

Lutheran Spokesman



Our fathers' sins were manifold, And ours no less we own;
Yet wondrously from age to age Thy goodness hath been shown.
When dangers, like a stormy sea, Beset our country round,
To Thee we looked, to Thee we cried, And help in Thee was found.

TLH 583 verse 2

Patriotism

By definition, patriotism is being loyal or faithful to one's own country.

Simple enough to understand, and I have little doubt that we are all good patriots of the land of our birth, the United States. Over the course of years many of you have done your patriotic duty: fought in our country's wars; voted in elections at the various levels; paid your taxes; been obedient to the laws of the land; have not incited civil rebellion, and so on.

In other words, you have been good patriotic citizens. And so we are to be, as our Lord directs us, when He says, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Rom. 13:1). So we strive—and so we teach our children—to be model citizens, patriots of the United States of America.

Still, while according to the flesh we are patriots of the United States of

America, we are foreigners here, strangers and pilgrims in this land.

Through baptism we have been born again to a living hope, born into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus, which kingdom transcends all that is of this world. We are reminded of our heavenly citizenship when we are told, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

Our being baptized into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus makes us patriots of His kingdom, and thus by definition we are to be faithful to that country, to that kingdom—faithful to our Lord Jesus in seeking first His kingdom, believing and trusting that our Father in heaven knows our earthly needs long before we even ask Him for them; faithful to His Word both in the hearing of it and the preaching of it; faithful in presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to

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Him—which is our reasonable service, since we have been redeemed not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By faith in our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord, we hold citizenship in a far better country than these United States.

The leaders we elect in America, the laws enacted, and the judicial system of the land are not perfect and never will be.

By contrast, the Leader whom the Father elected, the laws (by that I mean

the entire Word of God, which is our only guide for our sanctified conduct in life!) which He gives, His judicial system—faith alone in Christ Jesus—these are all perfect!

For us then, being a patriot and showing patriotism is first and foremost loyalty and faithfulness to our Lord Jesus who has been gracious enough to open the borders of His kingdom for us by faith—that kingdom of eternal righteousness and life.

It is to that perfect country of which we are now citizens that we travel; it is to that perfect country upon which we—like all those who in faith have gone before—set our eyes, not looking back to this country: "But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Heb. 11:16).

—Pastor Roland Gurgel



Righteousness Exalts a Nation

"It is out of the question that there can be a common Christian government over one country or a great number of people; for the wicked are always far more numerous than the pious. Therefore a man who would undertake to govern an entire country with the Gospel would be like a shepherd who would place into one stable wolves, lions, eagles, and sheep, letting them freely mingle with one another, and saying 'Take care of yourselves. Be good and peaceable among yourselves...'" (Martin Luther)

Martin Luther understood the implications for society when Jesus said, "My kingdom is not from here" (Jn. 18:36). The Kingdom of God—brought to bear on the hearts of people through the gospel of righteousness before God through Christ—is the compelling event in the lives of those who believe. There can be no greater peace, joy, safety, and liberty than that which is effected in the heart of the Christian believer. But Luther also understood that it isn't the place of the Church to govern society, where con-

trol must exist over both believers and unbelievers; nor is it the place of the government to interfere in the Church, where people are moved by the influence of the gospel. The two operate in difference spheres.

But sincere Christians are deeply concerned about the condition of their country, praying for their leaders and "all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Tim. 2:2). With peace, morality, and integrity eroding daily in our land, we are even more distressed when we read in the Proverbs that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). In our land there are too many moral and ethical failures to list, although issues like legalized abortion, common acceptance of homosexual behavior, and violence against the young and old certainly come to mind.

Surely, a country with problems like ours must fall into the category of the "reproached," not that of the "exalted."

Because of that, there is a tendency among some in the Christian community to seek to bring the reins of government under the influence of the Church. Is it not the Church's obligation to establish standards of "righteousness" in our land? What could be more desirable than a 'Christian' government?

True Faith a Great Blessing

But before we join the bandwagon calling for a 'Christian United States,' it may be important for us to understand a little about the 'righteousness' that exalts a nation. Lutheran theologians speak about righteousness before God and civil righteousness.



Righteousness before God is that quality that allows one to be accepted by God, to dwell in His favor, and to have a fruitful, spiritual relationship with one's Maker. This righteousness exists in the heart, although its presence is confirmed by outward works of love and piety.

Civil righteousness is a term that has been coined for the outward deeds that men produce which are beneficial to society; they will correspond to the Ten Commandments, and where they are carried out, man—who was created to reflect the image of God—will benefit and prosper.

Matthew Henry described these deeds of civil righteousness as "a righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers." He then comments that "these exalt a nation; they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God."

But such "righteousness" doesn't necessarily make any nation or body of people 'Christian' in the sense that they are holy before God. That can occur solely through the work of the Holy

Spirit in people who hear and believe the gospel of Jesus as their Savior. The government—exercising its influence through the Law, and backed up by the sword of punishment—cannot produce righteousness before God.

When these two great estates get tangled up, both are distorted and weakened in their mission. Nor, as Luther observed, can you run a country by the Church, whose primary objective is to influence through the gospel.

There is no question that Christians, who alone understand the terrible nature of sin, cannot remain silent on social issues that involve unchecked sin. I may not be a _____ (fill in the blank with some vile behavior), but the fact that it is practiced by others—and permitted in our land—is a reproach to us all, and thus a cause for our

Christian lamenting.

The presence of Christian faith in our land or any land is the greatest blessing, for Christian people will be abundant in the works that are beneficial. We Christians are aware that true righteousness before God will occur only through the call of the faithful Church for men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel.

But we also can seek that God will give us citizens and leaders through whom He instills in our land common values of justice, integrity, and morality consistent with God's own unchanging law. Where this civic righteousness carries the day, our nation and its people will be exalted in the eyes of others, and will enjoy peace and favor from God.

—Pastor Peter Reim



A SONG OF CONFIDENCE IN A DISCORDANT WORLD

With the recent Memorial Day and the 4th of July, we have witnessed and personally felt, at least temporarily, a renewed patriotism. After all, this is our land, the land into which our Lord has put us for the length of time that He Himself has determined.

Nevertheless, as Christ-believers we live in a foreign land, in a society hostile to Christ and His disciples. We should not expect that it would be otherwise. In John 17 Jesus said concerning His disciples, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (v. 16). Again He said, "I have given them Your word;

and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (v. 14).

And so it is. Christ-believers are criticized as the "Christian right." That is a small price to pay for trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and confessing His name. Christ-believers are seen as threats to our society. Sad to say, many who profess to be Christians—as well as many professing Christian churches—are attempting a song that will blend Christ and the world, good and evil, truth and error, church and society into one harmonious choir. The result

is a discordant, shattering noise!

Since we as children of God have been forewarned that the world hates us and will hate us, we should not feel sorry for ourselves. Unless we are going to attempt to make peace with this world by caving in to its philosophies and manners, a "woe-is-me" attitude will gain us nothing, and will cause us to lose a great deal more. The world will not compromise! We dare not compromise with those who believe that the only real compromise is "doing it their way."

As Christ-believers we should be just as adamant. We cannot compromise what is not ours to compromise! We cannot compromise God's Word. We cannot compromise truth. We cannot compromise faith. We cannot compromise the way of salvation. We cannot—for any reason—compromise anything to which the Word binds the conscience.

The clash between world-followers and Christ-followers is therefore inevitable. Rather than trying to make peace with the world, we want to be thankful for what we have been made—redeemed, restored, and forgiven children of God; and thankful for where we are going—to the Promised Land.

In that context, to be abused by the world is a privilege!

Sharing the Gospel

The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus paid for our sin; His resurrection restored life; His ascension has prepared our mansion in heaven (John 14). He will make it come to pass that we shall occupy that mansion. We will be with Him where He is.

In behalf of the members of His



body—those who continue in His Word—Jesus enlisted the steadfast love of the Father, "Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am" (Jn. 17:24).

For momentary relief from society's arrows, name-calling, and hatred, would we risk what the Lord has laid up for us in heaven?

Our response will not be to join with those who contribute to the discord. We will not try to legislate sin out of the human heart or faith into the unbelieving heart.

We will speak the Word of God—law and gospel—and the Spirit will conquer where He will. We will continue to share the gospel of our Lord, so that troubled hearts and weary souls may by God's grace join us in the harmonious choir that says, "Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10).

With those "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14), our song now and in eternity will be "blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13)!

Anger, raucousness, or compromise of our faith will not change the world in which we live. Such responses make us stressed, and cause loss to the hear-

ers as well.

Rather, sing the song of confidence and peace in Christ. Such a response may irritate many. But there is another distinct possibility: by our confident and quiet witness to the love of Christ

the choir may swell, even if only by one penitent at a time. Remember, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk. 15:10).

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



The Discourses of Christ

Spiritual Freedom—John 8:48-59
Part Three

Before Abraham was, I AM

We have arrived at the last round of a long argumentative contest between the unbelieving Jews and Jesus. It began in Capernaum a few days earlier, then moved to Jerusalem, where the strutting unbelievers puffed up their neck feathers and crowed their challenges, which went on for days.

Jesus responded in wonderful self-control, and because they deserved to know the truth, He finally confronted them, "Why do you not understand My speech? Because...you are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (8:43-44). Well, that stuck in their craw, and they went for blood.

(We step into the fracas at v. 48.) "Who do you think you are, to insult us (honorable descendants of Abraham and God's chosen children) on our home turf? Your conceit shows that we are right on target: "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

We wonder why Jesus didn't just walk away. Who needs that kind of hassle—especially in church, when

echoes of worship are still rippling the air? But as God does not smile at blasphemy, so Jesus could not retreat, for this was a larger issue than personal affront. God's Word was under assault, and Jesus could not let that pass in silence.

Defense of God's honor prompted Him to respond, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me." And as to My coveting publicity—I am doing quite the opposite, for "I do not seek My own glory." Indeed, the issue of My honor is entirely in God's hands, and I commit Myself to the One who seeks what I am seeking and judges My conduct. In point of fact, My goal on this Earth is the opposite of self-glory, for I will humble Myself and sacrifice Myself in order to

bring eternal life to lost souls: "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death."

(Gasp!) Such a mouthful the Jews could not swallow! "Now we know that You have a demon! Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? Whom do You make Yourself out to be?" What self-centered egotism, and from such a worthless fellow!"

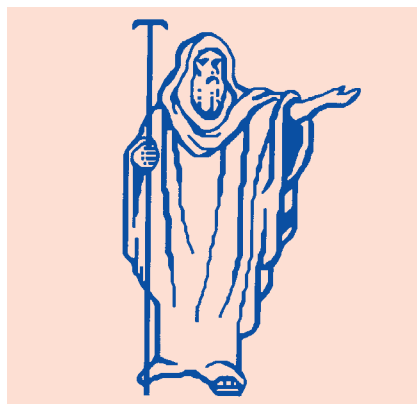
Abraham Saw the Day of Salvation!

Now, dear reader, let us pay close attention to His demeanor, for it is the opposite of egocentricity: "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing." However, if God in heaven gives honor to Somebody, who shall challenge God's judgment? "It is My Father who honors Me."

As for you fellows, you and God are on opposite sides: "...you say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him." God is a stranger to you, but not to Me, for "I do know Him and keep His word."

The sad truth about these Jews was not only their ignorance of God—they didn't even know Abraham! If they had any portion of Abraham's spirit, they would bow before Jesus, for Abraham had a wonderful relationship with Jesus; he was bonded to Jesus by faith. By faith he had seen Jesus as Messiah and Savior. And in that faith he had seen souls saved from hell. Millions of souls! Saved from hell! Through Jesus! Hallelujah! "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

God had been broadcasting Jesus on His GNN (Gospel News Network) for thousands of years before Abraham, and He got the message through to



Abraham, so that Jesus came to live in Abraham's heart as his Savior and Lord. Indeed, Abraham rejoiced to see the day of salvation for himself and for others.

No matter that Jesus and Abraham lived in different centuries; the Savior has always been a time-traveler. He was in Eden with Adam and Eve, too. "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Impossible? Improbable? Yet Jesus says it is so.

There it was, flat on the table: Jesus claimed to exist as a person independent of any beginning in time—that He is the eternal Being. And the Jews understood the full import of such a claim: Jesus was declaring Himself to be God. To them, of course, this was utter, rank, horrible blasphemy; and so in a rush "they took up stones to throw at Him" (cf. Lev. 24:13-16). Once down and hemorrhaging with massive brain damage, He would be silenced forever.

It didn't work, because there was a better time and place for Jesus to yield up His life. "Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Jesus left them in defeat, for their arguments had not dented His testimony, He had risen above their intimidation, and He had thwarted their evil-hearted

virulence.

Is that the end of the story? No, for it is important that He "passed by" all such distractions for a higher purpose—in order to get to Gethsemane, Calvary, and the cave-tomb. Only after passing by all such preliminaries would He accomplish what He had come to accomplish and could then return home.

The apostle Paul brings us to this conclusion: "Therefore (we don't overlook the meaning of "therefore") God also has highly exalted Him and given

Him the name which is above every name...that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php. 2:9-11).

When He comes again, He will not hide Himself from anyone and He will not pass us by, for He will take us by our hand and gather us around Him in His temple, to worship and praise Him forever in the heavenly Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

God grant this to more millions of our generation! Amen!

—Paul R. Koch



INTRODUCING the Books of the Prophets

Daniel

" . . . Daniel's name is significant; it means 'God is my judge.' His name aptly describes how he lived his life. He made faithfulness to God and His Word his top priority. The fleeting favor of men meant nothing to him if it meant disobeying his God...."

My wife and I decided to name our youngest child Daniel. When studying this book in preparation for this article I was reminded what a difficult name *Daniel* is to live up to. Daniel is only one of a few major Biblical characters of whom nothing negative is written. His contemporary Ezekiel refers to him three times as an example of righteousness.

Daniel's name is significant; it means "God is my judge." His name aptly describes how he lived his life. He made faithfulness to God and His

word his top priority. The fleeting favor of men meant nothing to him if it meant disobeying his God. Would you and I have had the courage to refuse the king's choice of foods (Dan. 1:8), or to pray openly to God knowing what the earthly consequences would be (Dan. 6)?

In the first six chapters of Daniel we find recorded some of the most recognizable episodes of the Old Testament. Which of us did not listen in wonder in Sunday School when we heard about the three men who escaped

Outline of DANIEL

I. Historical section (Daniel 1-6)

II. Prophetic Visions of the Coming Monarchies and of the Eternal Kingdom of Christ (Daniel 7-12)

death in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3), or who inwardly cheered when an angel closed the mouths of the lions (Dan. 6)? These events inspired and inspire us to want to be more faithful to our God.

From this historical section of Daniel (ch. 1-6), we learn that he was only a youth when he was carried away to Babylon in 605 B.C. by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. An intelligent lad, he was trained for service in the king's palace. His reputation and influence grew when God revealed to him the details of the king's dream as well as its interpretation, something the king's wise men could not do.

This historical section also reveals the wrath that God shows towards those who do not humble themselves before Him. In his pride, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built...for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30) He was humbled by being made to live and act as an animal, eating the grass of the field. Belshazzar, another king, threw a party in honor of false gods, and in his revelry used the gold vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He was humbled when the LORD, that very evening, had him killed and his kingdom given to the Medes. Finally, there were those jealous colleagues of Daniel who wished to increase their own power by getting Daniel in trouble. The hungry lions humbled them.

It is also interesting to note the many parallels that Daniel's life had



with Jacob's son Joseph. Both were snatched out of their homeland and placed in positions of authority in foreign lands. Both, in the most adverse of conditions, remained faithful to their God. Both were given the gift of interpreting dreams and, through this gift, obtained significant influence in the king's court. Both were richly blessed by God and used by Him in blessing His people.

The last half of the book of Daniel (chs. 7-12) is prophetic in nature and is, no doubt, less familiar to the average reader. The prophecies focus on the destruction that will come to kingdoms which oppose God. The image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (ch. 2) and Daniel's vision of the four beasts (ch. 7) seem to have much in common. Kingdoms would arise in succession to replace the Chaldeans. History has revealed that these kingdoms were those of the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans.

Because Daniel's prophecies proved to be so accurate in revealing future events, many Bible scoffers have concluded that this book was written after the events rather than a prophecy of them. We know, however, that God

knows the future and we see in Daniel's prophecies a glimpse into the omniscience of our God.

These final chapters of Daniel were written in Hebrew (unlike chapters 2-7 which were written in Aramaic, the universal language of the day). This seems to indicate that these prophecies were intended especially for Jewish ears. God wanted His people to be aware of the political chaos and destruction that was to come.

But the book concludes on a joyful note. For unlike these earthly kingdoms which would be built up only to be destroyed—whose greatness would

last only for a time—the kingdom of God and the rule of His saints will last forever!

As God tells Daniel in the final verse of the book, "But you, go your way till the end, for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

So as we in 2005 note the rise and fall of modern kingdoms, we too can be certain that our rest is assured in Him, our King of Kings. May God grant us His Spirit so that we may be more and more like Daniel in our faith.

—Prof. Joseph Lau



475th Anniversary of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1530-2005)

Called to be Saints

"I ain't no saint!" Apart from being extremely poor English, that statement simply isn't correct if spoken by a child of God.

We are not saints because we are flawless or without weaknesses. We are not saints because we will one day be honored and worshipped by a visible church. We are saints because God has called us to be His children and gathered us into His Church.

The apostle Paul addressed his letter to the Corinthian Christians: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (1 Cor. 1:2). A saint is someone who has been sanctified. To be sanctified is to be set apart for a special purpose. The Old Testament Levites were sanctified for



service in the temple—set apart from the other tribes of Israel for that purpose.

The Corinthian Christians were sanctified, as are we, in connection with

Christ Jesus. Jesus' redeeming work is the only means by which any sinner can be set apart from sin. God declares us righteous and holy in His sight through the redemption we have in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit uses the Good News about Jesus to call sinners into faith. Through faith we receive the righteousness which Christ won for us. In Christ Jesus we have been called out of the world and set apart to be "...His own special people that [we] may proclaim the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

God has called each believer into sainthood. He also gathers His saints into His Church. The Church of God is the invisible assembly of believers in Christ. This Church remains invisible to us during this life, because we cannot

know with certainty who has saving faith in Christ. Nevertheless, we know that this assembly exists because God promises that wherever His Word goes out, it will accomplish its purpose (cf. Isaiah 55:10-11). God has given us His gospel for the salvation of sinners. Thus, wherever the gospel is preached, there will be believers and a part of the Church of God.

The Church of God is unlike any earthly church we know—yes, even our own. God's assembly of saints knows no bounds of space. On this Earth we are confined to one particular place at a time. It would have been impossible for Paul to write a letter to the whole Church of God. He wrote to the part of the Church that lived in Corinth.

In each and every location where the

WE BELIEVE & CONFESS

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

A CONFESSION OF FAITH PRESENTED IN AUGSBURG
BY CERTAIN PRINCES AND CITIES TO HIS IMPERIAL
MAJESTY CHARLES V IN THE YEAR 1530

Psalm 119:46

*"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall
not be put to shame."*

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

VII. The Church

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.

(article abbreviated)

VIII. What the Church Is

Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners remain among the godly, the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ Himself indicated, "The Pharisees sit on Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2).

Accordingly the Donatists and all others who hold contrary views are condemned.

true Word of God is heard, we can be sure there are members of the Holy Christian Church, even though we are separated by space. We know, for example, that we have Christian brothers and sisters in India and Africa. We may never meet them, but we are gathered together in the Church. In his address to the Corinthians Paul added, "...with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

The Church of God knows no bounds of time. Even the end of time on Earth—death—cannot divide the members of the Church. Death does separate for a time, as some saints continue to live on the Earth and some have been called home. But in the end, nothing can separate us from our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 8:38-39).

If neither death nor anything else can separate us from our Lord, then neither can anything separate us from those to whom we are joined through the Lord!

What a joyful reunion the Church will have on the Last Day when all the saints of God are glorified to live with our Savior forever! There will be saints from every tribe and tongue and nation and people, all having been made kings and priests to our God where we shall reign forever! (cf: Revelation 5:9-10) There we will see face-to-face the

Church into which Christ has gathered us and which we now know by faith.

While we continue our earthly pilgrimage, God's saints gather together in visible congregations. Unlike the Holy Christian Church, these visible churches are bound by time and space. Visible churches are gatherings of saints, but are not the Holy Christian Church. Visible churches may include hypocrites—unbelievers masquerading as believers.

Nor does membership in any one visible church equate with membership in the Holy Christian Church. Membership in the Holy Christian Church is a matter of the heart and faith in Christ Jesus. Knowing what God says about His Church keeps us from thinking of the Church as nothing more than an outward organization. It keeps Christ as the head of the Church rather than making earthly leaders the head. This knowledge comforts us when visible churches and their leaders turn away from our Savior, because we know that the true Church continues.

You are a saint of God gathered into His Church. According to Christ's promise, the gates of hell cannot and shall not prevail against you (cf. Matthew 16:18). Rejoice in your sainthood!

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



**Ladies Group,
Resurrection
Lutheran Church,
Corpus Christi,
Texas**

Studies In Colossians

**“In (Christ) are hidden all the treasures
of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3)**

Chapter 4:7-18

THE TIE THAT BINDS

We tend to skip over some verses in the Bible, and at first glance these closing verses of this Epistle to the Colossians might appear to be no more than some personal notes added to an important inspired message. They are in fact a part of the inspired message.

These verses naming several different individuals and relaying sentiments and greetings from these people are as important to us as they were to the original recipients. These verses bring human identities, flesh and bones, to what all too easily become abstract concepts to us.

There is a tie that binds us together. Even when we are separated by many miles and may have never met one another, we are tied together by the redeeming love of Christ. He who died to redeem us to God has thereby brought us into the household of God. We are members of the household, not as slaves, but as children of God and heirs with Christ.

It is because of this tie that the Scriptures refer to us—and we recognize one another—as brothers and sisters in Christ. Many in the world do not understand the communion of saints and are indiscriminate in calling others “Christian.” While this may be a common abuse, another danger is that this address

becomes no more than a formality.

Read these verses, and very quickly you see that the relationship which these early Christians enjoyed was much more than a formality. They were interested in one another, caring for one another's welfare.

With the naming of these persons, Paul shows how the tie that binds Christian hearts together transcends the barriers which separate people in the world. Social and economic barriers, racial, ethnic, or gender walls are torn down. We are ONE in Christ.

The tie that binds together gives purpose and direction to lives. Tychicus had made the dangerous journey to Rome with Paul and shared the burden in his imprisonment there, providing for Paul's needs. Now Tychicus would undertake an arduous journey to be a messenger to the brethren. Onesimus, a run-away slave who encountered Paul in Rome and was called to faith by the gospel, now accompanied Tychicus on this journey, returning to his master Philemon.

Others, both Jews and Greeks, sent their greetings as words of encouragement to brethren who shared their faith and love for Jesus. Epaphras, a native of Colosse, did not forget those whom he had left behind there, but labored for

them in prayer. He did not remember them only casually; he worked at it, actively engaging God in prayer for the spiritual welfare of his fellow Christians and their congregations.

In closing, Paul urges that the message of this epistle be shared with neighboring congregations in the region.

The Tie Still Binds!

The tie that binds our hearts remains the same. It is the same great sacrifice which Christ offered upon the cross that has redeemed us to God.

Today we recognize that the tie which binds us as Christian brothers and sisters even transcends oceans! Let us not forget, it also ties us to the people in the pew behind or across from us, to the pastor who stands in our pulpit, to the congregation across the state line or on the other side of our continent.

Many challenges are faced daily by our Christian brothers and sisters. These challenges are brought to our attention in different ways. Sometimes it is a simple announcement in the Sunday bulletin entitled "At the Hospital" or "CLC NEWS."

These little paragraphs are not just to satisfy curiosity but are to inform us of what is going on in the lives of our brothers and sisters. Then we have the

opportunity to encourage them. Then we might assault the throne of grace with prayers on their behalf—and not just a passing thought that God might bless them, but "working at prayer" as did Epaphras.

And that is just the beginning! Occasionally we receive newsletters reporting on our joint synodical efforts, on the endeavors of our fellow Christians, and on the welfare and progress of mission stations and mission workers in the Americas, India, or Africa.

These newsletters are more than just interesting reading; they are opportunities to make the fellowship we occasionally share at meetings or worship a greater reality in our daily lives.

For some it will be seen as opportunity to undertake an arduous journey—and even a lifestyle as did Tychicus. For others it will be to support those who take up the work of our Lord with our greeting, with our prayers, with our offerings.

Always it is about seizing opportunities to share the message of Christ's love, and to encourage one another in the hope that we have in Christ—the only hope for the world, the sure and certain hope of everlasting life.

—Pastor Theodore Barthels



Missionary Koenig sent this picture of a "mission sign on outskirts of Lome, Togo"



The Christian Citizen

—Second in a Series—

LIFE ISSUES: ABORTION, STEM CELL RESEARCH, MERCY KILLING

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The right to life is the first right listed by Jefferson and is without doubt the most important right we possess as American citizens.

The right to life has a biblical foundation. God created life at the beginning of time and continues to create life every time a child is conceived (cf. Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13-14). God wants us to respect His gift of life, and He Himself protects life by forbidding murder (cf. Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13). God gives us life as a time of grace, for He wants all people to have an opportunity during their lives on this Earth to come to know Him and gain everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Isaiah 55:6-7; 1 Timothy 2:3-4). God alone, not man, has the right to end life (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39).

The right to life, unfortunately, is being ignored and undermined within several areas of American culture today, as our country moves away from its biblical moorings. Among those areas are abortion, stem cell research, and mercy killing.

Since the legalization of abortion in

the United States in 1973, over 40 million unborn children have been murdered in our country by means of legal abortion*. Abortion is sin, for it violates the expressed will and commands of God. Those who support abortion, knowingly or unknowingly, choose to deny or to ignore the fact that God creates life at conception. In their desire to defend what they perceive to be a woman's right to end an unwanted pregnancy, supporters of abortion fail to respect God's gift of life within the womb. They thereby advocate the violation of God's Fifth Commandment, which is intended to protect life.

The right to life of the unborn is thereby violated, and the unborn remain unprotected in our society. While we Christians will want to assist those facing difficulties when pregnant, we will want to remain consistent advocates for life. As Christians we ought to promote adoption rather than abortion when a mother does not want to or is unable to keep her child.

The issue of stem cell research has arisen because some researchers within the medical field believe that stem cells

"The right to life is...the most important right we possess...(It) has a biblical foundation... . God wants us to respect His gift of life!"

can be used to create various types of body tissues. These tissues, it is hoped, can then be used to combat debilitating diseases or ultimately to replace diseased organs. This issue is not as difficult to resolve as it may appear, if we keep the biblical principles concerning the right to life in mind. There are two types of stem cells—fetal stem cells and adult stem cells. To obtain fetal stem cells, embryos must be destroyed, which means destroying life created by God. To obtain adult stem cells no life is destroyed. The option we as Christians should advocate is further research using adult stem cells—which up to this point has already proven much more successful in laboratory testing.

Mercy killing, also called euthanasia, is advocated by those who want our society to recognize a right to die. Advocates claim that individuals should be able to die with dignity, which means choosing their own time and means of death, thereby avoiding

what is viewed as unnecessary pain and suffering. However, the advocates of a right to die fail to recognize once again the basic biblical principles of the right to life. God alone, not man, has the right to end life. He is in control of our lives, and no good will come from our attempts to wrest that control from His hands. There is no right to die within our U.S. Constitution. Such a concept usurps God's authority and opposes biblical principles.

As Christian citizens, we will want to bear these thoughts in mind as we consider the various candidates seeking our support for political office. While no candidates may, in fact, follow biblical principles in all areas of concern, we will want to vote whenever possible for those candidates whose views best reflect these principles, and whom we believe will best serve our country.

—*Pastor Paul D. Nolting*

**Information from <http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/>*



SMORGASBORD

• **BEWARE THE "MEANING SNATCHERS"** — We recently preached a sermon on 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 which includes the words: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God..."

We spoke, in that connection, of major changes which have taken place

the last fifty years or so, including in the world of thought—changes impacting our religious belief system.

Here is some of what was said:

"We are thinking of the philosophy known as postmodernism, which tells us in no uncertain terms that everything you and I believe is relative, there are no absolutes, there is no such thing as truth. Now no doubt we would like to think that such worthless ideas have a short lifespan, but we dare not be deceived. Now, we're told, we need to

be prepared for what is called 'The Invasion of the Meaning Snatchers.' That is how a reviewer (cf. Wis. Luth. Quarterly, Winter, 2004, p. 63f.) summarizes the idea being championed by a religious (!) philosopher at Nyack College in New York state. The new idea, called perspectivism, is a cousin to postmodernism. Perspectivism is defined as 'the belief that everything we know, everything that comes to us through our senses, is mediated through our subjective understanding...'

"Which means what? Well, it's just another way of saying there really is no such thing as objective truth. The man spouting perspectivism says: 'God...never intended to be known with objective certainty.' Perspectivism, according to its proponent, is critical of the 'erroneous belief that God is completely knowable.' In its bottom line, in other words, perspectivism rules out any objective certainty in doctrinal truth....

"That's why we need the warning: Beware the invasion of the meaning snatchers. The philosophic leaven of postmodern perspectivism would 'snatch the meaning' right out of the Bible, allowing anybody and everybody to decide what 'truth' is according to his or her own personal perspective."

Christian reader, how is it that you and I come to believe that God is "knowable"? How is it that we know and confess the Bible and its core message of Christ and Him crucified as truth—divinely inspired, objective, historical truth?

See, again, the above-mentioned text where the apostle Paul adds: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that

have been freely given to us by God..." (1 Cor. 2:12).

The work of God the Holy Spirit in heart and mind is the key! In our sermon we said: "Since the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts and minds to the secret, hidden wisdom of God—to spiritual things—we have a different spirit from that of the world. The world's 'wisdom' is humanism and its spirit humanistic. The world's 'wisdom' and spirit says that man is god. It's what the apostle, by inspiration, calls the "spirit of the world" which spawns frightening systems of thought such as postmodernism and its cousin, perspectivism."

Critiquing perspectivism, one man has written this: "We can only mourn the degree and rapidity with which postmodern philosophical notions have invaded and corrupted...the visible church that once used to share with us a commitment to God's objective truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. How sad it is to think that many will be directed to seek comfort in the 'personal journeys of discovery,' and in 'visions and still small voices' rather than in God's revelation of himself in the objective means of grace!" (Wis. Luth. Quarterly, cited earlier)

Here's how we concluded our sermon: "The upshot of all this is that, once the meaning snatchers have accomplished their ends—once the objective truths of God in His Word have been conveniently dismantled, shucked off—the ramifications are far reaching, even spiritually and thus eternally disastrous.

"Why? Because—to Satan's delight—it is the gospel of Christ and Him crucified which is undermined and finally lost. In addition, what's left

is that humans are but animals and, as such, have a handy, ready excuse for every kind of non-Christian (unbiblical and ungodly) behavior, including abortion, murder, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, etc.

"There are many changes happening in our day. In the midst of them all, God help us by His Spirit to keep our and our children's lives grounded firmly on God's secret wisdom objectively revealed in His Word."

Whether we believe it or not, that Word remains—as it has ever been—

the divinely inspired repository of God's Truth. As Paul says: "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:13f).

(SMORGASBORD is compiled by the editor who is pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming)



Fourteen Bible-centered devotions for the person who wants to know more about God and life with God.

#7: Are you window-shopping for heaven?

Many who are looking for God don't know where to look or how to find Him, because they look in the wrong places. They are like window-shoppers attracted to flashy advertising, or they spend their time looking for the "50% OFF" or other spectacular savings, as advertised everywhere.

Are you shopping for a special sale on heaven's blessings? Or are you one of the few who is truly concerned about value and quality, at whatever price? The best way to find quality is to seek the superior brand name, and don't get taken in by cheap, inferior merchandise.

You know I am talking about religion, not retail shopping. It is easy for church shoppers to be fooled by counterfeits, for much religious trash is peddled on TV and in magazines and church

advertising. So how is a person going to know what IS truth and what is bogus?

You might begin by trusting somebody who loves you enough to help you read and understand the Bible. Reading the whole Bible seems a big job, but one way to simplify the job is to use a shortened version of the teachings of the Bible—such as our Lutheran Catechism.

This small book brings to you the main teachings of the Bible in an organized form so that you can learn what God wants you to know and believe about the problem of your sinfulness and about God's redemption of your soul from sin; about your Creator and Creation; about the life and work of Jesus your Savior and about the Holy Spirit, your Helper; about the holy Christian Church, the resurrection of the

—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions

August, 2005

Date Scripture A leading thought on the reading Hymn

Moses left and mourning began, but mourning must be replaced by courage and faith. Joshua's motto should have remained Israel's motivation: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

1	Joshua 1:1-9	Be strong and prize My words	528,1
2	1:10-18	Instant acting and reacting	528,2
3	2:1-14	Espionage in God's plans	528,3-4
4	2:15-24	One in faith and one in purpose	528,5
5	3:1-13	Follow the ark and sanctify yourselves	528,7
6	3:14-17	The Ark of the Lord divides the waters	528,8-9
7	4:1-14	What do these stones mean?	629,1-2
8	4:15-24	You shall let your children know	629,3-5
9	5:1-9	Saved from the reproach of Egypt	528,10-13
10	5:10-15	What does my Lord say to His servant?	25,1-2
11	6:1-11	Jehovah's battle plan and His battle	25,3-4
12	6:12-21	Jehovah's victory	25,5
13	6:22-27	A promise made is a promise kept	25,6

The conquest of Jericho held promise of future success—and source of greatest danger, if Israel regarded His gifts as national rights and took His presence for granted. Victory was theirs only so long as they were faithful to the covenant of their God.

14	7:1-9	But Israel broke faith—and lost	324,1-2
15	7:10-15	Stop complaining, and sanctify yourselves	324,3-4
16	7:16-26	A vivid example in the Valley of Trouble	324,5
17	8:1-8	Jehovah returns to insure Joshua's plans	324,6
18	8:9-17	Pride goes before the fall	324,7
19	8:18-29	And great was the fall	324,8

Since God had given the key to the whole land of promise, it remained for Israel to declare in what spirit they intended to hold His gifts. Jehovah's object was to replace the heathen with His own redeemed and sanctified people that He might build His Kingdom.

20	8:30-35	A declaration of dependence	218,1-2
21	9:1-15	They did not ask direction of the Lord	218,3-4
22	9:16-27	Ignorance is no excuse	218,5-6

The Lord moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform! The tricky Gibeonites were conquered in the south, and north Canaan followed. But Israel did not yet hold all its cities; they must fight the fight of faith for the habitation in the heavens not made with hands.

23	10:1-11	Up in arms to reclaim their loss	26,1-2
24	10:12-15	The Lord obeyed the voice of a man	26,3
25	10:16-27	Their hand on the neck of their enemies	26,4
26	10:28-43	Joshua took them all at one time	26,5-6
27	11:1-9	As in the South, so in the North	19,1-2
28	11:10-15	Joshua's secret: complete obedience	19,3-4
29	11:16-23	The Lord (not men) exterminates the heathen	19,5
30	13:1-14	A few left to test Israel's faithfulness	19,6
31	18:1-10	God's plan to avoid further jealousy	431,1-3

dead, the Final Judgment, and eternal life. As you study the Bible, you will also be brought the blessings of Christian prayer, perhaps even the blessings of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar.

We can study the Bible together, if you wish, and God will help you to quit window-shopping for heaven, for you will discover that Jesus has already brought to you the gift of redemption. Jesus had you in mind when he said, "Other sheep I have...them also I must

bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (Jn. 10:26).

May God bless you in this way!

"Come unto Me, you wand'ers,
And I will give you rest."
O blessed voice of Jesus,
That comes to hearts oppressed!
It tells of benediction,
Of pardon, grace, and peace,
Of joy that has no ending,
Of love that cannot cease.

—Paul R. Koch



Looking Back and Looking Forward

The CLC Mission Newsletter of January, 1968, carried a devotional article by Pastor Fred Tiefel in Japan, reminding us that the CLC from its inception had and supported foreign mission work.

Also, there was a continued discussion on Indonesia as a possible mission field. It is clear that even back then there were those who proposed that opportunities for outreach overseas should be grasped in faith and love. Under the title "More on Indonesia," it was stated, "Rather than bewail the fact that we don't have men and money to go there and work, we reexamine our system of priorities and be ready to send men into such a promising mission field." He (the writer) considers this a better stewardship of our limited funds and men. He says: "I know from experience that there are foreign fields where one man can accomplish what ten can do here in the States. Such fields are becoming rare. But it is possible that Indonesia, because of the peculiar circumstances of its recent

history, is such a field just at this time. Later it may not be. But why should we feel that we could not send a man into such a field white with heavy harvest because we do not have enough men to pick up the gleanings in the very unproductive mission field that the US has become? There is much worth considering here!"

As we know, we did not enter Indonesia. "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established" (Prov. 19:21). Instead we find ourselves laboring for Him with brethren in India, "a field white with heavy harvest."

Also, we do joint work with brethren in six African countries—which may now include a seventh, Uganda. At Mbale on the Kenya border our pastors from Kenya and Tanzania



Mission Posters at Convention show countries where the CLC is doing mission work

are working with an Anglican pastor who wants to become a Lutheran.

As the mission newsletter remarked some 37 years ago on Indonesia, so there is much worth considering today. Creature comforts and all else that clutters our comfort zone can insulate to the point of stifling. The preference of the familiar as opposed to the unfamiliar can be a serious drag on outreach. Instead of impelling us forward, various organizational philosophies and practices can operate as a brake and cause us to hold off. Stymied by the flesh, our mind can transform what is in reality an exhilarating challenge into a fearful anxiety.

Launching out into the deep can be daunting, until it is remembered Who has commanded us to go and Who is in the boat with us!

By no stretch of the imagination can we lay claim to any credit for the thrust in our outreach to foreign fields. We did not 'plan' to enter Nigeria in 1974;

India with the CLCI in 1983; India again with the BELC in 1984; Kenya, Togo, Ghana in 2000; Congo (DRC), and Tanzania in 2001.

There was definite purpose and foreknowledge, but it was God's and not ours. We responded to the Lord's Word as the opportunities arose. Jesus leads, we follow.

As Zinzendorf wrote long ago, as he and his brethren went into all the world:

Jesus, lead Thou on Till our rest is won.
Heav'nly Leader, still direct us,
Still support, control, protect us,
Till we safely stand In our fatherland. (TLH, #410)

May this be our strategy and prayer.

—Missionary David Koenig



Stained Glass Windows Dedicated

Our LORD has revealed by His example that setting up memorials of His grace can be valuable for worship. On November 14, 2004 Grace Lutheran Church, Fridley, Minnesota, gathered to celebrate the dedication of ten stained glass windows.

The Stained Glass Project followed the theme: Expressions of Grace—A Progressive Bible History. The subjects of the windows range from Creation through Judgment Day. Rick Nelson, member of Grace, took a number of stained glass classes, designed the windows, and led the work.

The actual work on making the windows began in March 2003 and was finished in October 2004. It was a delight to watch the progression as well as to enjoy the beauty of the completed project.

The value of these windows cannot be measured in colored glass, oak framing, the many skills, gifts, donations, and hours of labor that have come from so many. Because they are vessels proclaiming God's own gracious message of salvation, their value exceeds all human measures. So we do not say today, "Look at what we have made, we have done," but "Look at what the LORD has done."

These windows are as diverse as God's own works. But there is one theme that unites them all: the cross of Christ. "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). That cross is the crimson thread of



God's blessing in all things.

We thank the LORD for the zeal, love, gifts, and talents He provided so that our worship home might be adorned with these beautiful expressions of His grace. May their art ever be sanctified by Your Spirit, O LORD, to awaken within us refreshing pictures of Your grace.

"God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations ... Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him" (Psalm 67:1-7).

—*Pastor John Ude*

Announcement

Upon the recommendation of the Reentry Committee, I have certified J. D. Sydow as eligible for a call into the teaching ministry of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. His name will be placed on the official CLC Roster.

—*Pastor John Schierenbeck,*
President of the CLC

**Kadapa District, BELC (India),
pastors who have joined**



**BELC Pastors' Monthly
Study, Renigunta District,
new in 2004**