

# LIFE AT THE SEM

April 2020

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## PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Zion Lutheran, Pierce, and Christ Lutheran, Norfolk, and their continued outreach and ministry.
- For those affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19), including health workers, parents, teachers, and leaders.
- For Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as they continue the search process for a new president, and for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students awaiting Call Day.

## IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE

Isn't it true that some clichés, some sayings carry the most truth in particular seasons of life? I have heard various sayings throughout my life – ‘make the small things count’, ‘it's the little things in life’, ‘do the little things right’ – and all of a sudden, in the middle of a pandemic that's sweeping the world, I find these sayings are true.

If there has been one thing to come out of this pandemic, it has been the opportunity to slow down and focus on the little things. With very little activities and meetings at church and evenings open seven days a week, there has been ample time to focus more on the little things, like sleep, exercise, time spent in God's Word, worship, prayer, chatting with family and friends on the phone, enjoying a walk, reading, and plain ol' thinking.

One little thing I have pursued during this time has been a free online course taught by N.T. Wright, who is a renown New Testament scholar. The focus of this course has been on the New Testament's doctrine of work and vocation of the Christian. In one of the recent sessions I listened to, N.T. Wright focused on Romans 12:12. This verse spoke once again to the current situation we find ourselves in: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

Now, Paul is speaking to a group of new believers who have laid aside their godless ways, and through the Holy Spirit, have become followers of the one true God. However, it wasn't easy by any means to lay aside the ways of the world to be a peculiar people focused on the things of God. Paul is helping the Romans turn a page in their spiritual quest, that it is through suffering, trial, and transformation of the whole mind in Christ that they can discern God and His will.

The question that I often hear today (and I'm sure many of you hear it, too) is ‘What is God trying to tell us?’ To a question like that, I must first acknowledge that I do not know the mind of God, aside from what He reveals to you and me in His Word and through His Son. But what I do know is that God has given us opportunities in the present time to focus on the little things. While we may not know the reason **why**, God has given us the blessing of His Word and various technological avenues to hear His Word proclaimed and taught in truth and purity, that our minds may be renewed. He has given us several tests, whether that be financial, physical, or emotional, so that we can re-examine what our priorities in this life are, so that we can further align with God's will. Most of all, it is in a time like this that we see that God's will is good. While He does not bring sin and brokenness into the world, God does bring good forth to make His glory known to us and our pigsty of a world.

So, how are you doing with the ‘little things’? Do you find yourself mourning the things that are lost, like the world around us, or humbly rejoicing in the opportunities you have been given? You see, the little things that we so often take for granted – worship, devotion time, family, friends – those aren't so little! Will you join me to avoid explaining away the reason **why**, and instead having our minds renewed each day by **big** things...God's Word, prayer, mutual encouragement and consolation, and so much more?

## CURRENTLY IN PIERCE...

The past month has taught us a lot about how to focus on the 'little things' for our work and life. Work at church certainly looks different now than it did over a month ago. Rather than preparing for weekly services, we have adapted to preparing services for our YouTube channel. Rather than teaching in the classroom during the week, I have been busy adapting the World Religions unit for our confirmation kids. Rather than visiting shut-ins and members, phone calls and Portal of Prayer deliveries have abounded.



For Kari, her work has changed. While she is no longer to be in the classroom with her preschoolers, she has compiled take-home packets for her kids and is receiving drawings and pictures from her kids in the mail! While she is no longer to be able to work at the daycare (due to low numbers of kids), Kari occupies her time at home working on sewing projects, crafts, baking, and discovering a new hobby...embroidery!

We have also come to enjoy being outside more as the weather warms up. Whether it's fishing or taking a walk or searching for ice cream places, joining our brothers and sisters in e-worship or lifting up prayers, playing games with college friends online or video chatting with family, we are thankful for our renewed focus on the 'little things.' What are the 'little things' you are focusing on?

Patently waiting on the Lord,

Ryan and Kari