

# St. Paul's Herald

February 2026

## LETTER FROM PASTOR

With a whole bunch of snow that came with the big winter storm we had recently, I had some extra time to spend with my family at home. One of the things that we did together was watch a couple movies; and what better movie to watch during a snowstorm than Disney's Frozen. For those who have not seen the film, the story follows a young princess named Elsa with the power to manipulate ice and snow, but who is unable to control her power. When Elsa becomes queen of her kingdom, her uncontrolled power is revealed causing all kinds of chaos for her kingdom and the people she loved. The real issue of Elsa's lack of control turns out to be fear. It is only when she learns to manage her fear and focus on love is she able to control her powers.

While Frozen is just a movie and Elsa a fictional character in it, fear is real and can cause all kinds of problems in our lives. What do you fear? Like me, if you are truly honest with yourself, you could probably make a whole list of things of which you are afraid. Fear by itself is not necessarily a bad thing. Having a fear of heights or from burning yourself on the stove causes you to be careful when working on a ladder or cooking dinner. God has given us a sense of fear for our protection; even a healthy fear of the Lord is a good thing (see Ps. 111:10). Unfortunately for us as humans, fear can easily spiral out of control and become unmanageable. This is

especially true with real risks in life related to the unknown. What will happen if \_\_\_? What will people think, say, or do if \_\_\_? When unchecked fear enters into our minds and thoughts, our whole outlook changes. Everything we do and say can become measured or overreactive. Our lives and the people around us suffer, all because of fear.

From a biblical perspective, fear is the enemy of faith. Unchecked fear distracts us from God and is a tool that Satan uses to steal our joy and cause us to doubt God's promises. God however does not want us to live in fear, but in faith, trusting Him to take care of everything. Fear should not direct our lives, but it can be used to direct us to act, especially to turn toward God. In fact, the best way to manage fear is to seek the Lord.

The Bible actually has a lot to say about fear, but it's much more than just strategies for managing it on your own. In the New Testament alone, the word fear is used more than 40 times. One common theme among many of the passages involving fear is the need to turn to God. The reason for this is simple but profound, as John declares in 1 John 4:18a, "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear." God is the author of love and sent His Son Jesus Christ in perfect love to cast out the darkness as well as fear within us. When we turn to Him, our fears can be relieved, our faith strengthened, and others around us blessed. We don't have to worry about anything that comes our way, even when bad news comes because "[your] heart [can be] firm, trusting in the Lord (Ps. 112:7)" for "the Lord is [your] light and [your] salvation, whom [or what] shall [you] fear (Ps. 27:1)". Turn to Jesus, beloved in Christ, who casts out all fear today!

In the love of Christ,

Pastor Josh



## CONNECTING TO GRACE

We are entering February, the month of Valentines Day and the season of love. One of the many things you may hear in our contemporary society, and maybe increasingly during this season, is that love is love. While the desire for love is not wrong, the phrase “love is love” ultimately leaves it up to each individual to define what love looks like. This raises an immediate problem; one person’s definition of love will likely not match another person’s definition. When someone tries to show love to someone else who has a different definition of love, hurt and frustration are often the result. Unfortunately, many problems in our world are the result of varied definitions of love. A standard for love is needed.

Thankfully, the Bible makes the standard of love clear when it says, “God is love (1 Jn. 4:8).” What this really means is that God defines love, not us as human beings. The problem with humans defining love is that we use our own sinful desires and emotions to shape our own definition of love that usually benefits us. God, however, defines love in a self-sacrificing way that shows honor and respect to others, even those who would have nothing to do with

Him. “God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” Romans 5:8 tells us. Jesus Christ came as the concrete embodiment of God’s love for us. It is Jesus who both shows us what love is and allows us to love one another.

Most people would agree with the idea we ought to love one another, but if they don’t agree on who or what defines love, practicing love becomes hard. Loving one another is certainly part of God’s Will for us as humans. Jesus himself summarizes God’s will when He says to the lawyer who challenges Him about it in Matthew 22:34-40, “...“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (36)” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself (39)”. In these verses, Jesus is summarizing what He would live out perfectly during His earthly ministry. This means that the key for loving others is Jesus and His love. Jesus’ love reaches out with care and compassion for His enemies and prays for those who persecute Him (see Matt. 5:44). Jesus’ love doesn’t “repay evil for evil” but “overcomes evil with good” (see Romans 12:17, 21 resp.). Jesus’ love is all of that which is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

While we may know what God’s love ought to look like from Jesus’ example, the problem is we still do not have the ability to live that way on our own. Just like a water wheel cannot power the mill without water, we cannot love each other without the love of Jesus Christ. Only God’s love in us gives us what is necessary to love one another. This means that we each need to be personally connected to God’s loving grace, where it is promised (in Word and sacrament) regularly, so that God’s love may define the love we share with one another. May you remember God’s great love for you in Jesus Christ as you share that grace and love with others!

