



Focus On The Things You Can't See

"We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18 - EHV

Usually when we look back at past years, there is very little that we can remember, but I think that most of us will never forget the year 2020. I'm sure that most of us are glad to flip the page of 2020 and look out into the unknown future of 2021, or are we? There is always that fear of moving into the unknown of the future. Is the new year going to be filled with more of the same pain and sorrow and sadness of the past, or is it going to be new and exciting and better? How should we view the past and the future? What can give us hope and a firm and unshaken confidence as we look back at the past year and live in the present and look forward to the future? The words of the Apostle Paul give the answer to these questions.

The Apostle Paul was addressing the problem of pain, grief and sorrow as he writes the words of our text, **"We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal."** In simple words, Paul tells us that we shouldn't be focusing on the things we can see, but on the things we can't see.

Why? **"For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal."** The things I can see are the material things like, money, health, jobs, family. They are the earthly things that many of us strive after to seek to make our lives complete. The problem is when we make these things that we can see the center of our lives and dwell on them as our main goals and hopes, what do we really have? This means that we are focusing on the wrong things. We are looking at life from the wrong perspective.

Christians can look at the past year and the new year, and at all the future years, not as an end in itself, but as a period of working and preparing for the real goal of life -- our eternal home of heaven. Last year, this year, our whole life, to the child of God are our journey to reach the eternal home of heaven. We know that all the things of this life will eventually be destroyed or go away. We know that even our earthly bodies, which bear more marks of wear and tear with each passing year, will not last forever but will eventually turn to dust. But here is the key: We know that we have something better to live for.

God tells us to focus on unseen things because they are eternal. What are the unseen things? They are God and his grace. They are Jesus and his love. They are the peace of sins forgiven. They are the certain hope of heaven. Surely these things are not seen with our earthly eyes, and yet they are real through our eyes of faith. People in their stubborn unbelief may mock us who live and walk by faith and who place eternal things first. But we with an eternal perspective look for a new heavens and a new earth, where we will live in heaven in God's righteousness. We have something concrete, unchangeable, and eternal.

So whether we are looking back at 2020 or looking ahead to 2021 and beyond, things don't really change for us as God's children. For no matter what is going on in our physical life, no matter what our earthly experiences may be, no matter how great our sorrow, or how full our joy, our eternal goal and our eternal perspective remain constant and unchanging. The year ahead is simply another step nearer to our goal of eternal life of heaven. May all of you have a blessed 2021 as we Focus On The Things We Can't See!

Pastor Mark Gartner

Pastor Gartner

January 2021

ALTAR GUILD

Lorinda Suhr	920-733-8515
Elizabeth Wilson	920-606-4603
Marilyn Wilson	920-858-2370
Bonnie Lillge	920-734-5373

BAPTISM Carson Anthony Evers, son of Sean and Melissa (Lecker) Evers was baptized December 13, 2020 at St. John. ***"Be baptized and wash away your sins."*** Acts 22:16

WITH THE LORD Our sister in Christ, Linda Shaw entered eternal life with her Savior on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. A Christian funeral service was held at St. John on Thursday, December 17, 2020. And our sister in Christ, Darley Holtz entered eternal life with her Savior on Friday, December 18, 2020. A Christian funeral service is being held at St. John on Wednesday, December 23, 2020.

"I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25.

BIBLE CLASSES Pastor Gartner began a new Bible Study on Sunday November 29th at 9:15 am entitled: **"Catholicism Today — A Study of What the Catholic Church Teaches and How It Measures Up to God's Word."** Join us as we look at some of the key teachings of the Catholic Church in light of God's Word, and we will also look at ways on how we can share the truths of God's Word with those in the Catholic Church who may be struggling in their faith.

Pastor Frey is leading a Bible Study on Mondays and Tuesdays called, **"Counterfeit Christianity."** The devil is called the Father of Lies (John 8:44); he uses his web of lies to lead Christians away from God's Word and thus away from the one true faith. This study, based on the book, Broken: 7 "Christian" Rules that Every Christian Ought to Break as Often as Possible by Jonathan Fisk, will examine these lies of the devil and their antidotes from Holy Scripture.

If you would like to receive a recording of these Bible Classes, please contact one of the Pastors and we will send you the link for these recordings.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING The annual congregational meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 19 at 7:00 p.m. All men ages 18 and over are encouraged to attend.

USHERS The 2021 usher schedule (January-April) is available. The cleaning schedule will be available by December 27. The schedules will be in the entryway of the church.

FLOWER CHART A 2021 flower chart has been placed on the bulletin board. If you would like to bring flowers for a special occasion, please sign for that date.

GREETING CARDS Did you know there are individual greeting cards for purchase in the church narthex? They are being sold by our Women of Faith as a service to you.

The cards are self-serve on a spinner rack near the library and are only 50 cents per card. Check the rack often as cards are added for special holidays and occasions.

WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY The pantry thanks everyone for supporting the food pantry. For January, the pantry needs: canned vegetables (corn, green beans, peas), jam, cookies, all crackers, canned tomato products, cake and brownie mixes and frostings, hamburger, tuna and chicken helper meals, hand and body lotions, men's and women's deodorants, household cleaning products (toilet bowl cleaners and kitchen and bathroom cleaning products), Kleenex and paper towels. Please drop items off at church by **Friday, January 8, 2020.**

WOMEN OF FAITH All ladies of the congregation are invited to join us Tuesday, January 12 at 1:00 pm for Bible study and LWMS updates.

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY All men of the congregation are invited to join us on Tuesday, January 19 at 9:00 am for Bible study.

2020 Annual Contribution Statements The statements will be available in January. If you want your statement emailed to you, let us know; email church.office@stjohn-appleton.org by Dec. 31.

2021 ENVELOPES If you have not picked up your 2021 offering envelopes, please pick them up as soon as possible.

The offering envelopes have changed for 2021. We no longer have individual envelopes for each fund.

January 2021

All funds are now listed on one weekly offering envelope. Information about the envelopes and the purpose of each fund is listed below. It is important to note that this is not asking for money, but just providing information.

Weekly Offering Envelope

500		January 3 2021	
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church			
General Fund: \$ _____	FVL Debt Retirement: \$ _____		
Building Fund: \$ _____	WELS Missions: \$ _____		
Land Fund: \$ _____	Institutional Ministries: \$ _____		
FVL Operational: \$ _____	Christian Family Solutions: \$ _____		
		TOTAL: \$ _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Giving Name: _____			
<small>On the first day of every week, each of you is to set something aside in keeping with whatever he gains. — 1 Corinthians 16:2 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. Made in USA.</small>			

- **General Fund** is used for maintenance, salaries, utilities, and tuition for elementary students attending Christian Day School. Basically, whatever it takes to run the church. The specific expenditures are shown on the congregational quarterly and annual reports from the treasurer.
- **Building Fund** is used for any necessary renovation and upkeep of the existing church and parsonage.
- **Land Fund** will be used for planning and development of a new church.
- **FVL Operational** is used only for daily maintenance, salaries, and utilities at Fox Valley Lutheran High School.
- **FVL Debt Retirement** is used only for Fox Valley Lutheran High School debt retirement – *Let the Children Come*.
- **WELS Missions** is distributed to the “mission field” for the spreading of the gospel for the training of Pastors and Teachers.
- **Institutional Ministries** is a WELS ministry to prisons, jails, hospitals, and nursing homes.
- **Christian Family Solutions** is a social agency, which has an office in the Fox Valley and is available for Christian counseling.

If you give electronically online and want to place an envelope in the offering box in the entryway, you may use the weekly offering envelope and check the Electronic Giving box.

Offerings in the special envelopes — Lenten Offering, Maundy Thursday Offering, Good Friday,

Thanksgiving Offering, Advent Offering, Christmas Eve Offering, Christmas Offering and New Year’s Eve Offering — will go into the General Fund.

Universal Offering Envelope

Envelope # _____	
General Fund	\$ _____
Building Fund	_____
Missions	_____
FVL Operational	_____
FVL Debt Retirement	_____
Child & Family Service	_____
Institutional Ministry	_____
Land Development	_____
Hmong Ministry	_____
Thoughts of Faith	_____
NAME _____	

You may use the Universal envelope if you wish to do so; it is on the counter in the entryway.

GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING NOVEMBER:

		<u>Expenses</u>
General Fund	\$29,651.00	\$22,907.00
General Fund YTD	\$342,195.00	\$306,735.00
Building Fund	\$865.00	
Land Development Fund	\$210.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$1,622.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$350.00	
Institutional Ministry	\$355.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$595.00	
FVLHS Let the Children Come	\$700.00	

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income.” 1 Corinthians 16:2

AN OPTION FOR GIVING YOUR OFFERING: VANCO, the company we use for online giving through our website, now offers an app that allows you to give directly to St. John through your smart phone, VANCO Give Plus. Simply download the app, login/create a username, and then find St. John. This app will allow you to give to whatever fund you so desire, as well as set a one-time offering, or a recurring offering with a specific frequency. For more information, contact Tim Springstroh or one of the pastors. Below are the links for the app.

Google Play:



Apple App Store:

