



The Messenger

International Lutheran Church

www.ilcseoul.org

February 8, 2026

Issue #996

A NOTE FROM PASTOR CARL

HIS DIVINE SERVICE

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' (Isaiah 58:9a ESV) Today the prophet Isaiah deals with the age-old conundrum of when our prayers and worship of God are more focused on our actions than God's. Today at International Lutheran Church, we see how Isaiah points to the good news that brings light into our lives in how God comes to serve us in worship that then is reflected in our actions toward others.

Isaiah 58 starts with the harsh reality of the emptiness and vainness that is often reflected in our worship of God. 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' (Isaiah 58:3) By musing in this way, we can uncover our true attitudes about our worship of God. In some ways it seems that we are only focused on our own actions and not on what God has done and is doing for us. In other words, it seems like we are only interested in "what is in it for me?" In other words, we develop a kind of *quid pro quo* attitude towards prayer as if it was our "way," or our "action" to press God's buttons so He would answer us or do what we want. This chapter then is an amazing insight into what worship and prayer are all about - that is, that our worship is not about us, but rather about God. God reveals to Isaiah that it is God who serves us. Worship is "His Divine Service" where His presence is the only thing that will bring about the change in us that we truly need.

This is not what we would expect and so we need to perhaps take a closer look. To begin with it is helpful for us to recall the instances where someone used the words "Here I am!" in the Old Testament. Whether Abraham (Genesis 12:1; 22:1,11), Jacob (Genesis 31:11; 46:2), Moses (Exodus 3:4), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:4ff) or Isaiah himself (Isaiah 6:8), the term "here I am" is spoken as one who is a servant to God (see also Acts 9:10 as Ananias speaks this too). But now these words are spoken by God Himself to those who would call on God in prayer especially the nations (see also Isaiah 65:1)! Worship, prayer, and fasting is where God comes to serve us. This is seen in how God describes what fasting is all about - "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6) These are all things that point to God's

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

9:00 AM *Sunday Morning Bible Study*
10:00 AM *Divine Worship Service*
(in-person and live stream)

OTHER EVENTS

Go to ilcseoul.org > Upcoming for other events

outcome of His service in our lives - to work forgiveness of sins and deliverance from death, our sinful nature and the devil. Only God can do this. And only God has done this.

"How can this be?" you ask. With His very presence. When God comes to serve, He comes here - into our midst, into our death and hell for the purpose of setting us free. His divine presence in the midst of our "fists and quarreling" literally breaks the cycle of our own violence, the yoke and oppression that we are stuck in. His presence is what frees us and changes how we look at God, ourselves, and our neighbor. His presence on the cross of our sin removes our condemnation; His presence in the stone-cold tomb of our death makes us alive and restores us to Him and one another. This is the amazing part about Epiphany - the light of God that has shone in our Savior Jesus - that same light now shines in and through us. This is one of the key teachings in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Because of His presence in our lives now, He serves our neighbor through us.

God's light goes before us. His glory is our rearguard. Jesus is reflected in our lives as we live in the reality of His service to us. As we stand in the presence of His grace, we are forgiven to forgive, we are freed to free, and we are shined upon to shine before others. His Divine Service - His presence - is what moves us to fast and pray with acts of kindness toward our neighbor, clothing the naked as we have been clothed, feeding the hungry as we have been fed, serving our neighbor as we have been served even as the light of His Divine Service shines in us and through us.

Blessed Epiphany,

Pastor Carl

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Unless otherwise noted, you may direct inquiries for any announcement to seoulilc.volunteer@gmail.com. Links to online or live stream events will be included in either the electronic version of *The Messenger* or will be sent out on Sunday morning.

UPCOMING EVENTS

In these coming weeks, watch for some mid-winter events such as the next ILC Info Session, Chili Luncheon, and Congregational Meeting.

CHURCH 360

With a new calendar year, we are updating our internal church records. Please help us by filling out an information form for our church management software, Church360. Thank you for your cooperation!

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

ONLINE GIVING

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN FAITHFULLY MAKING USE OF ONLINE GIVING.

Your generosity helps makes the ministry of ILC possible, by God's grace!

KEB HANA 166-890039-91604

READINGS

February 8: 5th Sunday after the Epiphany

OT	Isaiah 58:3-9a
NT	1 Corinthians 2:1-16
Gospel	Matthew 5:13-20

SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in serving as a Sunday Volunteer, or need to make a scheduling adjustment, please write to seoulilc.volunteer@gmail.com. Thank you!

FEBRUARY 8	10:00 AM
ACOLYTE	Adam & Anna
GREETER	Arem
USHERS	Rachel & Arem
COMMUNION ASSISTANT	Nathan
LIVE STREAM	Patricia
KITCHEN HELPERS	Eric & Insun
OFFERING COUNTERS	Joohun & Olivia