

[Jesus said] "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Matthew 7:15

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

Revelation 20: 12, 15

"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Recently there has been a tremendous amount of publicity about a book entitled *Love Wins*, written by Rob Bell, the pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The cover of the book announces that it is "about heaven, hell, and the fate of every person who ever lived." In the book, in a popular video that Bell released and in numerous recent television interviews, Bell summarizes his message as follows:

"A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance of anything better. It's been clearly communicated to many that this belief is a central truth of the Christian faith and to reject it is, in essence, to reject Jesus. This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus' message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world desperately needs to hear."

In other words, Bell believes, teaches and preaches that the doctrine of the eternal punishment of unrepentant sinners is actually keeping people from coming to Jesus. Bell conveniently either forgets or ignores that Jesus did, in fact, talk about unrepentant sinners going to hell. In fact, even though he devotes an entire chapter in his book to the topic of hell, he seemingly denies that anyone will actually go to hell. Bell contends that "God's love will eventually melt hearts," and that no matter how one lives one's life, God's love will "melt everyone's hearts" even after they have died. In other words, it doesn't matter if you have faith or don't have faith – it doesn't matter if you're a believer in Christ or a nonbeliever – because God's love will make everything fine either now or later and that "God's grace gives people space to work those issues out."

Bell states that the traditional (and incorrect) message of the Gospels is that people will go to hell unless they believe in Jesus – so Jesus actually rescues us from God. He asks how God could possibly be good or be trusted if we have to be rescued from Him. He says a lot more, too, and based on orders placed before the book's official March 15 publication date, it appears that millions and millions of people will be plunking down their \$22.95 (you can get it at Wal-Mart for \$11.99) to see what else he says. In my opinion, there are far better ways to spend your money.

Notoriously missing from Bell's arguments is what *Jesus* says. In Matthew 25:34, while discussing His return in judgment on the last day, Jesus says: *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"* Then Jesus turns His focus to unbelievers and says: *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"* And just a few verses later Jesus says: *"And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

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Bell's assertion that unbelievers can be "saved" even after death by God's love is clearly contradicted by Scripture, for nowhere in the Bible is there any possibility of a sinner's salvation after death. Indeed, the words of Hebrews 9:27 deny this possibility: "*And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*" Jesus says in John 3:36: "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*"

Especially troubling for Lutherans is Bell's claim that Martin Luther actually *supports* his position. To "prove" his point, Bell cherry-picks one short sentence out of the 55 published volumes of Luther's writings. Here is what Luther *really says* on this issue, with the sentence quoted by Bell appearing in italics.

"If God were to save anyone without faith, he would be acting contrary to his own words and would give himself the lie; yes, he would deny himself. And that is impossible for, as St. Paul declares, God cannot deny himself [II Tim. 2:13]. It is as impossible for God to save without faith as it is impossible for divine truth to lie. That is clear, obvious, and easily understood, no matter how reluctant the old wineskin is to hold this wine – yes, is unable to hold and contain it.

"It would be quite a different question whether God can impart faith to some in the hour of death or after death so that these people could be saved through faith. *Who would doubt God's ability to do that?* No one, however, can prove that he does do this. For all that we read is that he has already raised people from the dead and thus granted them faith. But whether he gives faith or not, it is impossible for anyone to be saved without faith. Otherwise every sermon, the gospel, and faith would be vain, false, and deceptive, since the entire gospel makes faith necessary." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 43)

Bell conveniently omits all of Luther's comments on this subject because Luther's words would not conveniently fit into his argument. That actually seems to be symbolic of much that Bell writes and says, taking a few words out of context (from Luther, the Bible and many other sources) to "support" an argument that simply cannot be supported or proven.

Bell's book and his teachings are troubling for the Christian in many respects. By saying that an unbeliever can go to heaven, he effectively denies the inspiration and the authority of Scripture. He is most certainly guilty of false teaching by watering down what Scripture says to make it palatable and popular among those who don't want to accept the reality of sin. And without coming right out and saying so, he eliminates the need for Jesus – the need for a Savior – who suffered and died for our sins. Who came not to rescue us from God – but to rescue us from sin and the devil.

In a thoughtful and well-reasoned response to *Love Wins*, Dr. Albert R. Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, recently concluded: "We dare not retreat from all that the Bible says about hell. We must never confuse the Gospel, nor offer suggestions that there may be any way of salvation outside of conscious faith in Jesus Christ. We must never believe that we can do a public relations job on the Gospel or on the character of God. We must never be unclear and subversively suggestive about what the Bible teaches."

In the Bible we have the real Jesus and not some false pseudo-Jesus who simply wants to make everyone feel good. Today, as we continue through the season of Lent in preparation for our remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, we must, indeed, hold fast to everything that Scripture tells us about Jesus and the sacrifice He made for our salvation. In spite of what Bell and his many followers may falsely believe, the truth – the only truth – can never be found in the words of Rob Bell nor, indeed, in the words of any other mere man or woman. The truth is and always will be found *only* in the words of God.

In Christ,

Pastor Terry O'Brien

Congratulations

... to all members of St. Paul Lutheran Church who are celebrating birthdays or wedding anniversaries during the month of April. Please send any additions or corrections to Barb Turner in the Church Office.



April Birthdays

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Mason Kindred | 13 | Elizabeth Engelman |
| 1 | Megan Merrifield | 13 | Heath Miller |
| 2 | Ila Klay | 14 | Mildred Dickey |
| 3 | Jacob Cutler | 14 | April Hunter |
| 4 | Mark Moeller | 15 | Hunter Williams |
| 4 | Amy Simac | 25 | Lyle Craig |
| 8 | David Law | 25 | Todd O'Brien |
| 11 | Larry Neal | 29 | Brandy Bockewitz |

April Anniversaries

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Pastor and Sharon O'Brien (33 rd) | 12 | Richard and Nancy Amling (53 rd) |
| 1 | Jerry and Patti Schnarr (5 th) | 21 | Merlyn and Joann Lower (44 th) |
| 6 | Rick and Carol Wilcox (20 th) | 23 | Darrell and Goldie Beck (41 st) |
| 8 | Jacob and Tiffany Ashcraft (11 th) | 26 | Darrell and Tera Stremming (42 nd) |



Serving Our Lord in His House during April

Communion Assistant: Tim Karbach
Elder on Duty: Jason Simac
Altar Guild: Sonna Livesay, Carol Wilcox

Ushers:
Adam Cross, Head Usher
April 3: Dave Allen, Wally Bingaman
April 6: Darrell Halbrook, Jason Simac
April 10: Vernon Benson, Wayne Miller
April 13: Rob Amling, Dick McGee
April 17: Jeff Bockewitz, Rob Merrifield
April 21: Todd Bockewitz, Dan Lees
April 22: John Livesay, Rick Wilcox
April 24: Larry Durbin, Bill Merrifield

Acolytes:
April 3: Christa Bingaman, Anna Simac
April 10: Mackenzie Bingaman, Josh Simac
April 17: Allison Kresin, Anna Simac
Josh Simac (Crucifer)
April 24: Christa and Mackenzie Bingaman
Josh Simac (Crucifer)

Greeters:
April 3: Bob and Betty Grotts
April 10: Roger and Irma Waddington
April 17: Darrell and Tera Stremming
April 24: Buck and Kay Miller

April 2011

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <p>27 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation</p> | <p>28 7:00 Ladies Guild</p> | <p>29 6:30 Bible Class</p> | <p>30 9:00 Bible Class 5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:00 Lenten Service</p> | <p>31</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>2</p> |
| <p>3 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation</p> | <p>4</p> | <p>5 6:30 Bible Class</p> | <p>6 9:00 Bible Class 5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:00 Lenten Service</p> | <p>7</p> | <p>8</p> | <p>9</p> |
| <p>10 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation 4:00 Mother/Daughter Banquet</p> | <p>11 6:30 Elders 7:30 Church Council</p> | <p>12 7:00 Voters Meeting</p> | <p>13 9:00 Bible Class 5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:00 Lenten Service</p> | <p>14 9:30 Thrivent Informational Meeting</p> | <p>15</p> | <p>16 9:00 Church Clean-Up Day</p> |
| <p>17 Palm Sunday 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service</p> | <p>18</p> | <p>19 6:30 Bible Class</p> | <p>20 9:00 Bible Class</p> | <p>21 Maundy Thursday 7:00 Maundy Thursday Service</p> | <p>22 Good Friday 7:00 Good Friday Service</p> | <p>23</p> |
| <p>24 Easter 8:45 Easter Breakfast 10:15 Divine Service</p> | <p>25 7:00 Ladies Guild</p> | <p>26 6:30 Bible Class</p> | <p>27 9:00 Bible Class</p> | <p>28</p> | <p>29</p> | <p>30 9:00 Church Clean-Up Day</p> |

Looking ahead ...

Don't miss the Ladies Guild Mother/Daughter Banquet at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 10! Make plans now to attend this festive event in the St. Paul Church basement – a special occasion for St. Paul mothers/daughters/members/guests to gather for a relaxing and enjoyable evening. The menu is highlighted by roast tenderloin, mashed potatoes and gravy provided by the Guild, and attendees are asked to bring a covered dish to share. In addition to the great food and great fellowship, a special program will be provided. The deadline to sign up (see the sheet on the bulletin board in the Narthex) is April 4.

Calling all volunteers – male and female – young and old – for the St. Paul Spring clean-up day on Saturday, April 16. Following the long and harsh winter weather, our facilities are in need of some top-to-bottom, inside-and-out cleaning. We'll begin at 9:00 a.m. and the more volunteers we have, the faster it will go. Following Easter, a second clean-up day will be held on Saturday, April 30. Please join us!

A special presentation for Thrivent members will be held on Thursday, April 14 at 9:30 a.m. in the Church basement. A Thrivent rep will be present to answer questions and provide information about Thrivent programs, including the “Thrivent Choice” program that funnels dollars directly to St. Paul Lutheran Church.

We're updating our records – and need your help! All St. Paul members will soon be receiving a special mailing asking you to provide updated information for you and for each St. Paul member (Baptized/Communicant) residing in your household. At most churches, records are somewhat difficult to access since details (dates of birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage, etc.) may be recorded in different books, on different pages of those books or even in different places. And, unfortunately, sometimes we just don't have specific pieces of information. We are using a new software program to record and track member information, attendance and financial contributions, and with your help we can make sure that our records are not only centralized in one place – but are also correct and —up-to-date.

Begin your celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter Morning by joining your fellow St. Paul members for our Easter breakfast! The menu will be highlighted by a variety of breakfast casseroles and fresh baked goods. Many volunteers are needed for set-up, clean-up, serving – and providing the food, of course! – so please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Narthex.

Lent/Holy Week/Easter Worship Schedule

Wednesday, April 6: 7:00 p.m. Midweek Vespers Service

Wednesday, April 13: 7:00 p.m. Midweek Vespers Service

Thursday, April 21: 7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service with the LORD's Supper

Friday, April 22: 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Service

Sunday, April 24: Easter Divine Service celebrating the Resurrection of our LORD

April 2011
Monthly newsletter of
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

Good News!

St. Paul Lutheran Church
208 E. Fourth Street
Pana, IL 62557

