

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light for my path” Ps. 119:105*

When you and I read that familiar verse from Psalm 119, more than likely we associate it with the Bible. The Bible is a book that many talk about, and we as Lutherans acknowledge its' central place in our faith. It was the study of the Bible that brought Martin Luther to reclaim the centrality of Christ's life death and resurrection both in the church and in the salvation of the individual.

It is hard to think of a time when the Bible wasn't available, but the time did exist in the early history of the Christian church that it was only to be read and interpreted by clergy of the church. Again it was Martin Luther, as well as others who took the Greek and Hebrew (the original language of the scriptures) and translated it into the common language so that everyone could read it.

Every since the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation the Bible has become the source, God's word for our life faith and practice. For hundreds of years following it was the book in everyone's possession. As part of my Dutch family heritage we have Dutch bible that was written for the reformed church in the Netherlands from 1776.

Of course the standard popular English version is the King James Bible. Despite its' being written with a different style of English, the beauty and majesty of the text still captivates us. Psalm 23 for example has no more beautiful or majestic prose than in the King James Bible. It was also the Bible people were dilligent in reading, despite some of the hurdles in understanding the language.

Today however, we are well blessed with many good english translations today, and since more ancient manuscripts have been found, and translated, we have a much more clear sense of what perhaps the original text was.

Curiously enough, however, with all the good readable and understandable Bible translations today, you tend to get the suspicion that by and large we are reading the Bible less. That is something to think about. For by not reading and studying the scriptures on our own by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we might succumb to the temptation of always letting someone else do it for us. Worse still something could be quoted out of context, which could lead folk astray.

Have you read the Bible on your own lately? Make time to do so! It is God's word, and is still very relevant to our lives today. If you need to get a Bible, I would recommend a good study Bible that helps explain some of the background, customs, as well as the wording of certain texts that may not be as precise in our English language as they are in the Greek and Hebrew of the Bible. There is a new Lutheran Bible with such helps in the New Revised Standard version of the Bible that we use in worship from Augsburg Fortress press. One bible that is more commercially, and easily available is the New

International Version Study Bible that you can purchase at any Christian as well as many commercial bookstores.

I will also be glad to help with suggesting a routine or method that you are comfortable with in personal Bible study. There are many available these days. I still follow a routine since seminary where I read the Bible through from September to May, then do something different from June to August in the study of scripture.

I would also like to invite you to bible study that will begin on September 19<sup>th</sup> after worship during the Sunday school hour at St. James, and will be repeated on the second through fourth Wednesdays at 7pm in the pastor's study. Please know that you are welcome to come even if you are not a member of St. James. We will be studying the Gospel of Matthew. This study will be of extra benefit in that the "featured" gospel for the church year for use in worship beginning with the first Sunday in Advent will be Matthew.

In another church I served there was an old secular Irish song, "My Wild Irish Rose" that had "Christian Words" to it for at St. Patrick's Day hymn sing. To me it has a nice way of saying how important it is to read and study the Bible. It's called "Tis True, O Tis True":

*'Tis true, Oh 'tis True*

*God's Holy Word is True*

*Every Verse, Every Line*

*Every promise divine*

*Meant for me and for you.*

*So read it each day*

*'Twill bless you on your way*

*And I know you will prove*

*As through each page you move*

*The precious old Bible is true*

Pr. John Van Haneghan