Trinity Tribune

2019 April

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas

Pastor's Message for Easter

Pontius Pilate's Ring Discovered

As we observe Good Friday and Easter this month, we will contemplate again the story of how our Lord Jesus Christ *"suffered under Pontius Pilate"* (Apostles' Creed) and *"was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate"* (Nicene Creed). An amazing new confirmation of this Roman governor who condemned Jesus to death was recently revealed in Israel.

The New Testament mentions Pontius Pilate by name 53 times, and there are many additional references to him in other ancient literature, including the Roman historians Tacitus and Philo, and the Jewish historian Josephus. In last month's newsletter I related that, despite this evidence, critics of the Bible at one time denied Pontius Pilate ever even existed. They declared he was just a figment of the New Testament writers' imaginations.

Until 1961 this was actually considered by skeptics to be one of their most powerful arguments against the truth of Christianity. It was fashionable to "prove" the entire faith false by mocking Christians for reciting in their Creeds week after week the name of a fairy-tale figure, who never existed in real life: Pontius Pilate.

Then in 1961 a two-by-three foot stone was discovered at Caesarea with this inscription: *"Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has presented this Tiberium to the Caesareans."* The "Tiberium" was an amphitheater named in honor of the Roman emperor Tiberius, and this was the dedication plaque like we often still have in public buildings today. So, contrary to the critics, this irrefutable archaeological evidence provides conclusive proof not only that Pontius Pilate really existed, but also that he was the Roman prefect or governor of Judea, just as the Bible says.

Discovered near Jerusalem in 1969 but not deciphered until last year, this signet ring was the propery of Pontius Pilate and bears his inscription.

Since 1961 this stone had been the only known ancient inscription with the name of Pontius Pilate. But, it turned out yet another confirmation of his existence had been laying around unnoticed in a storeroom at Hebrew University in Jerusalem since 1969.

That year an inscribed copper ring was discovered at the ancient fortress of Herodium. This massive complex was originally built by King Herod the Great, atop a huge artificial mountain he constructed near Bethlehem, about six miles south of Jerusalem.

Though he maneuvered to get himself appointed "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate, Herod the Great was not actually Jewish but Idumean, a neighboring tribe and traditional foe of the Jews. He was always paranoid about this, and the fortress of Herodium was intended to be a safe refuge for him in case of revolt by the subjugated Jewish populace. It was also the site of the mausoleum where Herod the Great was buried, when he himself died shortly after massacring the infants of Bethlehem, in a futile attempt to kill the true, newborn King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-18).

Herodium was one of several palaces of Herod the Great that were later taken over and used by the Roman governors, including Pontius Pilate. Another was the Praetorium, the former royal palace at Jerusalem where Pilate condemned Jesus to death: *"The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium . . . Then they led Him away to crucify Him"* (Matthew 27:27-31).

Though discovered in 1969, corrosion on the ring made it impossible to read the inscription. So, as happens with about 99% of all archaeological finds, it was packed away into a storeroom and forgotten.

It wasn't until last year that the ring came to the attention of researchers again. New cleaning techniques and computer-enhanced digital photography made it possible for them to render the inscription crystal clear—and it turned out to be not an obscure artifact, but a very important historic find!

Aerial view of Heriodium, the massive fortress built by King Herod the Great near Bethlehem, about six miles south of Jerusalem, atop an artificial mountain he constructed. Later used by Roman governors, it was in an ancient storeroom at this complex that a signet ring bearing Pontius Pilate's inscription was discovered in 1969, though due to being obscured by corrosion not deciphered until last year.

In the center of the ring is a picture of a wine vessel known as a "krater," a common decorative element for artifacts of that period. It is meant to symbolize prosperity and agricultural abundance, similar to our cornucopia. Around the krater is an inscription in Greek of the name "Pilate," in a possessive form that means, "Of Pilate."

Though coming first, "Pontius" was actually his surname, what we now have as our last name. In ancient times the Pontius family was both prominent and large. The modern-day Italian movie director Carlo Ponti, husband of the star Sophia Loren, was a descendant of this clan. However, while the surname Pontius was common, the individual name Pilate was extremely rare, making the identification of this ring with Pontius Pilate almost certain.

It is a signet ring, a type widely used in the ancient world to make impressions in wax or clay. That's why the inscription of Pilate's name on the ring is a mirror image, so that it comes out correct when applied to such materials.

This was either for purposes of authorization, like a signature, or to indicate ownership, like a label. This particular signet ring is relatively simple in design and materials, considered too modest to have been worn by Pontius Pilate himself as an elite Roman governor. More likely, it was entrusted to a functionary who represented Pilate at Herodium.

Like the common practice today of a secretary or other assistant signing letters on behalf of the boss, this administrator would use the signet ring he had been given to sign on behalf of Pilate routine orders and communications for the running of the palace, by impressing it into a wax seal. He could also use it to mark as the property of Pilate items stored in pottery containers, such as wine, by impressing the seal into the containers when the clay was still wet. The closest parallel we have today is an "official seal" used by many entities, including our church.

While Pontius Pilate himself likely didn't wear this particular signet ring, it can still rightly be said to have personally belonged to him. For, such rings were never the property of those to whom they were entrusted. Like an official seal, they indeed were Pilate's own property, and had to be returned when the holder left their position of service to him. Presumably this ring was lost, misplaced, or simply forgotten and left behind at Herodium, when after serving for a decade as governor Pilate retired in 36 A.D. and died shortly thereafter.

Nearly 2,000 years after the first Holy Week and Easter, there is a very poignant connection between this newly revealed signet ring and those events. For, the Gospels report that after Jesus was entombed: *"The chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 'Sir,' they said, 'we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again." So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.' 'Take a guard,' Pilate answered. 'Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard"* (Matthew 27:62-66).

This "seal on the stone" that had been rolled in front of the entry to Christ's tomb would have been made up of string affixed with wax seals. The seal itself could easily be torn off, and was not meant to *physically* hinder moving the stone or entering the tomb. Rather, it was a powerful, official *warning*, that anyone breaking into the tomb would incur the wrath of the Roman governor, on whose authority it had been sealed.

To convey this message, a centurion or other official representing Pilate would have used one of the governor's signet rings to impress Pilate's personal seal into the wax. Because it is quite likely such signet rings of a governor were all of similar design, we may now have a picture from the ancient world of the very image impressed into those wax seals on Christ's tomb!

Discovered at Caesarea in 1961, this was the only ancient inscription bearing Pontius Pilate's name until his signet ring found in 1969 was deciphered last year. A dedication stone for an amphitheater named in honor of Emperor Tiberius, it bears the Latin inscription: *"Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has presented this Tiberium to the Caesareans."*

Of course, what is truly significant about those seals is that they were indeed broken: *"For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone"* (Matthew 28:2). The opening of the empty tomb revealed to the world the Good News: *"Christ has indeed been raised from the dead"* (1 Corinthians 15:20). And He promises you: *"Because I live, you also will live. . . I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Me, even though he dies, yet shall he live"* (John 14:19, 11:25).

The message of Easter is that because He *"suffered under Pontius Pilate"* and *"was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate,"* because the *"seal on the stone"* to His empty tomb was broken when the angel *"rolled back the stone,"* heaven itself is now unsealed and open—for you!

Pastor Kevin Vogts

2019 Lent Services

Services at 7:00pm

Suppers Before Wednesday Services

April 3 – Lent Service V
"Sneering" & "Weeping"

April 10 – Lent Service VI
"Pounding Hammer," "Spurting Water and Blood" & "Confessing"

April 14 – Palm Sunday
"Donkey's Hoofs," "Cheering Crowds," & "Jeering Crowds"

April 18 – Maundy Thursday
"Singing," "Breaking Bread" & "Pouring Wine"

April 19 – Good Friday
"Dice" & "Death Cry"

April 21 – Easter Sunday
"The Rolling Stone"

Easter Lilies

We have again arranged for Easter Lilies to be ordered through the Church Office from Price Chopper, for $7 each. Sign up on the counter in the church office indicating that you wish to have these plants purchased for you, and put your payment in the offering plate marked "Easter Lilies."

The deadline to sign up for ordering through the Church Office is Palm Sunday, April 14. You are also welcome to bring your own plants, if you wish to purchase them elsewhere or receive them as gifts. Please still sign up on the list indicating that you will provide your own plants and drop them by the church the week before Easter Sunday. You are also welcome to take your plants home any time after Easter Sunday.

When you sign up, please indicate whom your plants are in memory or honor of, the way you want it printed in the newsletter.

Easter Egg Hunt

Twin Valley 4-H is sponsoring the annual Easter Egg Hunt, on Saturday, April 20 (day before Easter), at 10:00am on the Shelter House grounds. All children are invited to enjoy the Easter Egg Hunt and lots of other fun activities!

Sunday Sermons for April

Sermons by Pastor Vogts are available in both printed and audio form on our website at www.trinitylcms.org/sermons; as podcasts in the Itunes store by searching for "Rev. Kevin Vogts"; and printed copies of that day's sermon and several of the most recent sermons are available in the Gathering Room.

April 7
"The Parable of the Wicked Tenants"
Luke 20:9-19

April 14 – Palm Sunday
"The Sounds of Lent: Donkey's Hoofs, Cheering Crowds, and Jeering Crowds"
Luke 4:1-13

April 21 – Easter Sunday
"The Rolling Stone"
Matthew 28:1-15

April 28
Rev. Roger Schepmann
Guest Preacher

Maundy Thursday

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, April 14. A special service of Holy Communion commemorating the Last Supper will be held on Maundy Thursday, April 18, at 7:00pm. Pastor Vogts' message will be "*The Sounds of Lent: Singing, Breaking Bread, and Pouring Wine"* based on Matthew 26:26-30.

Tenebrae Service

On Good Friday, April 19, at 7:00pm we will have a traditional Tenebrae Service. "Tenebrae" (TEN-uh-bray) is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows."

The Tenebrae Service is marked by a gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights, symbolizing the death of our Lord, interspersed with readings, prayers, hymns, and other musical selections related to His Passion. Our Tenebrae Service will feature seven candles, gradually extinguished as we read Christ's seven last words from the cross.

Pastor Vogts' message will be *"The Sounds of Lent: Dice and Death Cry"* based on John 19:23-30. Bring your family to meditate upon our Savior's sacrifice for your salvation!

Sunrise Service

You are invited to an Easter Sunrise Service at Trinity on Easter Sunday, April 21 at 7:00am. This simple service will feature the Easter story and favorite Easter hymns.

A second Easter Service will be held at the regular time of 10:00am. The order of worship for the services will be different, but both services will feature Holy Communion, and the same Easter message by Pastor Vogts, "*The Rolling Stone"* based on Matthew 28:1-15.

Easter is one of the most moving and meaningful worship opportunities of the year. Bring your family and holiday guests to celebrate the real significance of Easter.

Lenten Suppers

As a special treat the Blocktoberfest Committee will be serving Bierocks for our final Lenten Supper, before our 7:00pm Lenten Vespers on April 10. Thank you to all those hosting these fun fellowship events! Thank you to all those hosting these fun fellowship events!

Easter Breakfast

Our thanks to the Generations group for serving a light Easter Breakfast between our services on Easter Sunday, April 21, beginning right after the Sunrise Service. All are invited to enjoy the food and fellowship!

Adult Bible Study

Our current study in Adult Bible Class is *"Put on the Full Armor of God!"* as described in Ephesians 6:10-19: *the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit.*

What is the meaning of each of these for you? How can you *"Put on the Full Armor of God!"* in your life? Join in Sundays at 9:00am in the Heritage Room!

QUARTERLY MEETING

The quarterly meeting of the Voters Assembly will be held following worship on Palm Sunday, April 14. In order to prepare for this meeting the Church Council will meet Tuesday, April 9 at 7:00pm. Topics include officer and committee reports, set date for Spring clean up and any other business.

Nursing Home Services April 14

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents at North Point and Medical Lodge on April 14. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. We begin at 1:30pm at North Point and then go to Medical Lodge for the second service. It's great to have church members there to greet the residents and sing along!

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 913-849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at trinitylutheranblock@gmail.com.

April 1 .... Lori Schlegel
April 1 .... Elaine Stewart
April 3 .... Brigitte Rodewald
April 4 .... Joy Hinds
April 4 .... Kristina Jenkins
April 5 .... Shamron Ferrell
April 5 .... Tyler Hieber
April 5 .... Wesley Medlen
April 5 .... Joe Mueller
April 6 .... Kelsey Debrick
April 6 .... Dennis Johns
April 6 .... Bill Koelsch
April 8 .... Leslie Prothe
April 8 .... Ella Durham
April 9 .... Emma Haley
April 10 .... Karlie McMullin

Sweetheart Dinner
February 24
Thank you to Lori Schlegel for the photos

April 11 .... James Fanning	April 24 .... Bridget Medlin
April 13 .... Suzanne Peckman	April 26 .... John Gerken
April 14 .... Matt Oberheide	April 26 .... Austin Reyelts
April 14 .... Venita Prothe	April 26 .... Tyler Reyelts
April 14 .... Layla Schlegel	April 29 .... Krista Munzer
April 14 .... Dana Simonson	April 29 .... Abigail Koelsch
April 15 .... Lois Holtz	April 29 .... Erin Meyer
April 16 .... Erika Hall	April 30 .... Ellen Pinneo
April 17 .... Gavin Kaiser	April 5 .... George & Pam Holtz (29)
April 17 .... Rev. Kevin Vogts	April 5 ...Burl & Shemene Peckman (33)
April 18 .... Melissa Richardson	April 13 ..Alan & Jeanne Hutchison (28)
April 19 .... Katie Taylor	April 20 .. Max & Jennifer Boydston (34)
April 20 .... Loren Herrs	April 25 ....Harold & Ann Peckman (71)
April 21 .... Ashley Debrick	April 26 .... Dan & Cathy Hieber (32)
April 22 .... Chloe Maisch	April 26 ....Kenny & Vera Kaiser (74)
April 22 .... Lori Richardson	April 26 ...... Keith & Laura Prothe (39)
April 22 .... Nicholas Minden	April 27 ...... Kevin & Marla Prothe (28)
April 23 .... Eric Ritch	April 28 .... Chris & Denna Jones (18)

GUEST PREACHER

Pastor Vogts will be gone for a family event on Sunday, April 28. Our guest preacher that Sunday will be Rev. Roger Schepmann.

After Church Snacks

Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship during 2019? Most of the year remains open! Consider signing up for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries.

There is a sign-up sheet on the table with the snacks. Our Generations group has generously agreed to provide and prepare the coffee and juice each week! So those signing up are only asked to provide some treat. Thanks to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour!

April 7
Gayle Plummer

April 14
Michelle & Emma Haley

April 21
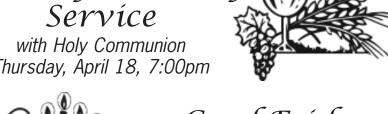*Easter Breakfast*

April 28
Need Volunteers

Missionaries of the Month

Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported by our congregation through our mission offerings to our Synod.

Holy Week & Easter Schedule

Maundy Thursday Service
with Holy Communion
Thursday, April 18, 7:00pm

Good Friday Tenebrae Service
Friday, April 19, 7:00pm

Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, April 20, 10:00am
On Shelter House Grounds
Sponsored by Twin Valley 4-H
All Children Invited!

Sunrise Service
Easter Sunday, April 21, 7:00am
Second Easter Service at 10:00am
Both Services Include Holy Communion
and Same Easter Message

Easter Breakfast
Easter Sunday, April 21
8:00am
Sponsored by Generations

All Invited — Everyone Welcome!

April 7	April 21
Rev. Michael & Karen Schempf	*Jana Inglehart*
Uganda	Dominican Republic
April 14	April 28
Rev. James & Peggy Krikava	*Rev. Steven & Martha Mahlburg*
Czech Republic	Sri Lanka