

Have I told you lately that I love you?

Cross of Glory is an extraordinary community of believers – perhaps you already know that! *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)* I hope that you’ve experienced first-hand the love and support that flow here.

You are probably also aware that for a year now we have struggled at one degree or another to meet our expenses. Some months we have paid our mortgage obligation on time; more often we have been late: a few days, a week or two, sometimes even lapping over into the next month. We have not always met our payroll obligations. We have paid a variety of bills late. And then every snowfall brought an additional bill for snow plowing. For a year we have been held captive from stretching our ministry and growing in discipleship because we have been encumbered by our (in)ability to meet obligations.

With Jubilee Sunday that will all change! We received an initial monetary gift of support from the Northern Illinois Synod, and more importantly we have been offered guidance and resources to escape the financial quicksand that has been lapping at our heels. The first step is Jubilee Sunday.

Certainly an important goal of Jubilee Sunday is monetary: no doubt about that. But I am more excited at the possibilities that it unlocks! It calls us to remember who we are and whose we are; to recall the blessings that built this community and which call us to God’s future. Leviticus 25 spells out the details of release in the year of Jubilee, when both people and land were redeemed and freed from financial encumbrances. Leviticus 26: 9-13 reminds us of the blessings God promises: *“I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. You will still be eating last year’s harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.”*

Cross of Glory is a unique gift because it already embodies so much of what a church can be. We are clear that we are orthodox: meaning that we are strongly Bible-based, believing that the Word of God is unfailing and eternal, and that it is relevant for us today. We believe that the Word is alive in our reading and hearing: God still speaks today (1 Peter 1:23). Our roots, therefore, are deep in God’s word and solid theology as we embrace the perspectives and teaching of Martin Luther and others, but never over the Word of God. Our roots are deep and secure as a community and each of us grows deeper as we dig in. Psalm 1: 1-3 *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

From those roots a solid core grows, reaching higher in our worship and praise, always directed toward and focused on God. We stretch ourselves into new experiences, new relationship, new music, new use of technology, all focused on God.

And as we grow higher we are also growing wider as we thrive and flourish in God's light and love. We reach beyond ourselves to relationships with each other, we reach beyond ourselves to serve God's people, we reach beyond ourselves to gather in the lost and the lonely and all who need to experience God's love in their own lives.

We are convinced that the whole world needs what we have: a relationship with the one true living God. So we do not live like inflexible naked branches: we move like leaves on the constant breeze of God's Spirit moving in the world: sometimes all together, sometimes just a little wave here and there. We are always part of the whole, connected and strengthened by each other and by our shared relationship with God. We proclaim that every person has value and that every person is included here because we are sure that God loves all people. All.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 18 for Jubilee Sunday. Please pray for this ministry and for all the people here. Please stretch to give a gift above your regular offering that will help to set us free to dream and to grow. Come and celebrate. Love is more than words: love is action. This is our opportunity to respond to what God has done and to open ourselves to what God will do.

And start to dream: What would you dream for this community two years from now? five years? What could we do if we could be sure that all things are possible?