our sinful nature that eats it all up? Our hearts are restricted, focusing on our own affections. Yes, on their own, they have total blockage and can only focus on me, myself, and I. And even after we have been brought to faith, those three enemies are still at work, trying to narrow and restrict once more.

A widened heart with love freely flowing comes extra nos (from outside ourselves). As we hear in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, (talk about a widened heart!) that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Paul Gerhardt, a Lutheran hymn writer once wrote these words: *"Come, see these things and ponder, Your soul will fill with wonder, as blood streams from each pore. Through grief beyond all knowing; from His great heart came flowing sighs welling from its deepest core"* (LSB 453:2). The blood flowed; no restriction. The Father's wide heart of love for the world is revealed in His crucified Son. As we ponder and wonder at such love, our hearts are widened. We rejoice in our baptism into His death and resurrection. We trust His life-giving Word. We feast at His Table. And the Spirit brings the unrestricted love of God to us and through us into a narrow and restricted world. And as He does, we pray that all may come to the knowledge of the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, saying: *"Your cross I place before me; its saving pow'r restore me, sustain me in the test. It will when life is ending, be guiding and attending, my way to Your eternal rest"* (LSB 453:7).



Pastor Craig



EVANGELISM NEWS

Some exciting events are happening this summer and fall at Holy Cross.



Thank you to all who helped in any way at the Honey Festival!



Jour de Fete is August 10 & 11, 2024.

Watch for sign-up sheets to be posted soon as we need many volunteers. Please continue to bring in items for the sale to the old basement. We do accept books, holiday decorations, dishes, pots and pans, toys, tools, working small appliances, CDs, DVDs, gently-used bedding, crafts, knick-knacks, jewelry.

Remember:

1. **No** clothes.
2. **No** heavy or large furniture, easy-to-carry items only.
3. **No** electronics with rechargeable lithium-ion batteries (i.e., old computers, phones, etc.), printers or routers as these items are difficult to dispose of.
4. Please, **no** encyclopedias.



September is picnic month for Holy Cross.
Watch the bulletin and newsletter for more info.



Pecanapalooza is coming up in November.
Watch the bulletin and newsletter for more info.

Evangelism Committee:
Bonnie Zerwig (chairperson)
Vicky Surman
Betty Schremp



Flower Waterers are needed at church throughout the summer!

We need volunteers for help with watering the flowers outside at church daily throughout the summer. Each volunteer will water one day of the week for the entire month.



Please sign up on the sheet on the table in the back of the sanctuary.

**Thank you
to all our volunteers!!!**

SEARCH-A-WORD PUZZLE

INDEPENDENCE DAY

L L I O F E L P A R A D E
Q N I D O C W Q U H T D Z
P Z I H U N N X D N I B R
B G M O R E O U V O S L I
O L O L T D I S Y I G E V
P S D I H N T K O T C S P
M S E D K E A R E A O S J
Z G E A T P N O H R U I T
K D R Y Y E W W Y B N N U
Z W F L S D B E X E T G X
A E U U L N Y R N L R S M
F J R E G I F I N E Y D U
A S E G U L O F C C O U U

JULY
FOURTH
GOD
COUNTRY
BLESSINGS
FREEDOM

NATION
CELEBRATION
FIREWORKS
PARADE
INDEPENDENCE
HOLIDAY

LCMS STEWARDSHIP ARTICLE FOR JULY 2024

The Rewards of Godliness

It's no secret that you can't bribe your way into heaven. No amount of good works will impress God enough to open heaven's door for their sake. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and the person who "keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10). Rather, salvation is "the free gift of God ... in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:23).

So, your good works won't earn you the reward of heaven. But does that mean that there are no rewards at all? Consider what the Small Catechism says in the "Close of the Commandments":

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20:5–6)

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands. (SC II)

God promises to bless you in keeping His commandments. What might these blessings be? Well, consider what Paul says about keeping the Fourth Commandment: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land’” (Eph. 6:1–3).

And think about what your life would be like if you went around stealing (breaking the Seventh Commandment), telling lies about people (breaking the Eighth Commandment), and generally being cruel to those around you (breaking all the commandments!). That is obviously not a blessed way to live. In fact, you’d be miserable living that way.

And Jesus says more about what is in store for those who make sacrifices for His sake: “Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:28–29).

So don’t grow impatient in doing good. Follow the Lord who has freely given you everlasting life.



– LCMS Stewardship Ministry:
lcms.org/stewardship



The Gift of Rest

Some of us look forward to slowing down in the summer - spending time with family and friends at barbecues, lounging by the pool, taking a trip or two, and sleeping in. For other people, it actually means cramming as much as possible into the short season: a summer job, classes, athletic training, trips, and lots of ice cream.

As you plan your summer days, consider treating them as a gift of rest from God.

If the God of the universe who holds galaxies and spins planets and breathes life takes a rest, how much more should we! Genesis shows us that it is sacred to form a rhythm of work and rest. In fact, God made it one of the Ten Commandments. He said to remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy, because it is a Sabbath to the Lord. (Exodus 20:8). Rest keeps our bodies and minds healthy, but it also reminds us that our days belong to God, and He alone gives us the ability to live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

This summer, accept God’s gifts for you, and listen for His voice. Try to be intentional about creating a daily and weekly rhythm for yourself that mirrors God’s rhythm. Work hard and play hard, but then allow yourself time to be still. Don’t overcommit yourself. Pray and spend time in God’s Word. Be silent with Him for five minutes, and increase that time a little bit each day. Be fully present in a face-to-face conversation with friends and family. Above all, allow Him to bless and rejuvenate you!





On the occasion of Independence Day,

below are some prayers that you can use at home. The Bible frequently recounts stories that, among other things, show us that God wants civic leaders at every level of government to lead honestly, wisely, and in accordance with God's will for us. God also wants citizens to live productively and generously as His children.

PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY

Almighty God, You have given us this good land as our heritage. Make us always remember Your generosity and constantly do Your will. Bless our land with honest industry, truthful education, and an honorable way of life. Save us from violence, discord and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Make us who came from many nations with many different languages a united people. Defend our liberties, and give those whom we have entrusted with the authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there might be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and in troubled times, do not let our trust in You fail. We ask all this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE AMONG THE NATIONS

Almighty God, heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into ways of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows. Give peace to your Church, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts, through Your dear Son. Amen.

PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

Grant, O God, that Your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart. Grant that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease. We pray that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace, through Y our Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
