

Dictionary.com defines the verb “lavish” with the following:

“to bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities upon”

The English word *lavish* is derived from the French term, *lavasse*, which was the term for a downpour of rain.

The NIV translation of 1 John 3:1 states, “See what great love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” After looking at the Study Notes in the Lutheran Study Bible and speaking with my pastor, it seems that “lavished” is an appropriate term for the original meaning of “given to the fullest extent.” Note the exclamation points after each of those two sentences. Scholars estimate that John was in his 90’s when he wrote this. You would think that by this time he would take his place in the family of God for granted. But not John. You can hear the excitement in his words! He stood in complete amazement over the fact that God considered him His child and lavished His love upon him.

I love the imagery of God drenching us in the downpour of His love: the beautiful picture of us in filthy rags, our sins and guilt covering every inch of our bodies, being washed perfectly clean by God’s lavishing downpour of love. This cleansing was won for us on the cross and given to us at our baptism so that we become children of the Father and heirs of His kingdom. Isn’t that amazing?

Our Father’s ultimate gift to us is eternal life in heaven with Him, but He also generously bestows His gifts on us while we live on earth. That was never more evident to our community (Faith Lutheran MS & HS) than during this year. As many of you know, we had a laundry list of tragedies hit our school community. We had three members of our school community shot on October 1 and many more who still carry the emotional trauma with them. We had two teachers lose children, one a young adult from cancer, the other a 10-month old who died while taking a nap. Two other teachers lost parents. One of our directors lost his wife to cancer. We had a recent alumnus (and current coach) die on the same day as the infant, and we had a 14 year-old freshman killed when a tire from another vehicle smashed into the car in which he was a passenger. We had a student lose a parent and other students diagnosed with debilitating diseases.

Each of these tragedies caused the type of devastation and pain that does not go away quickly—either to the living victims or the loved ones of those who have passed away. But, in every instance, God sent His love, comfort, and strength to those who needed it. Of course, this primarily came from the assurance of the resurrection. What comfort it is to know that our lives on earth are temporary, but that our eternal life, already won on the cross, is waiting for each of us. What peace it gives us to know that we will be reunited with our loved ones in heaven some day. The broken-hearted were also comforted by scripture that promises God is walking alongside them through these difficult times, freeing them of their burdens, and

giving them peace that surpasses all understanding. Surely, the Holy Spirit was at work easing the sorrow and fears of those who were affected.

The Holy Spirit also used the community of believers mightily to give comfort and support to all of those who were suffering. Christians from around the world, country, city, and from our own school community showered these families with God's love. This came in many forms but most poignantly from our student body that poured out scripture, tears, gifts, prayers, and hugs for those who were hurting.

Although we wish that every one of these tragedies would never have happened, God overwhelmed us with His good gifts in our greatest time of need. Our students, some of whom rarely shared their faith before these instances, stood boldly and proclaimed the Gospel. Families who were either not Christian or who rarely attended church heard the message of salvation during funeral services and showed up in local congregations during the weeks that followed. Other gifts were given so that those who were affected are getting the help they need and are on the pathway of healing.

What an amazing God we have who continues to lavish His great love on His people!

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