

4)We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. 5)He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, 6)that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, 7)so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. (Psalm 78:4-7 ESV)

The story is told of a pastor's farewell sermon to his congregation before he left to take a call to another church. In his sermon, he mentioned how this might be the last time he would see many of these people here on earth. He then explained how wonderful it is that because of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection from the dead, they can look forward to seeing each other again in heaven. The pastor then closed by saying, "I'll see you in heaven—don't forget to bring your children!"

"Don't forget to bring your children." What an insightful statement that is for parents with Sunday school or confirmation age children. And, indeed, there are parents who have every intention of going to heaven themselves, but their inactivity in paying attention to the spiritual training and welfare of their children belies their assumption that heaven is where they or their children are headed.

"Don't forget to bring your children." This statement also implies that the children in the congregation are also a part of the body of Christ. That "body" was a major focus in the Epistle reading from St. Paul on Sunday, January 21st: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body." That same theme continued in the Epistle reading for the following Sunday on January 28th: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Both adults and children are a part of the body of Christ through baptism. It is where we were washed clean as we died with Christ (Romans 6). It is where we were marked with the sign of the Holy Cross to signify us as ones redeemed by Christ the Crucified. The trouble is that even though we were washed in those waters, our sinful flesh still clings to us. We therefore have the ability to reject this greatest of all gifts through willful unbelief. Luther said that we need to daily drown our Old Adam. Part of what that means is taking every opportunity God places before us to receive His gifts of grace in Word and Sacrament.

Verse six and seven in Psalm 78 says, "that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn . . . so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God." That next generation, those yet unborn, include all of us living today. The hope and works of God referred to here are ultimately His saving acts in Christ. When parents

take heed of the spiritual training of their children, they also remember those same works themselves so they can “bring their children along!”

One of the ways that Christ sustains us in the faith is through midweek Lenten services. Lent is a forty day journey to celebrate Christ’s Passover through death to life. Down through the ages it has been a time of special attention to the hearing of God’s Word and meditation thereon. It emphasizes total penitence and newness of life and fruits, including the fruit of prayer.

When our Lord and Master said, “Repent”, He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. This is the first of Luther’s 95 Theses. This Lenten season beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 21st, our mid-week services will focus on repentance and the prayers we pray. Our sin is great, and because of it we don’t know how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26). In the Gospel lesson for Ash Wednesday, Jesus teaches us how to renew our zeal in faith and life related to our prayers.

Is your heart sometimes reluctant to pray? Do you desire to pray more confidently? In prayers for the church, for your pastor, for your neighbors, for your family, for the unchurched, for earthly leaders, how should we pray?

God grant us repentant prayer day by day, for we are in need of daily repentance in our use of this precious gift. In the words we say and in the thoughts of our hearts, God must give us to pray what our sinful nature cannot give itself, and it is available to us because of the tremendous sacrifice His Son made on Calvary for us.

It is my prayer that all of us at Trinity and our guests will use these special mid-week Lenten Services to be refreshed by God’s Word and to respond to Him in prayer. This life is a wilderness of sin that cannot be traversed without the guidance of the Lamb who was slain. The Lord’s Prayer is central to the passion of our Lord, for all through the hours of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, Jesus contended for the gifts He taught us to pray for in the Lord’s Prayer. Please do join us!

Pastor Hofmann