

Lutheran Spokesman



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Wounds that Heal

For some reason children seem to have a fascination with showing off scars. "Here's a bruise I got when I fell off my bicycle!" When children lose teeth, they want to make sure you know about it—"I lost a tooth!"

Bruises and scars can tell many stories. They can show things we've suffered through—pain we've felt; experiences we've had in life.

It's hard to imagine the experience the disciples of Jesus had—the height of joy as their Teacher received a hero's welcome as He entered Jerusalem! Yet by the end of Holy Week the disciples would feel sickened by what they saw. Their Lord, whom they loved so, would be treated so wrong—slapped, spit upon, made fun of, whipped, and worst of all, nails driven through His hands and His feet.

Their Friend would die on a cross as though He were the most vile of criminals.

Jesus knew all this was going to happen. In the Gospel of Mark we have

recorded three different times when Jesus told His disciples what was going to happen in Jerusalem. And all three times He told them He would "rise on the third day."

But when the third day after His death came, it seemed His disciples had forgotten what Jesus had said. That Easter Sunday evening when He appeared to His disciples, "they were terrified and frightened" (Lk. 24:37). How quickly they had forgotten Jesus' Word!

Reassurance!

So what would Jesus do to calm them and reassure them? He said to them, "Why are you troubled and frightened? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Lk. 24:38-39).

Jesus knew His trembling and doubting disciples needed reassurance. So He showed them His hands and His

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feet—His wounds! Yes, He really did die on the cross—it wasn't a dream. The holes in His hands and feet proved it. His flesh and bones also proved that He had kept His Word and was raised from the dead!

How similar we are to those disciples! We have Jesus' promises, yet how quickly we forget them.

How often we are troubled and frightened about many things. How often doubts arise in our hearts. We wonder if God really does forgive all our sins.

Jesus speaks to us as well, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I

Myself." Jesus really did die for our sins. God really did accept the payment Jesus made on the cross—He really did raise Jesus from the dead!

These aren't bruises from falling off a bike. These are the blows that justice made. These are wounds by which we are healed.

Behold His hands and His feet. You are redeemed!

Jesus lives! And now is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm my trembling breath
When I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense,
Jesus is my confidence! (TLH #201:1)

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer



Good Friday Silver

Exactly how much is a prophet worth—one who faithfully proclaims God's Word and has his people's best interest at heart?

How much? This is the question Zechariah once asked of his people: "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; but if not, never mind! So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter—that magnificent price at which I was valued to them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord" [Zechariah

11:12,13].

This biting prophetic drama was acted out by Zechariah in the name of the Lord God. It was an immediate condemnation of his own generation, which no longer valued God's prophet or put a high premium on his work but had, in fact, rebelled against God Himself.

How much? Pay me my wages, whatever you think I am worth! And so they paid him as they valued him, not with repentance and obedience, but with a paltry thirty pieces of silver (the payment demanded by the Law to a

master whose slave had been gored to death by an ox). Oh, healing for the body they highly valued, as does the world. Naaman the leper was ready to pay hundreds of pounds of silver and gold for physical healing. But healing and care of the soul for these people—that was another matter altogether, worth hardly anything to them.

Therefore the prophet, for the Lord's sake, sarcastically threw down in the temple their magnificent sum to be paid to the potter.

What is the Good Shepherd Worth?

How much is a Good Shepherd worth? That is really the question in this Messianic drama. It was first played out in Zechariah's life, but it found its more complete fulfillment in a future Good Friday generation that would reject their own Prophet and Good Shepherd Savior in the person of Christ Jesus.

It was a prophecy of the betrayal price paid to Judas—that princely price that Israel's leaders placed on their Messiah. "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me'" (Mt. 27:9-10). That money also went to buy a scraggly

field as a cemetery for poor, non-resident Jews.

Surely God had the right to expect the worthy wages of a faithful Good Shepherd for all He had done for His people. He had loved them, fed them, carried them in His arms, and gently led them. Always He offered of Himself, His mercy and compassion. His work was free. His salvation was free, but it was not cheap. Man's redemption was accomplished not with thirty pieces of silver or all the valuable metal in the world, but with Christ's holy precious blood and innocent but brutal suffering and death.

So when He was priced, unbelieving Israel, through its leaders, bargained down His value to a slave's worth and shouted, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" All this was done according to the foreknowledge and will of God. Men may think that they rule—as they so thought throughout the Passion History of our Lord—but they are as but pawns in the hands of God.

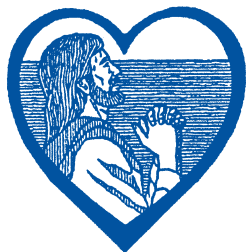
The questions remain for us: What is a faithful pastor worth? Cheap indifference?

What is our Savior-God to us—is He a mere slave worth about thirty silver dollars, or is He Lord and King of all?

What is the Good Shepherd worth—a favorable comment due only a noted social philosopher? Apathetic contempt?

Or is He indeed worthy of our repentance and trust, our praise and thanksgiving, our glory, obedience, and love?

Surely He is worth all of that—our hearts and our lives, our everything and our all.



—Pastor David Fuerstenau

"I thirst"
(John 19:28)

"I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily" (Ps. 69:3,17).

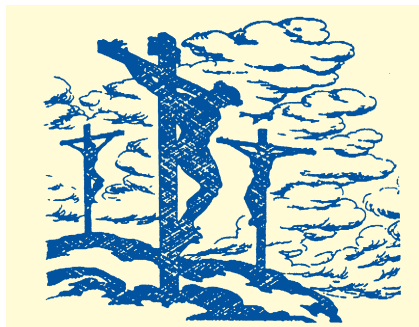
"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:2)

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Ps. 22:14-15).

If we want to know the enormity of our sin, we need only to sit at the foot of the cross, and recognize that the words above from the Psalms are a reflection of what our Savior suffered.

When originally offered the drink of myrrh and gall that would have alleviated His suffering and hastened His death, Jesus refused to receive it. He must be in full control of His senses to drink the cup of suffering to its fullest, for only by doing so could He satisfy the demands of the Law which pronounced death upon the sinner. To have done less would have left fallen man still under condemnation of eternal death with all its indescribable horror and suffering.

But when He had endured it all and had fully paid the price, the Son of God desired to see His Father. He was ready to die. It was His time, the time selected by Him. Unto the end Jesus



remained in control of all things in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. 69:21).

Now He said, "I thirst." The thirst that He felt was not uncommon for someone in His circumstance. A parched throat oftentimes accompanies death. But His thirst was more than a dry throat. He thirsts for those for whom He died, that they might come to Him and drink of the refreshing water of salvation.

By prophecy Isaiah chapter 53 says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." After the toil of His soul, the Savior finds satisfaction in every soul that has been redeemed and that has by faith grasped salvation in Him.

Each time that we hear this word, "I thirst," we should appreciate what it is that He suffered, and at the same time daily bring Him satisfaction through our words and actions as well as by living faith and hope. In that manner we

declare that Jesus did not thirst in vain.

May we satisfy the thirst of the Savior by saying with David, "I stretch

forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsts after thee, as a thirsty land" (Ps. 143:6).

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THE SIXTH WORD FROM THE CROSS—

"It is finished!" (John 19:30)

"It is finished!" With reference to our text, a Greek Lexicon offers for the particular verb form of the word "finished" the following interpretation: "Everything has been accomplished which by the appointment of the Father as revealed in the Scriptures I must do and bear" (Thayer).

Everything foretold about—and necessary for—our salvation is complete! With reference to the attainment of the promised eternal salvation, no works, no penance, no blood, no money—no anything!—is necessary, unless one does not believe what "finished" means.

As comforting as it is to believe that Jesus has paid the full price for our salvation when He died upon the cross, so sad is it when people remain comfortless and burdened because they believe that they have to complete what Jesus already called complete.

Our Savior Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished" (Lk. 18:31).

"It is finished" tells us that Jesus is true to His Word! We, the redeemed who believe the Word of Christ and trust in His once-for-all completed

atonement, are numbered among those to whom Psalm 22 makes reference: "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (Ps. 22:30-31).

Wilhelm Besser wrote in *The Passion Story*, "They who waste their energy in labor designed to add to or complete the work of Christ, they who, instead of accepting in faith the work of God that justifies the ungodly, they create a Savior according to their own fancy who is to make the virtuous more righteous, or to make penitent sinners gradually purer. They destroy for themselves the blessed message: 'It is finished!'"

The faith that saves is not built upon personal effort, however sincere, to pridefully try to complete what Christ called complete—as if Christ actually did not complete what He said He did. They make of Christ a liar.

The penitent sinner, a person of flesh and blood who daily sins much, relieves his accusing conscience not by trying harder to do what he can never do or even has to do, but by simply believing "It is finished!" In so believing, the child of God respects the Word and gives

Christ and His cross due honor.

In this context, Luther said, "My penitent tears do not justify me. Christ alone has taken my sins away. He cast them into the sea of forgetfulness. This is my defense, a defense which rests upon: 'It is finished!'"

People who appreciate visual art do not add another brush-stroke to the finished painting of a master. It is unthinkable. Why then should the sinner for whom Jesus died—and in

whose behalf He declared, "It is finished!"—even entertain the idea that the accomplishment of his salvation calls for an addition to what the Master has declared complete?

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works ... " (Ephesians 2:8-9). Thank God!

(This series by Pastor Daniel Fleischer on the words of Christ from the cross will be completed next month.—Ed.)



FROM A PASTOR'S DESK—

"Lent has to do with what JESUS gave up"

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the six-week period before Easter which is called "Lent." Traditionally, many Christians observe this time of the year as a season of self-denial. There are many seasonal events that have to do with this observance, such as:

- Mardi Gras, Carnival, or Fat Tuesday—These are different names for the same ungodly practice. People in many cities around the world take the coming season of Lent as an excuse to have a huge blow-out of overindulgence and promiscuity, just before Lent begins.

- Ash Wednesday—The first day of Lent. In some churches, worshipers have their foreheads daubed with ashes, as a sign of repentance.

- Palm Sunday—On this Sunday before Easter, Christians remember how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as

the Lord's Messiah, with shouts of praise from massive crowds of people who were waving palm branches.

- Maundy Thursday—On the evening before Good Friday, Jesus met with His disciples to celebrate the Jewish Passover, and to give them a new meal for Christians to celebrate, the Lord's Supper. The day is probably named from the early Christian practice of delivering gifts to the poor in baskets, called "maunds," on this day.

- Good Friday—A day of mourning for the death of God the Son. Jesus, though innocent of any wrongdoing, was executed by crucifixion, the most humiliating and painful way possible. God the Father poured out His punishment for the sins of the whole world on His innocent Son, so that we might have full forgiveness and eternal life in Him.

Perhaps you or someone you know has participated in another tradition of

this season, known as "giving something up" for Lent. Someone may decide to go without eating candy during this time. Another may give up eating meat, and perhaps another may take the occasion to quit smoking.

Is this a proper way to observe the season? That depends. If doing without certain luxuries is intended to remind us of what the Savior did for us, then it serves a useful purpose, but the focus needs to be on Christ.

The Bible certainly does call for Christians to practice self-denial, but the main theme and heart of the Scripture message is what Jesus was willing to give up for us: "For you know the grace

of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

In the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself suffered and died in our place. Those who put their full trust in Him will realize that any kind of personal self-denial could only be a pale reflection of what the Savior did for us on the cross.

Reflecting on how Jesus denied HIMself, for OUR sakes, is the very best Lenten preparation.

—Pastor Bruce Naumann

(Written as a devotion for a local weekly newspaper-Ed.)



The Powerful Easter Gospel **(See Luke 24:13-35)**

An empty tomb...a risen Savior—what a powerful gospel message is the Easter story!

God's intention is that we use this power for a specific purpose, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Jesus used this powerful message for that very purpose when He joined two men on a walk to Emmaus that first Easter afternoon.

Jesus chose to share the Easter gospel with them, for it is indeed a message of hope. One might think that Jesus would have had more important things to do than go on a walk, or more important people to see than those two disciples on that first Easter afternoon. The two men, after all, were not even among His chosen apostles. One of the men was Cleopas, about whom we

hear nothing else in Scripture, while the other is left unnamed. Still, Jesus approached them and walked with them. He chose to approach them, because they were sad and needed that message of hope.

Jesus engaged the two in conversation, asking them why they appeared so sick at heart. They could hardly believe that this Stranger was so uninformal. In the midst of their sorrow, they shared their bitter disappointment. Jesus, whom they deemed a prophet, had been delivered up to death by their own chief priests and rulers, dashing their hopes that He might indeed have been the promised Messiah, the One who was to redeem Israel. Oh, there



had been reports by certain women earlier in the day that the tomb was empty, but they gave those reports little credence. How badly these two men needed the Easter gospel—a message of healing!

"Their eyes were opened..."

Jesus admonished the two: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"

How surprised and startled Cleopas and his friend must have been to see this Stranger become so animated.

How amazed they must have been to hear Him explain so clearly all of the Scriptural prophecies beginning with Moses and ending with Malachi. He proved to them on the basis of God's Word that the Savior had to suffer and die and then rise again, for this was all part of God's plan to save mankind.

How powerful was that Easter gospel, for their sorrows were begin-

ning to melt away before this message of truth!

As the three of them approached Emmaus late that first Easter afternoon, the two men implored the Stranger to stay with them. It was, after all, late and He could hardly go much further. Jesus accepted their invitation, for He wanted to bring further blessing to their hearts.

As He sat with them at supper, He took up the bread and blessed it. At that moment their eyes were opened and they recognized Him as their risen Savior.

The Easter gospel became for them at that moment a message of joy. "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" they asked!

Quickly they arose and returned to Jerusalem. This was a message too powerful and too important to wait. They had to share it with others, who like themselves needed to hear and needed to believe the powerful Easter gospel!

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting



In last summer's parade, Grace Church of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota entered a float, effectively depicting "JESUS IS THE LIVING WATER."

#3: "How do I get to heaven?"

Have you heard about the young man who set out to cross the Atlantic in a bathtub? Nobody could convince him to not try it, so he launched his tub. But before he had paddled twenty feet, a small wave sloshed over the rim, and down he went. Friends who knew better were on hand to save him.

This is picture language for folks who launch out into life in vessels that are no good at all for deep water. They think they will sail safely into heaven, floating along in their man-sized boats of supposed good works, of good-looking deeds, and of a shiny life. Though washtubs of human kindness are OK for small jobs, they are not ocean-going vessels.

What I am trying to point out is that good deeds will not get anyone across the ocean of life and to the safe harbor on the far shore. It is a fatal mistake to become stubborn about this, for good deeds and kindnesses done to our fellowmen will survive no longer than a bathtub on the high seas.

Dear friend, do not make the fatal mistake of trusting human washbasins to make your soul clean enough for heaven. It won't work, as God warns: "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20); and "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The tub of life is riddled with the holes of disobedience, rotted with selfishness and stubbornness and anger and jealousy and pride and lust and other foolishness.

Dear friend, abandon the delusion of saving yourself, because you will sink like a rock and drown eternally!

Is there any way to rescue your soul from this disaster? Yes, for God is standing by and holding out His hands to you; He is your Rescuer. He is saving people all the time from the fatal mistake of entrusting their lives and souls to imperfect and flimsy deeds.

What will you do? Since you "have sinned and have come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), you should also know and believe that God wants to rescue you; He is standing here now, holding out His hands to carry you to eternal safety. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Are you ready to abandon your sinking tub? Jesus is waiting to rescue you for eternal life, just as He has rescued millions of souls before you.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

—Paul R. Koch

Previous articles appearing in this "three-minute devotions" series (written for persons who perhaps never heard of Christ, or who have lost contact with their childhood faith) were:

January 2005: #1: "Who are you?"

February 2005: #2: "I don't know God very well."

Resurrection Living

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Once again we have been reminded of the miracle of God's act of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This act of reconciling alienated sinners to Himself took place through Jesus Christ. "For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

We have had this word of reconciliation preached to us again during this Lenten season. The message of Lent is that "One died for all." The ministry of reconciliation has been committed to us.

Remember that if One died for all, then all died. There is no one who is outside of God's love for sinners and His universal act of reconciliation. This reconciliation becomes our personal possession through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith joins us to Jesus and makes what He did ours. Adam was the representative of the entire human race and when he sinned, we all sinned.

Even so Jesus was the representative of the entire human race. Through His perfect obedience, Jesus made us righteous. All of us share in Christ's death through baptism. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism ... " (Rom. 6:4). Joined to Jesus, we died to sin.

Death and the cross are not the end of the story. "Jesus died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). Jesus con-



quered sin and death for us. Jesus also rose for us. "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

Easter means that we look forward to the great day when we will be physically raised from the dead and receive the inheritance of the saints. Because Jesus lives, we also will live.

Real Meaning for ... Right Now!

Easter has real meaning for us right now. "Even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Jesus' resurrection means that we are the new and holy creation of God, Who has not imputed our sins to us. "Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

As Easter Christians we are no longer the slaves of sin, bound by our own lusts and the sinful flesh. The love of Christ now constrains us (holds close or holds fast), so that we live our lives for Him. The love of Jesus in His death and resurrection is the life-giving

power in our daily lives. Through Jesus' resurrection we are alive to God.

Jesus owns us body and life, because Jesus has purchased and won us from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil. We no longer live for ourselves. It is no longer "all about me." Those who live should live no longer for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Jesus' death is the price of our reconciliation. Jesus' resurrection is the source of our spiritual life and movement. Easter affects the way we live our daily lives.

The unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sins, even though he is physically alive. The unbeliever walks "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit who works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

God's grace has joined us to Jesus and His Easter resurrection victory. God "made us alive together with

Christ ... and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2:5-6).

The life we now live, we live by the power of Jesus' resurrection. The emphasis on resurrection living is sometimes missing from our everyday lives. We now live not just for ourselves, but for Christ Who died for us and Who rose again from the dead.

We are now alive in Christ. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we are enabled to walk in newness of life. Jesus' resurrection victory is reflected in our spiritual resurrection and our walk in newness of life.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E'en then this shall be all my plea:
Jesus hath lived and died for me.
(TLH #371:5-6)

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



Studies In Colossians

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

Chapter 3:18-4:1

God's house-rules for the Christian Home

Just read the entire passage once, and then tell me if it doesn't sound like a section from Luther's "Table of Duties." And so it is; for before we step

onto the holy ground of the Ten Commandments, we should take a good look at the person standing in our shoes. Whatever our station or calling

Seek Him Not

1. "Seek Him not in Joseph's garden,"
Hear the angel's startling news.
"Doubt not, but embrace my message,
I am come to comfort you.
He is risen from the grave,
All mankind to seek and save.
God has sent me here to tell you,
Seek Him not in Joseph's grave."

2. Seek Him not in worldly wisdom
Based on man's self-righteousness.
Listen not to modern prophets
Spurning Scripture's blessedness,
And who challenge God's own will—
Pride in self they would instill,
Guided only by their reason.
Seek not truth in human will.

3. Seek Him in the precious message
God has left us here below;
For the Spirit has recorded
All our God would have us know.
We will find our Savior there
In the Scriptures everywhere.
'Tis the truth, my soul believe it.
We must now this message share.

4. Let us sing, this wondrous morning:
"Lord of lords, and King of kings!"
Jesus reigns in glorious triumph,
"He is ris'n!" all Christians sing.
Our Good Shepherd bids us hear:
"Peace be with you! Have no fear!"
Praise the God of our salvation,
Resurrection Day is here!



("Original music and text for Easter"—submitted by retired Teacher Gerhardt Mueller, 573 S. Park Ave., Fond du Lac, WI 54935; he may be contacted at phone 920-922-0467 for the musical score.)



in life, God has not overlooked us in our needs and our privileged responsibilities. God has given a shelf-full of shoes to each of us, so let's take the shoes that fit the situation, wear them, and walk in them on His paths.

That brings us to the threshold of our own homes, our Christian homes, where we wives and husbands, children and parents together cope with one another. This is also the target-zone for Satan, where ego-fueled personalities may clash over the smallest triviality or compromise on the grossest abuse of God's will. If we let ourselves slide out of God's lap into that swamp, dear reader, no psychologist, marriage counselor, or divorce court will ever be able to make right what went wrong. Perhaps God will prevent such a tragedy if we observe these admonitions for our sacred and privileged responsibilities; let's live by them and up to them!

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."

Not to fret about His starting out with wives—the first one to go down should be the first one picked up. *Submit* means to "arrange in order," which is familiar enough in the military world, where self-determination must be sublimated to higher purposes. That's valid for soldiers of the Cross, too, where we all get our marching orders from the Supreme high command.

Because Christian marriage is a mutual enterprise, both spouses work together for common goals, and each will acquiesce to the other, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). But lest this be reduced to the absurdity of neither parent making a necessary decision (as each backs off

in deference to the other), the way to move forward is for wives to submit themselves to their husbands, who will take up their God-given assignment for the benefit of spouse and family.

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them."

In the shifting circumstances of life, you accommodate yourself to your wife, in love yielding your preference to her need, and from your heart serving her best interest, even "as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). That doesn't mean bossy and hard to deal with, does it?

Next, the relationship between parent and child swims into focus:

"Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."

Who but a genuine child of God feels like living contrary to the cultural norm? God is expecting a lot from you, His children, whom He has placed into this crazy and scary world. But what is to become of teenagers who have no Christian love and ethics to guide them because their parents had little and gave them none? When you parents love each other and cherish your child as God's gift to your oneness, you work hard at your privileged responsibilities, taking care to earn the love and respect of your child.

You fathers, strive to keep reign over your temper and to be judicious about restrictions and chastisement...

"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

... Bear in mind that your



kids/teenagers are struggling on many fronts, facing peer pressure and raging hormones. The teen-age suicide epidemic rings a warning bell for you Christian parents, too.

You youngsters have the job of working with your parents instead of against them. You know what is pleasing to your Lord, so commit your heart and soul and life to serve your Savior, and He will smooth the way for you through the terrible teens, hand-in-hand with Mom and Dad.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters (according to the flesh), not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done, and there is no partiality."

It is not entirely surprising that more godly direction is provided for servants (anyone who takes orders) than for wives, husbands, or children in the Christian home, for now we have stepped across the alley into the non-Christian home, where the Christian house-servant was a slave, bereft of Christian parents/family, in a strange

environment, and likely abused by the non-Christian master. How are you going to conduct yourself as a child of God in such difficult circumstances?

God wants us to be truly cooperative and submissive through the entire span of situations where we take orders from someone who gives orders. We are all servants in many ways, and as we mesh with the varied earthly systems included under "serving," God's primary concern is our motivation.

Are we human-oriented in our work-ethic, or are we Christ-centered? Certainly we want our boss to be satisfied, but that comes secondary, for we wish to serve with genuine godliness, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men," whether we serve at farm chores, baby-sitting, teaching, computer programming, providing health care, carpentering, trucking, or whatever.

God is just as concerned for your motivation when you are the boss ...

"Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

...Even if there were no labor union, EPA, or OSHA, you as a Christian boss will treat your employees fair and square, for you act "in sincerity of heart, fearing God, ... knowing that ... he serves the Lord Christ." In your business relationships you will follow the same principle that applies at home: first you serve God, and then you serve the best interests of others.

We are mindful that our Lord and Savior puts us on the first step of true godliness with "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," before

He puts us on the second step—"and ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37-39).

This dual-directional love holds sway in our Christian heart for every situation in life, and we know that anything less is a pious fraud. Simply put,

our heart depends on God, and others depend on our heart. God help us! Amen!

—Paul R. Koch

Footnote: In 1 Peter 3 God directs the living of us husbands and wives with some extra side-lights for "mixed marriages" and the need for being "of one mind."

—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions; March, 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Genesis</u>	<u>A leading thought on the reading</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	41:33-36	Let us use our talents selflessly	440
2	41:37-57	The God of history rules for His people	28,1-2
3	42:1-17	From bodily hunger to spiritual fulfillment	544,5-6
4	42:18-24	We recognize a guilty conscience	375,1-2
5	42:25-38	and the vise-grip of former wrongs	369,3-4
6	43:1-14	God Almighty manipulates human cunning	378
7	43:15-25	"Your God has put treasure in your hands"	441,1-2
8	43:26-34	"God be gracious to you, my son"	47,4
9	44:1-17	The litmus test of a soft heart is	399,1-3
10	44:18-34	consideration of others' happiness.	399,4-6
11	45:1-15	"God sent me to preserve a posterity for you"	34,4
12	45:16-28	True godliness has its reward	427,1-3
13	46:1-7	"I will also surely bring you up again"	427,4-5
14	46:28-34	Their own home in a foreign land	33,1
15	47:1-12	"I'm but a stranger here..."	660,1-2
16	47:13-26	The government gobbled up private property	33,3
17	48:1-16	God has led me all my life long	427,6-7
18	48:17-22	"God will be with you and bring you back"	645,1-3
19	49:8-12	His Kingdom shall be everlasting	645,4-5
20	50:1-14	They buried him in the Promised Land	429,2
21	50:15-26	Man proposes, but God disposes	514,5-6

E X O D U S

III: FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT TO SERVING THE LORD

When the danger arose that God's chosen nation might forget the Promise, God detoured them through suffering to make them long again for the promised Deliverance. Then Jehovah led them out through Moses, a type of Jesus, our great Deliverer from sin-slavery.

22	1:1-14	Life became bitter with hard service	247,1
23	1:15-22	God supports the right to life	247,2
24	2:1-10	Adopted by the world but nourished by the Lord	247,3
25	2:11-25	Personal anger does not serve God	410,3-4
26	3:1-12	Called to serve the Lord of glory	40,1-2
27	3:13-22	"I AM" the God of your fathers	40,3-4
28	4:1-17	No excuse for refusing to serve God	43
29	4:18-31	The people believed...and worshipped	413,1-3
30	5:1-23	God's enemy ratchets up the pressure	423,1-3

INTRODUCING the Books of the Prophets

Lamentations

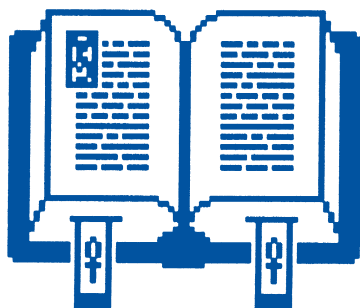
"... How was the Lord to get His message across clearly to the people of the world if His messengers were sounding an unclear tone? God had a clear message for His backsliding people: Your harlotry, running after false gods, your injustices and unfaithfulness are being punished by Me, your righteous God."

The book of Lamentations consists of five poems or songs, each comprising a chapter. The songs of lament in this book were written in a unique poetical fashion called acrostics, in which each verse (or group of verses) begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Unfortunately, this feature is lost in our English translations.

However, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the book's meaning has been preserved for our warning on the one hand, and our comfort as well.

What a name for a book! To *lament* means to weep or express great sorrow over something. Not a great name choice for a best seller!

Ancient peoples had a custom of singing songs or elegies at the occurrence of important events. And the author of the book of Lamentations (assumed to be Jeremiah, the prophet) had quite a bit over which to express great sorrow. He had been an eyewitness of the destruction of his own beloved capital city—God's city, Jerusalem. He saw his temple—God's temple—destroyed. He witnessed his fellow people—God's people—carried away into Assyrian captivity. In fact, he himself



suffered many things at the hands of enemies and friends, including public ridicule, torture, and imprisonment.

Judgment Strikes

What could have caused such horrible calamities to happen to God's own chosen people?

God had made a covenant with His people. At Mt. Sinai the Lord told the Children of Israel through His servant, Moses: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:4-6).

Outline of LAMENTATIONS:

I. The tragic state of Jerusalem (Lamentations 1)

II. The wrath of God (Lamentations 2)

III. The prophet's grief (Lamentations 3)

IV. The reason for the tragedy (Lamentations 4,5)

It was all very clear. God is the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of all mankind. He had specially chosen the Children of Israel to be an example for—and to carry His Word to—the sin-darkened world around them. The love that God had showered upon them would be all the impetus they would need to follow His commandments.

However, even before the chosen people of God entered into the Promised Land, they began showing their allegiances to the world, the devil, and their own sinful flesh. After settling in the land of Canaan, they did not drive out the inhabitants, as they had been directed. They didn't adhere strictly to God's laws of separation from the sinner and his sin. As a result, God's people began to intermarry with the locals and to adopt the local customs, including the religious practices.

How was the Lord to get His message across clearly to the people of the world if His messengers were sounding an unclear tone? God had a clear message for His backsliding people: Your harlotry, running after false gods, your injustices and unfaithfulness are being punished by Me, your righteous God.

And the punishment on sin becomes a chastisement to those who were still His children: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! She weeps bitterly at night . . . she has none to comfort her. Judah has gone into captivity, under affliction

and hard servitude . . . Her adversaries have become her master . . . Jerusalem has sinned gravely, therefore she has become vile. Young and old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and young men have fallen by the sword; the tongue of the infant clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst; those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger . . . The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger" (selections from Lamentations).

Mercy in the midst of Judgment

So God had His revenge and that's that? Not so! It was God's mercy which brought this disaster on His people. Through the chastisement of their enemies, the loving Father was drawing His children back to Himself in repentance, which leads to salvation.

Our Father in heaven knows better than we that He is the only way to salvation, through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. That is why He will do anything, even send calamities, in order to keep His people trusting in Him and Him alone.

Even in the midst of all of the sorrow and turmoil, the Holy Spirit was able to sustain the prophet's faith, enabling him to declare: "This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is

my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" (Lam. 3:21-24)

Is Lamentations a poor choice for the name of a book? Not when we consider that the lamenting that His believing children must go through in this world will in no way compare with the rich joys a loving Father has prepared

for us, in His Son, our Savior!

"I called on Your name, O Lord, from the lowest pit. You heard my voice . . . You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, 'Do not fear!'" (Lam. 3:55-57)

—Teacher David W. Bernthal



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

Of Free Will—and the Interconnection of Bible Teachings

Are the Lutheran confessional writings of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (A.C.) as helpful and relevant today as they were in the early beginnings of the Lutheran Church in the 1500's?

The answer from a confessional Christian is, "Yes, without any question!" The religious truths there set forth are foundational to our Christian faith and are timeless. The false teachings which are exposed and combatted continue to be promoted in prominent denominations in Christendom to the spiritual harm of those who give ear to them.

Praise and thanks be to God that the confessional statements found in THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION continue to be fully subscribed to and cherished in our midst, as well as professed to all who, with us, would consider them to their blessing.

The teachings of Holy Scripture are so closely connected and interdependent that if one teaching is corrupted by human error, the other teachings are also adversely affected. This corruption

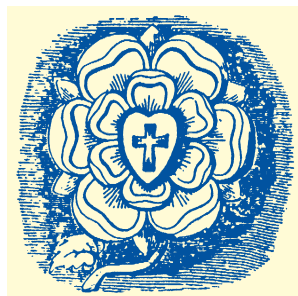


of teachings can be so far reaching that it finally undermines the gospel of Jesus Christ and jeopardizes one's salvation.

The framer of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (Philip Melanchthon—Ed.) recognized this and therefore carefully and systematically laid out the truths of God's Word in all their beauty on the one hand, and on the other hand clearly identified and rejected the insidious falsehoods that would rob us of those truths.

When addressing the Biblical teaching of "Free Will" and the false teachings that conflict with it, the Lutheran confessions reveal the close interconnection of such teachings as "Original Sin," "Free Will," and "Saving Grace."

First of all, concerning "Original Sin" THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION declared that all people are "born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence (that is, with evil inclinations)." Since man is born with original sin, the A.C. went on to confess concerning the teaching on "Free Will" that man in his natural state "has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2,14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word." With man born spiritually dead in tres-



passes and sins (Eph. 2:1), he has no natural strength or power to make himself righteous or acceptable to God. He cannot contribute a single thing to his own eternal salvation. Even when it comes to the matter of believing in Jesus' work of redemption, natural man does not possess the free will to make a decision to believe in Jesus.

From the days of our Catechism instruction, we learned to confess these truths with Martin Luther's explanation to the Third Article: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength

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

XVIII. Freedom of the Will

It is also taught among us that man possesses some measure of freedom of the will which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends. But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Word of God, for Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:14, "Natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God."

(article abbreviated)

believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in true faith..."

The errorists which THE AUGSBURG CONFSSION identified and contended against in these key areas of Christian doctrine were the Pelagians—whose false teachings are being taught in the Reformed churches of today—and the Scholastics of Roman Catholicism. Both the Pelagians and the Scholastics denied the total depravity of man and his spiritually dead condition caused by original sin. So then, both falsely claimed that man has the natural power and free will to love God above all things and to obey His commandments (A.C. II; Apology II, 8).

These false beliefs then quite naturally led both the Pelagians and the Scholastics to say that man can contribute to his own salvation. In the Lutheran Apology ("defense") of THE AUGSBURG CONFSSION, it is clearly stated concerning this: "Very well; but what difference is there between the Pelagians and our adversaries (i.e. Scholastics), since both hold that without the Holy Ghost men can

love God and perform God's commandments with respect to the substance of the acts, and can merit grace and justification by works which reason performs by itself, without the Holy Ghost?" (Ap. XVIII, 68)

When we hear this, we can more easily understand how the Reformed churches have come up with their faulty teaching of "Decision Theology," wherein they make the appeal to unbelievers to invite Jesus into their hearts and to decide to believe in Him and to make Jesus the Lord of their hearts. We can then also see how the Roman Catholic Church still falsely holds that man is not saved alone through faith in Jesus' redemptive work, but also through his own works of righteousness.

But since—as the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1ff—we are naturally spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, all the honor, glory, and credit for our salvation belong to God. It was Jesus' sacrificial death for our sins and His righteous life lived in our place which alone satisfied God's just demands for our forgiveness and salvation. And it is the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in our hearts which alone enables us to receive Jesus' precious gifts by faith and to



"Hannah's Helping Hands"—Women's group, Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wisconsin

stand before God as righteous and acceptable in His sight.

May God preserve these saving truths among us and grant us the grace to faithfully proclaim them to the salvation of souls and to the glory of His holy

name.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud

(Please note: The consideration of articles in this **Lutheran Spokesman** series is not necessarily in the sequence the articles are found in the confession itself.—Ed.)



SMORGASBORD

• SPEAKING OF "CLOSE COMMUNION"

On our bookshelf we have the title "THOMASIVS Old Testament SELECTIONS with Interpretation and Homiletical Adaptation by M. REU, D.D." This book of sermon helps, translated from the German, was published by Wartburg Press, Columbus Ohio, in 1959.

Something in this book caught our attention as being relevant to Pastor Warren Fanning's recent series of twelve articles on "Close Communion." More than once the writer called attention to the holy fact that the practice of "close" communion was not a recent phenomenon in the Christian Church. Rather, we were reminded, such careful, conservative practice with regard to the Lord's Supper extended back to Biblical times.

The appointed text for "Thursday in Holy Week"—in both the Thomasius sermon series as well as in Reu's book—is Exodus 12:1-14 (please read this text).

Here then is some of Dr. Reu's commentary on that text, bearing out the fact that a practice akin to "close communion" extended back even to Old Testament times and the institution of the Passover.

For example, this is said: "... The

annual Passover feast was not only a celebration and renewal of the fellowship between God and the people but also of the fellowship among themselves, the people being renewed in the consciousness of their solidarity and unity, and the unity being constantly renewed. So it is with the Lord's Supper, in connection with which Paul says, 'For we, being many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' It is the true family feast of God's children, the climax of the worship service of the Christian congregation, the covenant people of the New Testament. In this supper it also demonstrates its unity before the world. Therefore no one who would belong to the people of God and be preserved with them from the death in which the world lies prostrate dares to despise this feast. And no one is to participate in it who is not one with them in faith even as no one dared participate in the Passover who was uncircumcised, and who had not given due heed to the prescribed cleaning. Thus the Lord's Supper draws the line of distinction sharply between the child of God and the world."

The Reu commentary goes on to draw the following parallel between the Old Testament Passover and the Lord's Supper: "The Passover was to strengthen Israel for the journey from

Egypt to the land of Canaan. The New Testament church is also a pilgrim band, whose destination is the heavenly Canaan. That its people may not perish or faint by the way, the Lord refreshes them and strengthens them with the gift of His body and His blood. Whoever neglects the Holy Supper must either be of the opinion that he can make the journey in his own strength or else despises the commandment of the Lord, who has appointed this means for strengthening His own, not leaving it to the individual to choose his own ways or means; or, finally, he does not sincerely believe that our life consists in journeying from this world into another world, saying rather

in his heart, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' . . . " (book cited, p. 280)

Pastor Fanning's series helped us grow both in understanding and appreciation of the practice of close communion. God through His Holy Spirit help us—within the fellowship of our like-minded Christian and confessional Lutheran brothers and sisters—to treasure this holy Sacrament as the special feast it is for our souls! As we sing in one of our hymns for Holy Communion:

This feast is manna, wealth abounding
Unto the poor, to weak ones power,
To angels joy, to hell confounding,
And life for me in death's dark hour.
(TLH #315:10)



A “Christmas” Graduation

At a brief ceremony in the Immanuel Lutheran College (ILC, Eau Claire, Wis.) Fieldhouse, tucked between Christmas Concert presentations, Eric Libby was graduated from the seminary department of ILC.

Mr. Libby has successfully completed the course of instruction at ILC Seminary, and is presented to the

Church as a candidate for the public ministry in the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

Due to the timing of his graduation, Mr. Libby is not being held in reserve for the spring meeting of the Assignment Committee on graduates.

With the notes of Scriptural song stirring our hearts, we thank the Lord



(l-r) Eric Libby, Prof. Steven Sippert, ILC President John Pfeiffer at the graduation

Meet Eric Libby:

Eric Libby, newest graduate of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary at Eau Claire, Wis., was born (7-30-77) into a pastor's family (Douglas and Heidi Libby of Mankato, Minn.). He attended parochial grade schools in Spokane, Wash. and Mankato, Minn. in preparation for Immanuel Lutheran High School, Mankato, and Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, from which he graduated in the class of 2000.

During his seminary years he vicaried at Sleepy Eye, Minn., and at Eau Claire, Wis. He and his wife Becky currently reside in Eau Claire as they await their first child this coming summer.

Editor's note: At our request, Mr. Libby submitted biographical information to introduce himself to our readers. We thank him. May the Lord of the Church soon grant his servant a Divine Call into the ministry of our church body.



The graduate with his father (r.) and Prof. Sippert

of the Church for His Christmas grace and blessings upon Eric Libby and upon us.

—Paul R. Koch, reporting



Announcements

AN INVITATION FROM THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ILC:

Professor David Lau has announced his retirement from the Faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. effective at the end of the current school year. Professor Lau served in the pastoral ministry from his ordination in 1960 until the summer of 1991, when he was installed as a member of the ILC Faculty. His long and faithful service to our church and our school will be acknowledged in part during the Class Day-Graduation festivities on the ILC campus May 20-21, 2005.

As is our custom, we would like to present a monetary gift to Professor Lau as a token of our appreciation. CLC members are invited to contribute to a "retirement purse" which will be presented to him in May. Please make your checks payable to Immanuel Lutheran College, and stipulate: "D. Lau retirement purse." Send your gifts to
Jim Sydow, ILC Business Manager
Immanuel Lutheran College
501 Grover Road
Eau Claire, WI 54701

—Pastor Vance Fossum,
ILC Regents chairman

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Thomas Schuetze, who was called by Faith Lutheran Church, Coloma, Michigan, to be its pastor, was installed on February 6, 2005.

—Pastor David Schaller,