

# The Assistant Pastor

January, 1928

## NINETEEN TWENTY-EIGHT

The click of the time clock has sounded and the ponderous door to a new year has automatically swung open. We enter and find three hundred and sixty-five locked compartments each one of which is opened, in regular order by a contrivance that no expert save Time himself can operate.

Pry and wrench and drill as we may, the next compartment will not open till tomorrow; then, and not till then, will we know what it contains.

We fondly hope that as each one opens, ever greater treasures of happiness, prosperity, success will be revealed to us.

But what if it is not so? What if some compartment is filled with reverses, another contains diseases germs? As one door opens you stand, perhaps, face to face with your own tombstone.

It is not merely possible but probable that this will happen to, at least, some among us. Who will it be? It can be you.

Facing such possibilities in the new year, who can be happy? Treading the unknown in the dark, who can coolly proceed?

The answer is: All who heartily join in the song of David singing:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters . . .  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

*A Happy New Year in His Name*



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## THE ASSISTANT PASTOR.

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H. M. Tjernagel, Pastor.  
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## CHURCH SERVICES.

**Saude**—Second and fourth Sundays, 10:45 a. m.; Saturday school every Saturday, 10 a. m.; confirmation class, 9:30 a. m. Fridays.

**Jerico**—First and third Sundays, 10:45 a. m.; Saturday school 2 p. m.; confirmation class, 2 p. m. Fridays.

Fifth Sundays by special announcement.

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"Merry Christmas." "A beautiful day." These were greetings exchanged as the worshippers gathered at our churches to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of our Savior. The weather was, indeed, beautiful and nearly all came to church, some in bob-sleighs, some in automobiles. All seemed happy and the smiles and good cheer increased as rig after rig drew up to the church and unloaded its passengers.

There is one place, at least, that a person is not inclined to be selfish; in the church pew. No one cares to have a pew alone; one is always pleased to try to make room for one more. The entire service seems better when the church is well filled. Not only is the hymn singing more uplifting, but even the sermon seems to be effected by well filled pews.

The pastor, I know, and believe, the members too, feel a special encouragement and strengthening after well attended services such as our Christmas services. It is true, one can and does rejoice over the wonderful message of grace even though alone to hear it, but, how delightful is it not, nevertheless, that others rejoice with us.

At my home we had the usual Norwegian Christmas eve supper. I might have sat down to the table alone and the food would have pleased my palate, strengthened my body and satisfied my hunger. But, you will not be surprised to hear that I did not choose to do that. The whole happy family was at the table and together we enjoyed the "lute-fisk" and "lefse" much more than we would have done

singly. We have also experienced the truth of an old adage and found that it is quite difficult to get one chunk of wood alone to burn brightly in our log cabin fireplace, while, if we throw several chunks together we soon have a warm, playful fire.

This principle applies also when Christians assemble themselves together for worship; to pray, praise, and give thanks. Why do our Christmas services, as a rule, stand out as red-letter events in our church year?

Tradition has decreed, from time immemorial, that all must go to church on Christmas day. Then old and young and, oftentimes, even the feeble, find or make a way to get to church. It takes more than a faintly announced headache or slightly inclement weather or somewhat bad roads, to keep one away from the Christmas service. And the result? Well filled pews, an encouraged pastor and consequently better sermon, a choir and an organist that puts forth their very best effort and in the pews delighted and happy men, women and children.

Why is it that every Sunday service is not a big event? Is it because the message at other services is less important and more ordinary than the Christmas message? To be sure, the blessed Christmas message is wonderful but, is it not wonderful yes, marvelous, to see the child we worship in the manger in action as an adult, as we do see Him when He stills the tempest—4th S. after Epiphany; gives sight to the blind—S. Quinquagesima; feeds the five thousand—4th Lent, or hear Him as He speaks to us of His love—3rd Trinity; of His willingness to forgive sins—11th Trinity. Wonderful messages to sinners every Sunday. Surely the message is beautiful and marvelous enough to make every Sunday service a great event in the life of every congregation.

If all who obey the traditions of men and go to church on Christmas day, if in any way possible, would as conscientiously heed the admonition of God not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is," Heb. 10, 25, but make use of every opportunity to see Him and hear Him according to His own promise, Math 18, 20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," every Sunday service would be a big event and blessings untold for time and eternity would surely follow. An ever greater number would joyously sing: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

There is a sickness known as anemia. The patient may live for some time, but all vigour and ambition gives way to a pronounced lack of vitality and to listlessness. Cheeks that were rosy become corpse-like and the ruddy lips turn pale blue.

If you wish to belong to an anemic congregation, stay away from services every once in a while. If you wish your pastor to be anemic in his work and sermons, let him preach to your empty pew every now and then. If you want to murder your own soul, just settle down comfortably on your couch and read your news paper while the church bell is calling you to church. To gain admission to hell you need not rob and steal and kill and shoot up things generally, it is enough that you "despise preaching and His word, and needlessly neglect divine wor-



ship, for such causes as laziness, unnecessary work, amusements etc." I shall never forget the moans of agony from a death bed I visited one Sunday morning as the church bell rang. "O how many times has not that bell called me and I have not answered!"

Dear reader, I ask you right here and now to resolve to attend every divine service in your church during the present year unless reasons, valid before God hinder you. It is exceedingly important that you do this. Your pastor needs your presence in church, your fellow members need you and, above all, you need to be there for your own sake.

\* \* \*

In a general way we can say that church attendance is good among us, relatively large crowds gather for services when the weather and roads are good. But, in the matter of church attendance, we must not think or speak thus in general or collective terms. God does not deal with us in crowds or in wholesale. He deals with individuals. And we cannot approach Him by the dozen or fifties or hundreds, but singly. The pastor and the congregation have strayed far afield if they lose sight of the individual in the crowd. When four hundred are present at services while fifty, for invalid reasons, are absent, have we a right to rejoice over good church attendance? Will mother's birthday be a happy day because nine of her children came home to see her and receive her blessing while only one did not care to come? She will likely cry herself to sleep that night because of the one. Was the Good Shepherd satisfied when He had all but one of His hundred sheep in safety? No, He left the ninety and nine and went to seek the one that was lost.

Church attendance is not good unless every member is present at every service when not prevented from attending by real hindrances. Your personal church attendance is not good if you miss one service without valid reason.

By every member we mean every man, woman and child. "Children too?" Yes, why not? "But the baby is so fussy and noisy and will only disturb others." Well, if you cannot keep the baby reasonably quiet, take her out into the nursery. If you have been disturbed in listening to the sermon, you have, nevertheless, heard more than you would have heard if you had stayed at home and you have shown your pastor, your fellow member and your God that you desire to attend public worship.

What are valid reasons for staying away from services? This question is very readily answered by all who truly desire to go to church, while to those who seek and welcome excuses for staying away, it is somewhat knotty and will remain vexing until they truly learn to fear and love God "that we may not despise preaching and His word, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it."

"We got company on Sunday so I could not go to church."

"I had to stay home from church Sunday to cook dinner."

"It looked like rain Sunday and I did not want to take the car out because I just washed it on Saturday."

"No, I wasn't in church Sunday, we went for a drive to Clear Lake."

## Parents must plan the future of their children.

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"We were all invited out for dinner Sunday, so I could not go to church."

"No, we did not feel like going to church, we just lounged around at home."

If all who stay away from church for such reasons would come, we would have regular Christmas crowds every service.

"Baby was quite sick Sunday so we had to stay home from church."

"A fire broke out at my neighbors just as we were getting ready for church and we had to go over and help as best we could."

"We could not all go to church Sunday because my pastures are low and the cattle need watching or they break into my neighbors corn field."

If only those who had similar valid excuses stayed away, there would always be some, but not very many vacant pews.

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And now, dear reader, let me remind you of the glimpse we get of Heaven in Revelation 7, 9-10. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And verses 14-15 "There are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

The saved in Heaven are constantly in the presence of God and joyously singing His praises and day and night eternally worshipping and serving Him in His temple.

You find it irksome to sing hymns at a Sunday service and to sit through a sermon about the Lamb and the blood that washes sins away, and, therefore, stay away from church as often as you can find somewhat of an excuse for doing so, what do you think of Heaven? Can you imagine a more wearisome place?

This matter of church attendance for the purpose of worshiping God by offering prayer, praise and thanksgiving, is more important than many realize. He who has not in time found joy in the assembly of God's children on earth, will find no joy among saints in eternity. He who has not in time loved and worshipped the Lamb of the Bible, Jesus Christ, will not in eternity find happiness in the white robed throng singing before His throne in Heaven.

O God be merciful unto me a sinner and let thy Holy Spirit fill my heart with love for "the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."

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