

Welcome

We want to welcome you to the Bismarck Seventh-day Adventist church. Whether you are a visitor or a long time member we hope that you experience God's presence as well as warm Christian fellowship today here at church. Have a Happy Sabbath!

Announcements:

Dec. 15 –Activate Workshop
Dec. 22 – Christmas Program
Dec. 25 – Christmas Day

Prayer Requests:

Peter and Linda Davidson family
Kim Darmody's family in Calif. Fires
Deloris and Sheila Oswald
Jim Lunday
All Fire Victims in California
Our young adults

Revelation Seminar: We will not meet this afternoon because of the activate workshop. We will resume next Sabbath at 4pm

Activate Workshop: The follow-up to the Awaken workshop begins this afternoon at 1:30pm. The second session will begin at 5:30pm. Dinner will be provided. This workshop is for everyone who attended Awaken last month. Please bring your workbooks as we will be building off the work we did there.

Brentwood's Christmas Program will be Wednesday, December 19th, 7pm at the Bismarck church. Refreshments to follow. Please come out and support our students.

Christmas Program: Next Sabbath we will be having our annual Christmas themed worship service. This program is always a lot of fun, full of music, and is a great opportunity to invite friends and family to church. All invited to the potluck after the church service.

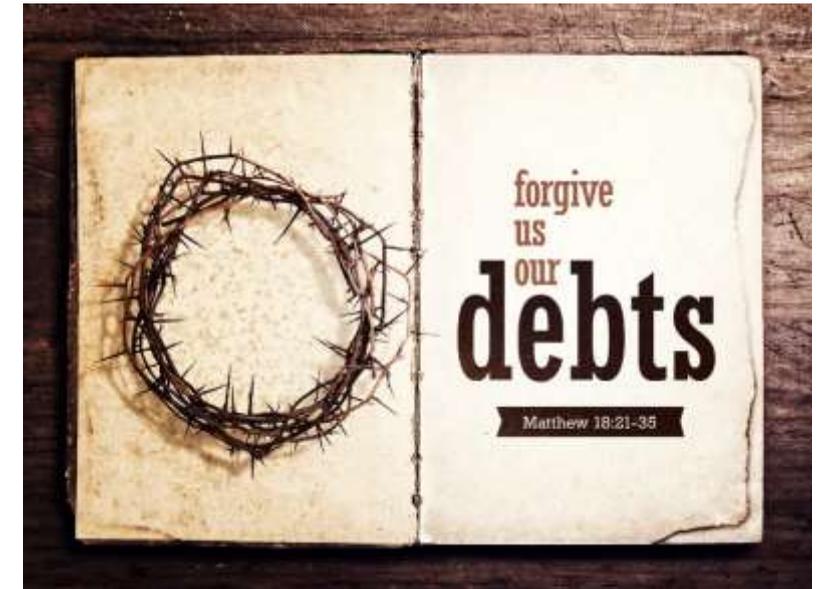
December has 5 Sabbaths and that means "its haystack potluck". A clipboard will be passed around. Hope to see ya'll!

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Musical Prelude		
Welcome & Announcements		Bob Hieb
Invocation		Pastor Tyler Bower
Praise Time		Dan Spilovoy
	#121 Go, Tell It on the Mountain	
	#130 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear	
Tithes & Offering	ACS	Kimber Flemmer
Children's Story		Laurie Foerderer
Scripture and Prayer	Luke 6:37-38	Rosie Christenson
Special Music		Jodi Dossenko
Sermon		Pastor Tyler Bower
	The Lord's Prayer pt 6: Debt Forgiveness	
Closing Song		Dan Spilovoy
	#Now the Joyful Bells A-Ringing	
Benediction		Pastor Tyler Bower
	Elder of the Month – Bob Hieb	
	Sunset Today: 4:54 p.m.	
	Sunset next Friday: 4:57 p.m.	
	Offering next Sabbath: Local Church Budget	
Pastor Tyler Bower		Church Secretary
972-352-7437		701-226-4765
	bismarcksdasecretary@midconetwork.com	

Dec. 15, 2018
Bismarck Seventh-day
Adventist Church



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Small Groups: Now that our fall semester has come to an end, we'll be taking a short break from groups over the holiday season and start up again after the first of the year. If you have suggestions for a small group that you would like to see take place in the spring semester please contact Pastor Tyler or Julie Bitz.

Pastor's Corner – 12-15-2018 – Was a Sacrifice Needed?

Our Dakota Conference likes to encourage us pastors to keep studying spiritual topics and so whenever the Theological Seminary puts out a new book, they usually purchase it for us. Not long ago they sent me a copy of the latest book off the “Andrews University Press” press called, “Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology.” Yeah, I know, it's a title only a theologian could love but the content of the volume focuses on something that is important to all of us who believe – the nature of salvation.

At first glance, it might be hard to imagine why we need a 400 page book to help us understand what seems to be a pretty straightforward Biblical teaching. One that is pretty well encapsulated in the most famous verse in all the Bible: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, so that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16). This is the heart of the gospel and it is beautiful in its simplicity. However, there are depths (contours if you will) to the plan of salvation that go beyond this basic gospel truth.

One of those contours is how we should understand the sacrifice of Jesus. We have to ask ourselves the question, why was a sacrifice even necessary? If God is truly a God of love, why couldn't he just forgive sinners without requiring the sacrifice of his son? Why not just extend forgiveness? Does God require a sacrifice to somehow appease his wrath?

When I consider my closest family members (my daughter and wife) I am struck by the fact that I am perfectly capable of extending forgiveness to them without the need for any kind of sacrifice or appeasement. If one of them does something that hurts my feelings or that I don't agree with, I can simply choose to forgive them and move on. My love for them is such that I can just let things go, if I choose to. I don't require punishment before I can forgive.

I think of the living parable played out through the relationship between the prophet Hosea and his wife Gomer. God had commanded the prophet to take for himself an unfaithful wife and to adopt the children that came from that unfaithfulness. Time and again, God asks Hosea to take his wife back and shower her with

love, despite her unfaithfulness. God compares Hosea's experience with Gomer to his own relationship with Israel. God commands Hosea, “Love her (Gomer) as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” I'm not sure what God has against raisins or cake, but I understand his comparison between adultery and the worship of false gods.

My point in bringing up this story is that Hosea was asked to receive back (and forgive) his wife without requiring any kind of sacrifice on her behalf. Not even repentance, as far as I can tell. Forgiveness was simply offered without the need of a sacrificial atonement.

Why then did God require his son to die before he could extend forgiveness to the human race? Why not just simply forgive and move on? Why not just make the decision and say, “hey guys, I don't like what you've done here, but I love you. Come back home and let's work this out.”

The answer to these questions is presented in the first chapter of the book I mentioned earlier. This chapter traces a history of the development of theologies related to questions of free will, God's character of love, and the great controversy.

Reflecting on the teachings of theologian Hugo Grotius the author of the first chapter writes, “God could not merely freely forgive the sinner, Grotius pointed out, because it was not His role merely as an *individual* offended Deity that was involved. Rather it involved His role as *Ruler* of the universe – a universe that can only function in peace and safety according to certain principles of fairness and justice. This shift of God as offended Being to God as offended Ruler means that in enforcing His law, He is not doing it out of some personal sense of pique, pride, or impaired glory. Rather, He is acting on behalf of the good of all the beings in the universe that depend on the stability, fairness, and morality of His government. In defending His honor, His character, He defends, as Ruler of the Universe, the very thing that allows the universe itself to have order, stability, security, peace, and, of course, love.”

The point here is that God is not just an individual, but also a ruler. All just governments have laws that protect the freedoms its citizens. Those laws have to be enforced in order to protect the well-being of everyone. In the case of God's government and the rebellion of humanity, God had a decision to make. Was he going to punish his children as his own law demanded, maintaining the integrity of his government, or was he going to extend forgiveness which he was compelled to do by his nature of love?

This decision, of course, was complicated by the rebellion in heaven that was being led by one of God's chief angels. Lucifer had

been spreading lies and asking questions about God's fairness and justice. Between the rebellion begun by Lucifer and the need to maintain the integrity of His government as well as his desire to show love and mercy to sinners, God was in a difficult situation. The only way out of this situation was to somehow punish sin (as required by His law) and yet at the same time forgive sinners (as required by love).

He accomplished this impossible feat by sending his own son to pay the penalty for disobedience. Jesus received the punishment required by the law, which was necessary to preserve the integrity of God's government. Once justice was served, God was then free to extend forgiveness to sinners who would subject themselves to the authority of the one who was sacrificed. As Paul states in Rom. 3 that Christ's sacrifice allows God to be both just and justifier. He upholds his law and shows mercy.

Did God really need a sacrifice in order to forgive humanity? Yes and no. If God were just an individual and not a ruler, then I would say he most certainly could have forgiven us without the need of a sacrifice. Just as you and I can forgive our loved ones without the need for punishment. It's just a decision we can make. But because God is also a ruler and his government depends on justice and fairness, transgression against his laws must be addressed. He can't just forgive without causing damage to his own reputation and rule. The Great Controversy against God and his government is what requires sin to be punished.

The great news of the gospel is that God would rather take that punishment upon himself than mete it out upon you and me. It is his desire that nobody should be lost and that all should come to repentance. Jesus' sacrifice makes it all possible.

If you're interested in studying these topics more deeply and really diving into the theology of salvation (called soteriology) I encourage you to pick up the book *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*. You can get it from the Adventist Book Center or from Amazon.

Happy Sabbath
Pastor Tyler