

I.N.I.

40th Anniversary Sunday
August 11, 2013
Psalm 100

In Christ Jesus, our ever-living Lord and Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

40 years ago! Do some of you remember some of these well known events in 1973? The Watergate scandal was in full bloom with court hearings. The Vietnam War came to an ignominious end with a cease-fire declared. An Arabian oil embargo caused fuel shortages and gas prices to rise. Vice-President Spiro Agnew resigned and Gerald Ford was sworn in. And Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church was incorporated. Services were held in the chapel of the University YMCA.

40 years! That's quite a milestone---in a person's life, in years of marriage, in length of a business, in the years of a congregation. Many years, yet quickly accumulated. Time has a way of flying by and adding up.

From the beginning of creation, time has been important both to God and to man. The Lord clearly marked off each day of creation with the words... **THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE FIRST DAY, etc.** Therefore along with the importance of marking off time—days, months and years also came the celebration of past events—remembering the past by setting up special events, observances and services.

It was the Lord Himself who commanded the Old Testament people to rest on the seventh day as an anniversary celebration and observance of the rest He took when He finished creating the world. When the Israelites were set free from Egypt they were to repeat the Passover celebration every year as a reminder, an anniversary remembrance of what God had done for them.

We too have followed in that same custom with our celebrations of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and the other religious holidays—they are anniversary remembrances, celebrations of what God has done for us His creatures.

That is also why we celebrate birthdays. Not to honor the person who has grown another year older, but to thank the Lord for the gift of another year of His grace, peace, health and happiness.

Therefore it is entirely proper and God-pleasing that we should mark the days, months and years of the existence of a Christian congregation dedicated to preaching and spreading God's Word and serving God's people.

We celebrate the birthday of the New Testament Christian Church with Pentecost, now almost 2,000 years ago.

We mark the Reformation of the Church--you could also call it the birthday of the Lutheran Church---with a special celebration and the date of Oct. 31, 1517, now almost 500 years ago.

And today we are celebrating the beginning of Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, now 40 years old and this church building now 25 years old. In the middle of your bulletin you have a brief timeline history of major events that occurred here at Peace Thru Christ.

But we notice that in the celebrations and festivals of the Old Testament that God ordained, it was not just to mark time. The Israelites were not just to say on Passover, "Now it is 500 years since God led us out of Egypt, Woo-Hoo!" The celebration was to remember and praise God for His great works.

Why were they to rest on the Sabbath? To remember how God rested after His great work of creation and to look forward to the rest He would give them through the Messiah, His Son.

Why did they celebrate the Passover? To look back upon and remember God's great work of setting them free from the slavery of Egypt with the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts and to look forward to the real Passover Lamb, the Son of God who would shed His blood on the cross and set them free from the slavery to sin.

Why celebrate a church anniversary? To remember the great works that God has done in our midst with the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ and to look forward to the great celebration we will someday enjoy in heaven forever. Everything, every celebration points to Jesus!

Therefore as we look back and remember the past---

**AS WE CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF HISTORY, THE PSALMIST INVITES US TO
JOIN IN A SONG OF PRAISE FOR THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PEOPLE.**

I: WE ARE INVITED TO A JOYFUL WORSHIP OF OUR CREATOR-SHEPHERD.

II: WE ARE INVITED TO THANKFUL PRAISE TO OUR EVERLASTING SAVIOR.

Our worship of our Lord needs to be solemn. Solemn in the sense of sincere. It should not be half-hearted, a meaningless repetition and babbling of the mouth and lips with no thought or devotion from the heart. It also should be solemn in the sense of decency. No outlandish screaming or shouting or acting in such a way as to shock people. Paul tells us our worship should be done in decency and order. But that does not mean that our anniversary worship should be somber, sad, morose, or without feeling. The Psalmist says our worship should be with **JOY!**

TODAY, on this 40th anniversary celebration **MAKE A JOYFUL SHOUT** to the Lord!

As we read through the major events of the early years of our congregation there are a multitude of reasons for us to shout with joy! But how often do we feel, really feel overjoyed to be a Christian, and a member of a Christian congregation. In our worship how often are we filled with happiness to be a child of God, a redeemed brother and sister in Christ? Now we need to be wary of empty emotionalism, so that we do not put our faith and our trust and our hope in our feelings, we need to put that in God's Words and promises. But perhaps with all of the solemnity of our Lutheran worship, we may at times lose or set aside our joy and rejoicing.

David danced for **JOY** when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem.

The Israelites together with Ezra shouted for **JOY** when the foundation of the new temple was laid after their return from captivity.

The baby John the Baptist leaped for **JOY** in his mother's womb when the announcement was made to Elizabeth that Mary was to give birth to the Christ-child.

The Wise Men from the east rejoiced with exceedingly great **JOY** when the star stopped above the home where the baby Jesus was.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great **JOY** and were continually in the temple courts praising God after Jesus ascended into heaven.

The Church in Jerusalem was filled with great **JOY** when Paul and Barnabas reported how the Gospel of Christ was preached in Asia Minor and brought about the conversion of many Gentiles.

All of those moments of **JOY** and rejoicing came about because of some great work of our God. So today we too make a **JOYFUL SHOUT** to our Lord for all that He has done for us here at Peace Thru Christ. May we serve the **LORD** with gladness and come before His presence with singing—all of us joining our hearts and voices together. Why?

The Psalmist says, because we **KNOW**; and this word for **KNOW** means a knowledge of the heart---we know from God's Word working in our hearts that the **LORD**, Jehovah, is our God, the Triune God of our salvation. He is the One who created us and not we ourselves. We are His people and we are His sheep for He is our loving Shepherd. We know that we do not deserve to be His sheep. We have not been as obedient and faithful as we should have. We are not here today celebrating 40 years of history because we are better than others, or because we worked harder than others. We certainly should not be patting ourselves on our backs.

All I need to do is look back over the years the Lord has given me to serve you as your pastor and I see many, many failures on my part; times when I was not serving Him and you as I should have; and I am sure you see your failures too as you look back on your life as members of this congregation. For all of these failures and sins of commission and omission we need to fall before our Creator God and loving Savior-Shepherd in repentance and seek forgiveness.

It is simply by God's grace and mercy that we are here. He made us His children through faith worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. By nature we have no righteousness of our own, but have been declared righteous through Christ's perfect life and innocent death. Jesus' suffering and death alone has atoned for all of our sins. By grace and the power of His Gospel the Holy Spirit brought us into His flock as His redeemed sheep and through us He has done marvelous things.

Over the 40 years the Lord has seen to it that the first church was built, than changed into a parsonage and this church building was built. A fellowship hall and new school addition was added. A Christian Day school began. Vacation Bible School has been held every year where hundreds of youngsters have heard the Good News of Jesus' redemption; baptisms, confirmations, weddings have been performed in Jesus' name; and victorious funeral services of life over death have been held as God took His sheep one by one to be with Him safe in the Savior-Shepherd's arms.

The history of Peace Thru Christ is—the people, the pastors, the teachers, the activities, the

services, the events. Many of you know it very well. It is a history of people, services---baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals---fellowship, statistics, finances, building projects, purchases, pastoral and teacher changes and so on, for without these things it would be impossible to tell the whole story.

But the people, the pastors and the teachers, the services and activities have come and gone. The one constant throughout all 40 years is **JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER.** The history of Peace Thru Christ is really His Story of the power of His Word, of our Savior's boundless grace and mercy to undeserving sinners.

The greatest person, story and event in our history, the whole reason for our being here, is Jesus Christ and His birth, His life, His death and His resurrection from the dead.

The Psalmist continues with these words: **ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE. BE THANKFUL TO HIM, AND BLESS HIS NAME. FOR THE LORD IS GOOD; HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING, AND HIS TRUTH *ENDURES* TO ALL GENERATIONS.**

A generation is about 30 years so we are well into the second generation of believers here at Peace Thru Christ. God has kept His Word and has passed down His truth from one generation to the next and now it is being passed on down to the third generation. The promise is there—as long as the Word is in your midst, as long as you continue in His Word, the Lord will pass His truth of salvation on down to all the generations that call Peace Thru Christ their church home.

The Lord God has given us here at Peace Thru Christ tremendous blessings, undeserved blessings and He has given us many, many opportunities to use these blessings of His Word in its truth and purity. What greater way to thank the Lord for His past blessings than to use His Word for the welfare of all those whom we meet and to tell them about their Shepherd-Savior Jesus who lived and died for them.

May we conclude this anniversary worship with humble and heartfelt thanks joyfully worshiping and thankfully praising our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier and looking to our Savior and His Word as our strength and comfort for the generations yet to come.
Amen.