



## Summer 2026 Lion's Roar E-Newsletter

\*\*Please note: if you cannot see all of this newsletter (to the end, where Amanda's contact information is) find a link at the bottom of your e-mail that will allow you to "view the entire message".\*\*

### Pastor's Corner - *Pastor Joel Neubauer*

**A woman came with an alabaster jar of costly aromatic oil from pure nard. After breaking open the jar, she poured it on Jesus' head. But some who were present indignantly said to one another, "Why this waste of expensive ointment? It could have been sold for more than 300 silver coins and the money given to the poor!" So they spoke angrily to her.**

—*St Mark 14:3b-5 (New English Translation)*



Why this waste of oil indeed. The global cost of oil has claimed a lot of focus lately: our economy wrestles with sudden spikes in prices; our ecology wrestles with the scars of extraction from earth; our atmosphere coughs with the smog of summer travel exhaust; our peace is shaken by violent shifts of power or providence in spots like Iran, Venezuela and our own domestic energy strategy.

Why this waste of oil? When gasoline creeps toward five dollars per gallon, home budgets beg us to be wary of where we go and of how much oil we use to get there. Thirty years ago I was just learning how to maneuver a heavy ol' 1983 Volvo Turbo's manual transmission — and to fill up, I'd stop at a station that sold gas for 98¢/gallon. I could thoroughly explore teenage nights and weekends for a five-dollar bill, planning routes based on fun instead of gas efficiency. Not today. I still look for the cheap gas...but you know it isn't cheap. Costs are up. Questions are asked.

Why this waste of oil? It can feel like pouring a year's worth of work into every gas tank. Three hundred silver coins — ancient shorthand for a family's annual income — is a lot to pay for oil that's here today and burned tomorrow (and breathed as its fumes fill the air long afterwards). I laugh a little bit to realize that we no longer mint pennies because a single cent is so small in our inflated

era (friends, I had to look up the code for the “¢” sign above because my keyboard doesn’t include it otherwise), but oil costs so much that our gasoline prices still list its going rate down to that most miniscule measure of American money — to the “mill” — to one measly thousandth of a dollar.

Why this waste of oil? If we’re wary today, we’re not original. Folks mumbled about wasted oil thousands of years ago, when a woman dumped a bucket of oil on Jesus’ head. Can we blame them? Can we afford to sap our monetary resources while wasting such a finite resource? How or when or for whom is it ethical to stain the earth, dump our oil, aggravate our neighbors’ asthma?

Our community of faith gathers at a church home within an industrial park. We are shaded by seven and a half acres of trees. Wild turkeys have raised chicks on our lawn year after year. Deer and raccoons and opossums and ospreys form our local resident community: it’s our people who drive here to gather together, to serve others, to sing and pray and commune as a congregation.

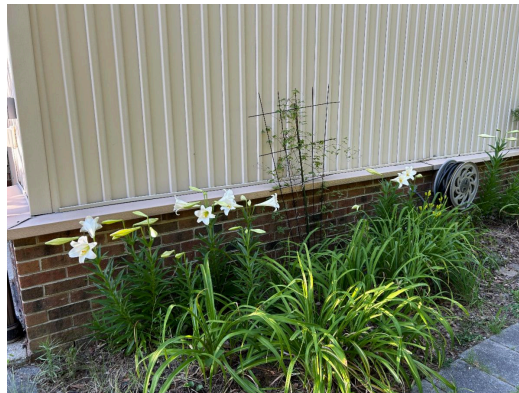
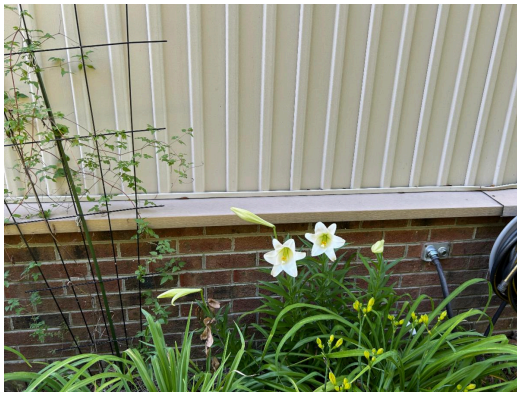
Jesus defended the woman who poured out so much oil on him. She’d measured what mattered to her: her gift of aromatic oil wasn’t a waste, but an investment in relationship — a very costly relationship for her, and a relationship that would cost Jesus his life. Jesus then commented to the sticker-shocked crowds that poverty and people’s needs would always face us. We still have to ask ourselves what is worth the price of oil, the price of our natural and budgetary resources, the price of our environment, the price of community life and service for others. It’s not at all easy.

Knowing what we value drives us in two paradoxical directions: where we find what we love, we want to wantonly, liberally invest our all — and where we find what we love, we want to conserve and protect and defend from destruction and waste. Of course the oil in question here isn’t in our gas tanks, but it’s not a bad metaphor. Our gas budgets, our vacation plans, our grocery bills, our environmental footprints, our contributions to Virginia 529s and 401(k)s — yup, even our congregational pledging and partnership — all ask us to scrutinize how we are investing in love. It’s either for the sake of love or it’s a waste.

Jesus accepted the woman’s love. We accept each other’s love as we travel our miles to gather. We commune on Love that Christ offers us in God’s self as we commit our offerings for the love of those loved through the many ministries of our congregation and of Christ’s church. We are both cautious to conserve what is precious and quick to extend God’s loving welcome with reckless abandon. And we do it while some (sometimes we ourselves) mumble or wonder if it’s all worth it (trusting God’s gracious gospel, holding us close through it all, indicates always, yes, it is). —*Pastor Joel*

## News and Announcements

**Thank you to our Garden Stewards for maintaining our beautiful grounds!**



### **A Legacy of Excellence: Honoring the Service of Bill Valvo and Wayne Hedrick**

For years, the foundation of our IT infrastructure at St Mark has been built upon the partnership of Bill Valvo and Wayne Hedrick. As Wayne begins his well-deserved transition toward retirement, we want to acknowledge the profound impact they both had on our organization.

Bill Valvo, our former IT committee chair, was the architect of our technical mission. He brought a vision and dedication that set a high standard for our community. While he passed away a few years ago, the systems and standards he established remain the backbone of our operations today. We remain profoundly grateful for his foresight and service.

Since Bill's passing, Wayne has been the steadfast guardian of that legacy. He continued their work with unwavering



**“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40**

St. Mark Lutheran Church's Ecuador Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in sponsoring a child at the Refugio de Los Suenos in Quito, Ecuador. Your sponsorship provides these children with an education, food, medical and dental care,

commitment, guiding us through every technical challenge with the same level of care that defined their original partnership. Much of this vital work happened behind the scenes, and while it often went unnoticed by the congregation, its importance to our daily mission cannot be overstated.

Wayne, thank you for your years of service, for honoring the legacy you and Bill created, and for the countless hours you spent ensuring our success. You leave behind a robust, well-maintained environment and a standard of excellence that will continue to serve St Mark for years to come.

We wish you nothing but the very best in your retirement.

taught life skills and vocational skills and shown God's love. Because of your love, compassion and generosity, these children will be provided with a safer and brighter future filled with God's love and hope.

This year, 138 students between the ages of 4 and 17 were sponsored through this Ministry. In addition, 7 adolescents will have the opportunity to attend a University and continue building a better future for both themselves and their community. Many of these University graduates come back and volunteer at the Refugio.

We feel blessed to have 12 new Padrinos sponsoring 18 students. God continues to bless the students at the Refugio with the love and support of our St Mark members and friends.

If you wish to sponsor a child, please contact St. Mark Lutheran Church at 757-898-4395 for more information.

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## Flyers

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# Congregation Meeting

Sunday June 28th  
Combined worship service at 10am,  
Congregation Meeting,  
Potluck Picnic!



PJ's Faith Fable

[Click here](#) or on the article itself to view in another window or tab.

**PJ's Faith Fable:  
The Box Turtle, the Cooter and the Snapper**

As a roly-poly rock across a sunbaked asphalt road, a fairly swift but barely fist-sized box turtle aimed itself at the far grassy ditch where a spring rain's runoff ran in refreshing rivulets—a feeding spot, a drinking spot, a safe spot.

But just as the box turtle reached the edge of safety, there came the sound of a thunderous engine on the rumble of mechanical wheels: a turtle-flattening car raced on the road.

So the box turtle froze, afraid. Face and legs and tail fell into its shell as it clutched its belly bones to its carapace, closed and fearful; the box turtle hid beside a smallish, stony gray lump as the car whizzed (sparingly!) by. And when the box turtle peeked its bright eyes out again, when the road seemed empty again, the box turtle realized the stony gray lump beside it was not a lumpy gray stone—but a turtle in its own terrified, frightened shell.

Our box turtle had come upon the smallest of newly-hatched snapping turtles. This snapper was so little it could not run to safety or snap in self-defense: it had only been able to hold very still and to hope that car would miss it. As our snapper had hidden the box turtle, so the box turtle was loyal to stay by the snapper 'til both were able to enter the grass in peace.

Our box turtle recalled this small snapper as it later met a snapper again. Now, however, I have to tell you this snapper was adolescent: not full-grown, but fist-sized too, formidable as the box turtle itself. Yet the box turtle knew that snappers share their vulnerabilities. And the box turtle realized this snappy fellow was headed to live in a pond, hunting food of its own: there was no competition between them—they dwelled in friendly, blameless peace...

until the snapper sloughed safely into a pond where it came upon a red-bellied cooter. The cooter was a very big pond turtle, a good foot from nose to paddling toes. The cooter gently grazed on water grasses and algae while the fist-sized snapper fed on fish, frogs and flesh. Our cooter did not fear its smaller, snappy hunter-of-a-neighbor. Both enjoyed life: each purely let the other live, side-by-side, all well.

But when a mature snapper once swam by the side of our red-bellied cooter, and our cooter realized what a daunting, dinosaurish, dangerously dragonish demeanor is donned by a fully-grown snapping turtle, our cooter deigned to trick the big turtle out of the pond.

“When I warm myself on the lakeshore, I'm sure I've seen healthier hunting grounds on the far side of that sunbaked asphalt road,” said the cooter to the massive snapper, “and I'm sure you'd prefer to cross to hunt there.”

But our bigger snapper was also wiser. “Do you want me to go and grow in the waters you know are on the other side, or do you hope that as I try to cross the road a car will come and I'll be too big to hide myself from it? I have been a loyal turtle to loyal turtles; a blameless turtle to blameless turtles; a purely peaceful turtle to turtles of pure peace. Now you are trying to steer me toward danger, to put me in the path of destruction. If you turn away from the better ways of how we live as turtles together in this world we share, how would you prophesy I'm to meet your mercies (or, rather, your being merciless) there?”

*With the loyal you show yourself loyal.*

*With the blameless you show yourself blameless.*

*With the pure you show yourself pure.*

*With the crooked you show yourself shrewd.*

—Psalm 18:25-26

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