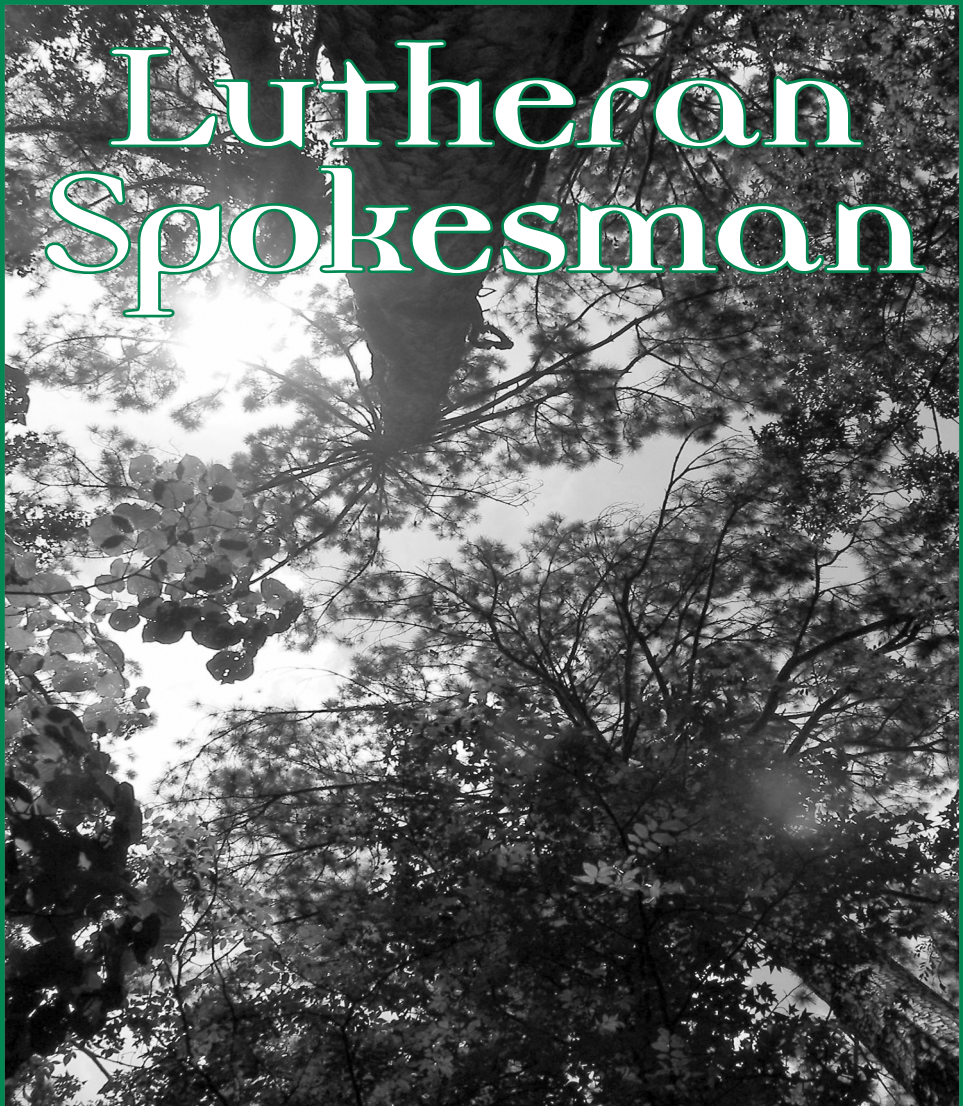




Lutheran Spokesman

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun...

Psalm 19:1-4

“BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL!”

“I forgot!” I don’t know how many times my parents and teachers heard those words as I was growing up. “Did you clean your room like I asked you to?” “I forgot.” “Did you read the English lesson you were assigned?” “I forgot.” It seemed to be a quick fix for any situation. SURELY I couldn’t be punished for something I forgot!

What might work as an excuse when we are teenagers will not fly when we are adults. When a report is due at work, “I forgot” is not acceptable to your boss. There are stories in the news of parents forgetting their child in the car on a hot day. The results of forgetting about a child in a hot car has horrible repercussions. “I forgot” is not an acceptable defense in court.

What about the LORD? How could we ever forget about Him? Sad to say,

it happens. Our lives are filled with endless distractions. The devil wishes for nothing more than to have us forget about the LORD. It is so easy to become consumed with the activities of the world that we forget about our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter.

The repercussions of forgetting the LORD are eternally horrible.

Our worship services help to keep us from forgetting. The symbols in our churches—such as the cross and the baptismal font—remind us of our salvation. More important than a symbol, however, is the Word of God by which the Holy Spirit Himself reminds us.

A Blessed Benefit Package!

King David writes in Psalm 103: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And for-

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get not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities....”

Much as we look for jobs with good benefit packages, the LORD has His eternally blessed benefit package. He forgives ALL your iniquities! Later on in Psalm 103 David expands on this forgiveness: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

The LORD is indeed merciful and gracious! He has the perfect benefits package for forgetful sinners. Go east and see when you meet the west. Go west and see when you meet the east. That is how far the LORD has removed our sins!

We extend a Divine Call to our pastors so that they might keep us from forgetting the LORD’s benefits. When we have confessed our sins to God, a pastor reminds, “Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto you all, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord

Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 16).

This is as if your pastor is saying, “You have confessed you are a miserable sinner and have called upon the LORD to forgive you for Jesus’ sake; now Jesus Himself commands me to tell you this—I HAVE to tell you this: He has forgiven all your sins, He has removed your transgressions from you!”

Reminded of the forgiveness earned for us by Jesus, we go on to bless the name of the LORD. Bless His name in our worship services! Bless His name in our daily lives! Bless His holy name with all that is within us! Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Oh, bless the Lord, my soul!
Let all within me join
And aid my tongue to bless His name
Whose favors are divine. Amen. (TLH #27:1)

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer



Debt...or No Debt?

“Deal...or no deal?” A recent game show manages to build considerable suspense around that simple question. At the start of the show, a contestant chooses one of twenty-six identical briefcases, the contents of which might be as much as one million dollars, or as little as one cent. Then, without examining the contents of the chosen briefcase, the other briefcases are opened, a few at a time, to show what amounts are taken out of play.

As this progresses, a “banker” sits

in the shadows and figures the odds that the chosen briefcase might indeed contain a million dollars. He calls the show host and tells him what he is willing to offer the contestant for that briefcase. The contestant is then faced with the choice: take the deal and sell that briefcase, or no deal, keeping the briefcase in hopes that it has a vast sum of money inside.

Contestants are typically asked what they would do with their winnings, if indeed they are high. Answers

range from the wild and extravagant, to simply “pay off my debts.”

Paying off debts might be attractive to a lot of folks. Some would like to burn a mortgage or do away with a car payment, while others find themselves struggling with stunning credit card debts or astronomical medical bills that loom over them day after day.

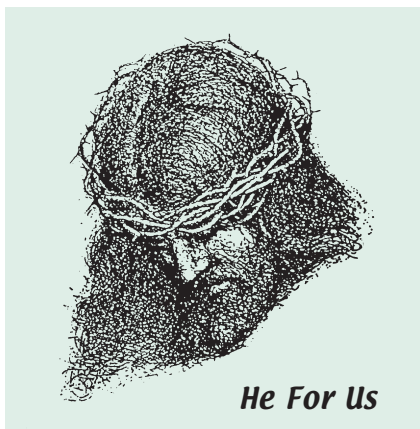
Many of us would simply welcome a chance at a show that asked the question “debt...or no debt?” But, that would be silly. Who would choose to remain in debt? Who would pass up the opportunity to have no debt?

Jesus told a parable of a servant who owed his master “ten thousand talents”—a talent was a large sum of gold or silver. This was an astronomical sum that he could not begin to repay, and it was ordered that he be imprisoned and his family be sold into slavery. The man fell on his knees, begging the master to give him time to repay. Instead, the master quite graciously forgave him the debt (Mt. 18.23ff).

But the debt Jesus had in mind was not gold or silver. In the Lord’s Prayer, as recorded by Matthew, the petition is made “forgive us our debts...” (Mt. 6:12). The debt referred to is that of sin—our offenses and failures before God; our lack of true righteousness. These accumulate before God as fast as our thoughts conceive sin, or our hands and lips work unrighteousness. Like interest compounding, one sinful act often leads to another.

And we would simply pray to God “forgive us our debts”? How daring is that?

But that is what the parable was about—a servant who owed a vast sum; a master who freely forgave that



debt, setting the servant free.

Debt Free—In Christ!

The apostle Paul was conscious of how pervasive that sin-debt is, even among well-meaning followers of the Lord such as himself. This is brought out in the epistle to the Romans: “Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good” (7:20-21). Our sinful nature is captive to sin: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:23-24)

How can one live with a debt like that hanging over his head? Who would choose to remain in such a debt?

But the good news is, there is One who does “deliver us.” Paul knows Him well: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). In Christ Jesus, God’s Son, we find complete forgive-

ness. It is based on absolute grace—totally unmerited love and forgiveness. Jesus is the answer to the debt that looms over us all.

Yes, in Jesus Christ, we are debt free—or are we?

There is another part to the parable Jesus told—the part about the first servant finding a fellow servant and attempting to wring a minor sum out of him (“pay me what you owe!”). This second one begged for mercy, but found none in the recently forgiven co-worker.

For Jesus this is a stupendous contradiction in the spirit of His people—to be forgiven, but not to forgive. Paul’s way of presenting it was in terms of escaping one debt—not to be free, but to become indebted to the Lord: “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh” (8:12). He doesn’t really finish that thought. It is not necessary to do so.

The whole tenor of the Christian life is one of gratitude and indebted-

ness. We have been freed from the debt of sin. In the Old Testament, the Psalmist asks “now what?” “What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people” (116:12-14).

A wonderful paradox of the Christian faith is that those who best understand that they have been freed from debt to sin are the most content to be indebted to the Savior, and for His sake, to one another. Paul again: “Owe no one anything except to love one another” (Rom. 13:8).

So, when—yes, when, and it’s not a game show, but the gospel proclamation!—we are presented with the question “Debt...or no debt,” consider carefully. To be free of the debt of sin—that’s good. To deny indebtedness to the Lord—that’s bad. To bear the debt of love toward God and man—that is supreme.

—Pastor Peter Reim



Columba: The Fox and the Dove

Online these days you can find both myth and fact about the Celtic Church and one great missionary, Columba. You might find much excellent material on several Celtic missionaries—and you could be ashamed or embarrassed, for those guys were good!

Christianity seems to have few missionaries now. Many clergy and their members seem to have trained themselves to want safety and coddling in their self-styled ministries. To be a

Celtic-type missionary today would be like going to northern Iran. Those men went out to people who did not want to be delivered from “error’s chain,” but whose lives were crying out for deliv-

erance. They faced severe hostility, yet by the grace of God their efforts produced fruit.

This was happening during the Dark Ages on the Continent. These men eventually went to France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, even down to the heel of Italy's boot! And harsh as pagan resistance was along the way, it was worse in Roman Church areas. Unlike the pagans, that decadent institution had twisted the Bible to form all kinds of false doctrines and arguments against the gospel. Missionaries were thus considered mavericks, loose cannons, even anarchists—because they would not come under the control of Rome.

The Celtic Church resisted Communion fellowship with Rome for centuries, until it was forced into it by the end of the first millennium. It was largely Irish (as was Columba by birth). Their work was so impressive that Thomas Cahill wrote a book about it titled *How The Irish Saved Civilization*.

Yes, Cahill admits that the words "Irish" and "civilization" hardly seem to belong in the same sentence. But they belonged together from the fourth to the ninth centuries. Dark on the Continent—but bright in the north and west.

Needed: Willing Missionaries!

Columba was at the heart of the mission thrust. Born in County Donegal in A.D. 521, his given Irish name was Crimthann (fox); later it was changed to Columba (Latin for dove). Though very sharp at first, he learned tenderness through Christ's Word and Sacraments. Born of royalty, Columba decided early on to serve Jesus rather

than become king of Tara.

Columba was preceded by several notable Celtic missionaries—men like Martin, Ninian, Piran, Patrick, and Finbar. They saw their callings as making missionaries out of their members.

Columba trained at Molville Abbey under the scholarly Finnian. By age 24 he had mission fever. In his early 30s he was noted for his devout Biblical preaching, and had founded missionary training centers. Life-long passions were: transcribing the Scriptures (that's how the missionaries got their own Bibles), teaching doctrine, and preaching the gospel.

The Celtic Church operated as a rural church; there were no big cities, hence no dioceses, no hierarchies, no power struggles. Presbyters, abbots, pastors and bishops were on the same level. In schools, liturgy, communion, prayer, teaching, preaching, theology, and missions were all tied together for all the people.

In A.D. 563 Columba and twelve men set out for the Island of Iona in Scotland (Pictland). In time their number grew to 120. They found Pictland to be a tough mission field, but God gave them success. Word of their work got around down on the continent; anxious men fled north, bringing many kinds of books from crumbling libraries. These the Celts added to their own Hebrew and Greek texts, and to their own Celtic histories and philosophies.

But as historian Charles Warr points out, "The only supreme authority Iona acknowledged was the Holy Scriptures, the Catholic (universal) Creeds, and Apostolic practice and example." The missionaries honored Jeremiah chapter 6 and held firmly to the "old paths" and

“the good way” (as continental Europe was saying “we will not walk in them”).

It would be a thousand years after Columba that God would bring Martin Luther onto the scene. By then the Celtic Church was long gone, absorbed into Roman corruption and superstition. By Luther’s day the errors against Scripture were so ingrained in society that it has been difficult to remove many

of them to this very day!

As we approach the brightness of the Day of the Coming of our Lord with all His saints and angels, may God provide us with willing missionaries—men bound to the Scriptures, men of vision, as well as church members with a sense of dedication and sacrifice.

—Pastor Emeritus Warren H. Fanning



Beauty of the Heart

The old saying claims, “Beauty is only skin deep.” Is that really true?

Most would probably agree that it is true, but a quick glance around the world might make us wonder. Entire industries have been built around the marketing of physical beauty. Nearly all of us spend a part of each year’s income to enhance our outward attractiveness. Skin creams, make-up, hair treatments, hair gel, jewelry...and the list goes on and on (for both men and women).

So it seems that what is being said is, “Beauty is only skin deep, but it is the skin that counts!”

Physical beauty is real. It is a gift from God. In giving us our physical bodies, God also gives us our outward attributes. The sacred writers point out that some of His children had the attribute of “good looks.” Rebekah, Isaac’s wife, was “very beautiful to behold” (Gen. 24:16). “Leah’s eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance” (Gen. 29:17). David was “ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking” (1 Sam. 16:12).

God gives all His gifts according to

His wisdom and will. Not everyone receives God’s gifts in like measure. Certainly, those who have any particular gift from God have no cause for personal vanity and pride.

When it comes to physical beauty and adornment, neither men nor women should pursue these things as a matter of sinful lust. To highlight beauty in order to create sinful desires is an abuse of God’s gift. The abuse of this gift is evident in the covetous demands for beauty that have infected society—and the lustful motives which are frequently associated with them. Such lusts are adultery and a sin before God. “I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her [or a woman at a man] has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:28).

True Beauty

Greater than any physical beauty is the gift of beauty that goes beyond the body’s surface. Whether a tabloid magazine would agree or not, to a husband or a wife the spouse is the most beautiful in the world. To fathers and mothers, their children are beautiful

whether handsome or not.

Speaking of true beauty, Peter wrote, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

The finest of facial features and the grandest of physiques will suddenly come to nothing when the body lies and rots in the grave. By contrast, the beauty of a heart at peace with God cannot be corrupted or destroyed. In the same chapter of 1 Samuel that describes David as handsome, God reminded Samuel, “The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

We all may have differing degrees of outward attractiveness, but our hearts, by nature, are equally ugly. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mk. 7:21-23).

The sinful, corrupt hearts with which all people are born turn beautiful in God’s eyes only when the individual looks to Jesus for forgiveness of sins. God took the sins of the world and placed them on His Son. He takes the holiness of His Son and gives it to sinners. When God looks at hearts clothed in Christ’s righteousness, it is a beautiful sight to behold!

One of our hymns speaks well when this is said: “Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress; Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head” (TLH #371:1). The beauty of a sin-stained soul that has been washed clean in the blood of Christ is a beauty that translates into an eternal beauty in heaven.

God surely does not disapprove of good care and grooming for outward appearance, but it is the inward beauty of a believing heart that is incorruptible and truly beautiful in God’s eyes. God warns against pride and lust, and against the danger that outward adornment may become one’s only beauty.

A person who finds his or her most meaningful beauty in the Savior of the world has the beauty of His righteousness. A person who is confident in the



Some Immanuel Lutheran High School grads, and parents:

Top left: Pastor & Mrs. David Reim,
son Benjamin

Bot. left: Mr & Mrs. Paul Meyer, son Benjamin

Above: Pastor & Mrs. James Albrecht, son Joel
(Story, p. 19)

forgiveness of sins through Christ, peace with God, and eternal life in heaven, is dazzling with the beauty of a

gentle and quiet spirit. This beauty is precious. It is beauty of the heart.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



The Discourses of Christ

The True Vine—John 15:1-8

Remaining in Christ

It was Maundy Thursday. Jesus and His disciples had just risen from the Passover table. In a little while they would cross the brook Kidron, a journey that for Jesus would lead to the cross.

There was not much time left for teaching, but Jesus used these last hours before His arrest in the garden to impress upon His disciples the importance of remaining in Him.

There is a proverb which says that repetition is the mother of learning; we rarely learn anything by hearing it only once.

We see the truth of this proverb in the words of Christ before us. Seven times He repeats the word “remain” (also translated “abide” or “continue”). He would soon be taken from them, and they would see Him crucified, dead, buried, then risen and ascending. And the disciples would no longer see Him and walk with Him as they had been doing.

But their vital connection with Jesus would not be broken. They were in Him by faith and needed to remain in Him.

Jesus’ disciples need to remain in

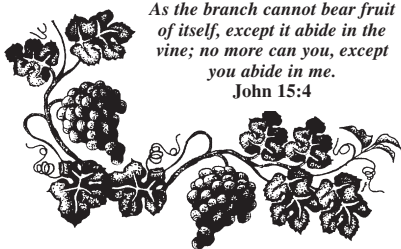
Him because He is the true vine. All other vines reflect what He is: the source of life to His disciples, the branches which by faith are connected to Him. By faith in Christ His disciples have the forgiveness of sins. “You are already clean,” Jesus says to them, “because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

As branches connected to the true vine, Jesus’ disciples have the benefit of the Father’s care, for He is the Vinedresser. The Father prunes the branches, skillfully removing whatever threatens their health and hinders their fruit-bearing. This is the fatherly discipline that God applies to believers—the trials of life that humble us, that lead us to repent of our sins and show us our dependence on Him.

Life and Power!

Jesus’ disciples need to remain in Him if they are to bear fruit. A branch cannot produce grapes if it is not connected to the vine. Indeed, a branch cannot go on living if it is cut off from the vine.

When we trim branches from a tree



or shrub, we are reminded of what Jesus says here. As we gather up the cut branches to dispose of them, they may appear green and healthy, but we know better. They were dead from the moment they were cut off, and their deadness will soon be apparent in dry and withered leaves.

So Jesus' disciples would be dead without Him, as He reminds: "Without Me you can do nothing."

Disciples who remain in Jesus have life and power from Him. As branches in the vine they bear fruit. And not just a little; they bear much fruit!

What is the fruit that Jesus' disciples bear? It is what elsewhere in Scripture is called the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23); "goodness, righteousness, and truth" (Eph. 5:9); "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb.

12:11). These are the Christ-like qualities the Holy Spirit works in believers by connecting them to Christ by faith. The Father is glorified when His Son's disciples bear good fruit.

Remaining in Christ gives disciples the privilege of prayer. Notice how this is expressed: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." We remain in Christ by continuing in His Word (John 8:31,32); that is what maintains and strengthens our vital connection to Him. As we grow in His Word, we learn more and more to desire and ask for what is pleasing to God and thus to see our petitions granted.

What Jesus says about remaining in Him is humbling. Life and strength—any good in us—must come from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These words are fatal to any ideas about what we might be or accomplish without Christ.

But what a gracious invitation we have here from Christ! He wants His disciples to remain in Him as branches in the vine, so that we will live and flourish with a life that will last forever.

—Pastor John Klatt



With graduating son Joshua, former missionary Paul Gurgel (second from right), wife Barb and other family members, together with an old friend from Africa, Martin Essien



Pastor & Mrs. Paul Tiefel with son Paul Tiefel III, who graduated from Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. with a BS degree in Education

The Perfect Revelation of the LORD

I have to admit that there is one good thing that comes along with running all over town to attend my children's ball games. Because the games often go into later hours of the evening, I have seen some fabulous sunsets.

This evening, for example, a storm system is moving in, with dark, glowering clouds down low, with high, mountainous peaks of fluffy white cumulus above; and here and there the sun's rays touch the edges with reds, oranges, and purples.

How quickly the opening words of this psalm of David come to mind—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork"!

It is impossible to miss, isn't it? How can anyone see what I have just described and not know there is a God? "Every house is built by someone," the Bible tells us; so also when one looks at creation it should be obvious that someone made it—and that "someone" who "built all things is God" (Heb. 3:4).

David draws attention to the sun as an example (see vv. 4b-6). Every day we see it making its journey across the sky; we are awed by "the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day." "The moon shines, too, at His command, And all the stars obey..." (see TLH #43:2)!

How evident are the "invisible attributes of God...even His eternal power and Godhead..." (Rom. 1:20)!

But we know that not everyone "sees" what we "see." For many, the wonders of the world are nothing more than the product of millions of years of

THE PSALMS *THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER BOOK*

—Please read Psalm 19—

random chance and evolutionary processes. Even though God's hand is so evident everywhere, many refuse to accept it—and "professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22).

The Word is Truth!

It is alone through the Word of God that the truth comes to light. Only when one comes to know the Lord as Savior can there be a full appreciation of Him as Creator.

The gospel alone reveals the love of God in Jesus Christ as Savior. No other place reveals to us lost mortals the answer to the sin which so easily ensnares us.

Only through the Word of God do we come to learn the wonder of it all—how God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son, and also that He loves us enough to give us this beautiful world to live in, to care for, and make use of.

How true it is, as David says of the revealed words of God—"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

As we look at the middle verses of this psalm (vv. 7-11), it may seem confusing that David uses terms such as "law" and "judgment" in the same

breath as phrases like “converting the soul” and “rejoicing the heart.” It may appear he confuses law (which condemns) and gospel (which saves). Yet David is only doing what we find elsewhere in the psalms (for example, Psalm 119). He is using terms we often limit to part of God’s Word to speak of the Word of God in its entirety—the whole revelation from God, which includes both law and gospel.

And when we understand David’s words as he intends them, we readily concur. God’s Word reveals the truth concerning creation and redemption. It condemns those enemies of God who “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever” (Rom. 1:25); and it “rejoices the heart” (v. 8) of those who have the

gospel-light shining on them.

Oh, how we pray with David (vv. 12-14) that this God—who has revealed His glory in creation, who has enlightened us in His Word to our lost condition by nature, who has revealed to us the salvation He has won for us through His Son—would continue to help us in our battle against sin, and that He would cleanse us from sin of every kind.

And then may “the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart” be filled with the love of God (the message which everyone around us needs to hear!), for certainly such words are “acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”

—Pastor Paul Krause



DAILY DEVOTIONS IN YOUR E-MAIL

From the Editor: *For about a year now we have been receiving these daily devotions. We heartily recommend them.*

The brief readings generally follow the church year. We find them to be a spiritually refreshing, gospel-oriented “balm of Gilead” for sin-burdened souls in the wilderness of this sin-sick, dying world.

Pastor David Schaller, one of the contributors to this six-days-a-week devotion, adds these details: “The pastors of the lower Michigan study conference invite you to subscribe to a free devotional e-mail list. Once subscribed, you will receive a short written devotion in your e-mail every morning except Sunday. These devotions are not official publications of the CLC, but they are written by a variety of CLC pastors to share with our members and others alike. To subscribe, visit: <http://www.redeemerccl.org/devotional.html> and look under “Daily E-Mail Devotions.”

Christian brothers and sisters, this is a FREE (“without money and without price”—Isaiah 55:1) service, which will only enlighten, enrich, and edify.

Herewith, some samples.

Monday, March 6, 2006

Mark 14:31 “But he [Peter] spoke more vehemently, ‘If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ And they all said likewise.”

BRAVADO DOES NOT EQUAL FAITH

How often we can hear or read the Passion History of our dear Lord Jesus and overlook important indicators of Scripture that are meant to teach us.

In the first section of the Passion History, Jesus tells the disciples they would all flee because of Him and what was about to happen. Peter, the bold one, and the others not to be outdone by Peter, proclaimed, “Though all should flee; I will not.” Peter may have thought this was faith speaking, and while well intentioned, his bravado before the storm was not faith. As the events of that Friday unfold, we see how little it took for Peter to stumble and fall.

On occasion one hears comments, “I don’t need to go to church to believe.” This may be true, yet the comment reveals not faith but bravado. Even so, if we think to ourselves, “I would never say that” or “I know that isn’t exactly true,” the bravado which we so often think is strength of faith shows itself when we fail to make use of that which *does* give strength of faith.

Why do we miss a church service? Why do we not attend Bible study? Why do we skip midweek services? Strength of faith? Are we not saying with bravado as did Peter and all the other disciples, “I will not forsake You!” only to stumble at the simplest of questions: “Are you not also one of His disciples?”

The Lord has with great love given us His Word, which is the means not of bravado, but for the strengthening of faith which we need daily, not once in a while.

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Mark 14:34-35 “Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.’ He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed...”

WATCH AND PRAY

The bravado we often mistake for strength of faith shows itself not just in words, but also in what we do. Thus, not only because our flesh is weak do we miss the means that give real strength of faith, but we also often misuse the time available for preparing ourselves spiritually.

Jesus takes the disciples into the garden, confesses to them that He is in agony of soul because of what lay ahead of Him. He bids His disciples to do what? “Watch with Me one hour.” This was not the first time that very evening He had encouraged His disciples to watch. Earlier, in His response to Peter and the others of their boast, Jesus encouraged them, “Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Jesus then leads by example. He goes off by Himself to pray—to watch and pray—that He Himself does not enter into temptation.

Here we see Jesus’ faith was not bravado. He could have reasoned within Himself, “I am the Son of God and I can handle anything.” Instead, recognizing the great dangers which lay before Him, the hour of darkness, Jesus turns in faith to His Father and prays.

Here we view one facet of faith: humility. Recognizing the dangers that lie before us and knowing that of ourselves we are unable to handle even the smallest of temptations, we turn to the Father and place ourselves in His care, under His wings—those almighty wings, spread over us in the pages of Scripture.

Wednesday, March 8, 2006

Mark 14:38 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

STAYING UP WITH JESUS

The bravado which is not faith further shows itself among the disciples in that during the critical hour they slept.

In all fairness and understanding, the disciples had been awake since Thursday morning and this now was just after midnight Friday. They had also just eaten a large Passover meal and had listened to Jesus' words before, during, and after that meal. It had been a long and surely an emotional day.

Yet we cannot think that the devil has so much compassion on us that he does not attempt to lie and deceive when we are tired. It is usually then that he presses home his temptations, when we are weakest. All the more reason then to remain awake to watch and pray that we fall not.

While we speak of the physical, it is the spiritual of which Jesus is speaking when He encourages us to watch and pray. It is far too easy for us—members and pastor alike—to fall asleep spiritually. We grow lax in our work, we grow sleepy in our study. "Members don't come. They don't listen." "Pastor's sermons are too long. They are not interesting enough. They do not apply to me." Becoming weary is not the fault of the members or the pastor, it is the individual's own failure to watch and pray, to fall asleep spiritually.

The devil does not take a holiday nor rest nor sleep, and his attacks are on the soul. "Rise, my soul, to watch and pray." Faith is not boastful, it is humble and prays. It is awake and alert. Stay up and watch and pray with Jesus.



CROSS PURPOSES



A HORROR STORY FROM ACADEMIA

...The next time someone says "I am a Christian," ask him: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of the world?"

It is no secret that public education as a system—we are not indicting all teachers in the system—is to a great extent anti-Christian. The common religion of public education is secular

humanism. Secular humanism makes man the measure of all things. When anti-religionists complain that they do not want religion in the public schools, they are either being disingenuous or

deceitful. Secular humanism is a religion. There is religion in the public schools!

Unfortunately, unless children have been well-grounded in the faith in their home and church—and even this is not a guarantee—when they move on to college many are frequently led away from the truth and subsequently from their faith. Others who dare to protest in defense of their faith are ridiculed, perhaps even threatened verbally, or have their grade docked.

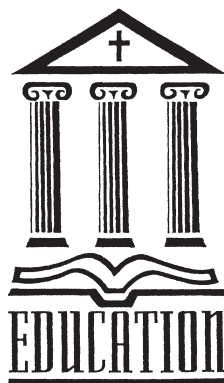
It is a mean world out there for Christ believers.

Recently an article from the *Houston Chronicle* was forwarded to us by a fellow Christian, with the caption, “This article will confirm your use of ‘Christ believer’.”

“Christ believer” is a term frequently used by this writer because the name Christian has been so abused. For example, a journalism professor at the University of Texas—he teaches your children, as well as the journalists of your local newspaper—said, “I don’t believe in God. I don’t believe Jesus Christ was the Son of a God that I don’t believe in, nor do I believe Jesus rose from the dead to ascend to a heaven that I don’t believe exists.”

“Given these positions, this year I did the only thing that seemed sensible: I formally joined a Christian church.” It was a Presbyterian Church.

That this professor was accepted into a Christian Church says something about the state of the Christian Church in the world today. This individual calls himself a Christian, “sort of.” He says that he is a “secular Christian” or a “Christian atheist.” He joined a Christian church because “clearly there’s an advantage to being



able to speak within a religious framework in the contemporary United States.”

By his own admission his act was political. In his conception of faith the professor says, “An atheist can be a Christian. A Hindu can be a Christian. Anyone can be a Christian...” For him, Islam can be Christian. Without going into his twisted explanation of this foolishness, we quote: “I joined a Christian church to be part of the hope for the future, to struggle to make religion a force that can help usher into existence a world in which we can imagine living in peace with each other and in sustainable relation to the non-human world.”

Besides the fact that this is not Christian, this intellectual does not have much hope. He hopes to “imagine” a world in which people live in peace with each other.

What Is A Christian?

Of what benefit is it to us to know what this professor said?

Substantively there is no benefit. But it does alert us to a few things. For example, when someone calls himself a Christian, what does it mean? Not all self-proclaimed Christians are

Christian! Further, while this man may be off the scale, anyone who thinks that there is not more of this anti-Christian drivel to which your children are exposed in the secular humanism factories had better wake up. Years ago we heard of a young man who was told in a secular institution that when he was finished there he would not believe any longer what he had been taught in his home, his church, and his Christian high school. We fear it turned out that way!

What is a Christian? A Christian is one who believes in the Triune God. He believes that Jesus is the Son of God who died for the sins of the world. He believes that heaven is his home and that entrance into the eternal home is through faith in the atonement and merit of Jesus Christ Who, having died, rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven, from whence He shall come again to take each Christ believer home.

The next time someone says "I am a Christian," ask him: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of the world?" In the 4th chapter of his first epistle, the apostle John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

How empty and vacuous is a world in which man is the measure of all things!

So ask yourself, "Where will I send my children to college?" Since so many influences affect where they attend college, bend every effort from early youth to bring them up in the Scriptures whereby the Spirit of God creates Christ believers. Fit them out with the whole armor of God that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6).

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



Thirty-two women from the Pacific Northwest CLC congregations of Gethsemane and Trinity (Spokane), St. John's (Clarkston), and Redemption (Seattle) gathered for fun, fellowship, and inspiration on March 18, 2006 at Gethsemane. "We studied God's Word as to how it relates to the Beauty of a Simple Life, When Less is More." (Linda Brincken, Sec'y)

Teacher David Bernthal was asked to deliver the address for a special Education Alumni service, July 16, 2005, at Faith Lutheran Church, Coloma, Michigan. We print an abbreviated version of the message.—

“Forgetting to be Wise; Learning to be Foolish”

It may seem out of place to be promoting foolishness over wisdom, especially in our day and age of higher education. We and our children attend institutions of learning to acquire this world’s wisdom, so why would anyone wish to forget it and become foolish?

The Lord gives us His perspective on this in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (please read the text).

Where has human wisdom led humanity so far? When God gave mankind Paradise on Earth, Adam and Eve—deluded by Satan—plunged themselves and all humanity into the delusion they could be as wise as God.

We see the results today, in couplings easily made and marriages just as easily broken, in lives aborted and euthanized. By the wisdom of man, homosexuality is considered simply a natural sexual progression. Evolution is accepted as a fact, and everything in the universe is reduced to bits of moving matter in an evolving cosmos. Man’s wisdom recognizes no Creator, no divine laws, and surely no need for a Savior from sin.

This worldly wisdom permeates the books we read and the movies we watch. Our children learn it in the public schools, and our universities are breeding grounds for humanism. Worst of all, this deadly worldly wisdom resides in each of us as well, for our own sinful nature clings to the teachings of the world and desires its wisdom. Guided by Satan, the human brain has

invented man’s own religions and his own paths to redemption. But none of them work.

Thanks be to God, He has rescued us from man’s worldly wisdom with His own divine foolishness.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” This stands in sharp contrast to the human way of redemption, where if you miss the mark, you have to try harder. If you can hit the target most of the time (or at least better than the other fellow), you tend to be satisfied.

But the God of the Universe demands perfection, not just effort. He requires perfect performance—not only sometimes, but each and every moment of our lives. And that, of course, is where human morality founders; sin has ruined any potential or possible human goodness.

God’s solution to the problem of sin is the cross of Jesus, which the world sees as a foolish notion.

Why would the Son of God leave His eternal honor, power, and dominion in order to take on the form of one of His servants? Why should Jesus humble Himself under the Law, keeping it in all points in a life of flawless faithfulness, and then pay for the sins of others by dying a holy death? And why should His righteousness be credited to others?

The righteous for the unrighteous? Almost unimaginable!

Yet that is exactly what the holy God has accomplished! Though it be sheer nonsense to those who are perishing, we are now His own! We have been given the ability to see and know the difference between the world's wisdom that leads to destruction and the "foolishness" of the cross of Christ, which is God's wisdom to eternity!

Our life's goal is to forget the wisdom of mankind and to rejoice in the "foolishness" of Christ, who teaches us that a stand for pure doctrine is never the wrong move.

Thinking Back...

We recall that the founding fathers of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) were not content to form a new synod but also made plans for the training of pastors and teachers. They were led by the encouragement, "Train up your child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 2:6). Their fellowship would need dedicated pastors, teachers, and lay people instructed by the Holy Spirit through His servants at a school.

And the Lord has richly blessed Immanuel Lutheran College from its beginnings in Mankato, Minnesota, and the current campus in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where we continue to apply God's wisdom for the laity, pastors, and teachers.

This congregation is listed among the

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founding members of the CLC. This congregation has sponsored daughter congregations in Sister Lakes and Grand Rapids, as our Lord Jesus encourages us to spread the gospel abroad and take on ourselves labors which others deem foolish.

In 1974 this congregation began a Christian Day School, understanding that a Christian school is more than a public school with Bible stories added in. You have provided opportunity for your children to sit at the feet of their Savior hour after hour during the day, learning the one thing needful.

In a Christian school every subject is taught from a Christian perspective. Learning in a Christian school encourages the individual to be the best possible tool in the hands of the Savior.

How do we calculate the success of a Christian school? The apostle Paul



It's a moving thing—the ILC Graduation Day procession of faculty and graduates down the walk-way for the auditorium festivities.

tells the Corinthians that he planted the seed of the Word and Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the increase. The Lord does not instruct us to teach and preach until we see results, but simply to teach and preach, then let the Lord handle the results.

In our decisions of the future, shall we continue to stand up for the pure Word of God and His teachings? Will we proclaim the saving name of Jesus out loud to someone in the barbershop or at our work place or over a cup of coffee with a friend? How about inviting that friend or neighbor to your worship service? He may be dying to hear the Word of God from a friend.

What about re-evaluating your use of time and talents in the Lord's service? If you are afraid that you haven't the training or that you're not good in those situations, then you are ready for the job. The Lord has work for you, too: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not

many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things that are despised God has chosen, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:26-30).

The world will never see us as the wise ones, but we know that we are the chosen ones. Chosen not only to believe in the wonderful "foolishness" of the cross that has already saved us, but chosen to carry that message to all whom the Lord sends our way.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the ability to recognize and take advantage of each opportunity as it comes! In Jesus' name! Amen!



From the back row...

**at the closing concert and graduation ceremonies at Immanuel
Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin**

Each year it's the same difference—everyone's a year older, and some faces are no longer seen in the Field-House at the concert or at graduation. And the graduates (so everlastingly youthful!) take their places among the ranks of those who have gone before, little pieces that fit together to make the big picture—to borrow a phrase from President Pfeiffer's address to the assembly.

All God's children need training to

get the big picture, said the keynote speaker, the one created for them by their heavenly Father/Creator, and to see how they fit into it individually. The Creator of the universe has picked each of us—undergraduate or graduate as we may be—to assume our place in the big picture. As the Lord revealed this to Isaiah: "This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise" (Isa. 43:21), so the apostle



Immanuel High School Graduates

Peter echoed this same heart-humbling truth, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV).

We listen, we hold our breath, we thank our God, we turn to the Light, and we step forward to serve Him. Each year it’s the same, and each year it’s different.

“From thorns to Throne” was the theme of the closing sacred concert on Friday evening, and we enjoyed the same message which we repeat to ourselves every blessed day: “Glory be to Jesus!” “If you but trust in God to guide you” was but one of the heartening messages brought to the audience by our young singers. Perhaps the entire concert will appear on tape for those who want to hear it again.

As to graduation: one seminary graduate was presented to the Church as spokesman for the Lord Jesus: Matthew R. Ude, who will become the pastor to succeed Arthur Schulz at Trinity congregation of Millston, Wisconsin.

Three graduates from the four-year Bachelor of Science program were granted their diplomas, and six graduated from the two-year Associate of



Pastor Arthur Schulz wishing Matt Ude, his successor, well.

Arts degree program of the college department.

Thirty-one ILC High School seniors shared in graduation honors, handshakes, hugs, and congratulations. No doubt a good percentage of them will return to our lovely campus and familiar classrooms to continue their preparation for life, and all will find their places in God’s big picture.

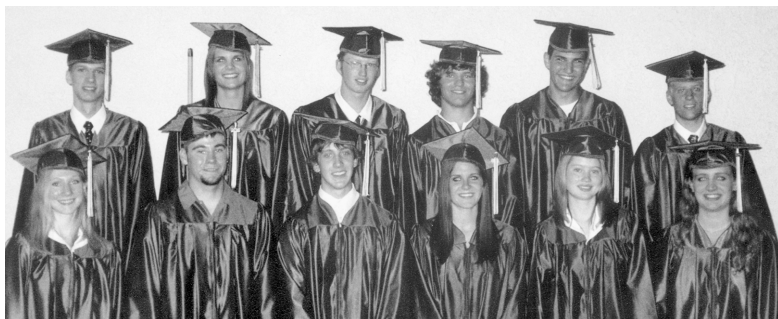
Let me tell you, the ILC student body is blessed with musical talent, intellectual vitality, and spiritual gifts! The music of trumpets, flutes, piano, pipe organ, and choirs was enough to set ears ringing and hearts vibrating. Even the back row was a good place to be—at our Alma Mater, Immanuel Lutheran College of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

See you there sometime soon!

—Paul R. Koch

Mankato Immanuel

Graduation 2006



On the first New Testament Pentecost, the sound of a rushing wind seized the people's attention and "divided tongues as of fire" sat upon each of the apostles (Acts 2:3) as they proclaimed the "wonderful works of God" in the native languages of everyone gathered there (Acts 2:11).

By the end of the day many people had heard the gospel, 3,000 were baptized, and those who heard carried the message back to their homeland. Pentecost was an amazing event in the early days of the New Testament church—a day marked by the Holy Spirit giving gifts to the apostles—and the apostles, in turn, using those gifts for the furtherance of the gospel.

Pentecost (June 4, 2006) at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota was a festive remembrance of the Holy Spirit's outpouring in centuries past, but it also included a unique celebration of the Spirit's on-going gifts among the people of God.

The day was also Graduation Day at Immanuel Lutheran High School (ILHS). In the afternoon commencement service, congregation and guests were able to celebrate and thank the

Lord for the gifts which He has given to the twelve seniors.

Mr. Jay Sydow, commencement speaker, urged the graduates to "Stay Focused on Your Way Home." He based his message on Colossians 3:1-4. Mr. Sydow called upon the graduates and the assembly to remember the importance of setting our minds on things above, using our God-given gifts to serve Christ, always keeping our hearts and minds focused on the goal—eternal life with our Savior in the glories of Heaven.

Mr. Sydow's address was his last opportunity to speak formally to students he has taught for the past five years. He has resigned from the faculty and will relocate to South Carolina where he will be married this summer. The school and congregation thanked Mr. Sydow for his faithful service.

MacKenzie Friedrichs spoke on behalf of the graduating class. He thanked the teachers for helping the students develop their gifts; the parents for their ongoing support in so many ways; the congregation for providing a school for Christian education. He urged his classmates to enter the next

season of their lives with thanksgiving and zeal as they seek to further develop and use the gifts God has given them.

As the voices of the graduates rang through the sanctuary while singing their class hymn (*The Potter's Hand*, Darlene Zschech), the words beautifully captured the day's message from God's Word and sent the graduates forward with prayer:

Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior,
I know for sure all of my days are held in
Your hands,
Crafted into Your perfect plan.
You gently call me into Your presence guiding me by Your Holy Spirit;
Teach me, dear Lord, to live all of my life through Your eyes...
Take me, mold me, use me, fill me.
I give my life to the Potter's hand.
Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me;
I give my life to the Potter's hand.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



With the Lord—

Harvey H. Callies (1918-2006)

On Saturday, May 27, 2006, the Lord Jesus took to Himself the soul of Harvey Henry Callies, member of Messiah Lutheran congregation of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, closing his earthly sojourn of eighty-seven years, five months, and twenty-one days.

During this long pilgrimage the Lord enabled Harvey to serve Him and others in various capacities—including his WWII military career (USA, Africa, Brazil), many years as employee in what is now known as Verizon Communications, service in the CLC Limited Ministry (Winner, S.Dak.), managing the CLC Videotape Ministry (15 yrs), conducting Messiah's Sunday Chapel services at the local health care facility (10 yrs), serving as CLC Statistician (20 yrs); and for shorter periods operating a print-shop at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, as well as managing the CLC Book House on the campus.

Harvey and Edna (Niermann) married in Seattle, sharing their lives for sixty years; they were blessed with



Harvey & Edna Callies

many gifts, including five children and eight grandchildren.

Harvey's mortal remains at Rest Haven Cemetery now await the word from Jesus to share in the victory already enjoyed by his soul. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Pastors of Messiah Lutheran Church, Paul Tiefel and Mark Gullerud, conducted the committal and church funeral services ("The Victory Service of Harvey Henry Callies" on May 31); sermon text was John 14:1-3; theme: "The ascended Lord's everlasting preparations for Harvey Callies."

—Paul R. Koch, reporting

—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions

September, 2006

*Every page and almost every verse of the Epistles bring Jesus into the picture. Especially the **Apostle Peter** reveals that true, godly sanctification flows from a heart imprinted with Jesus.*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Thought gleaned from the text</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	2Peter 1:1-15	His divine power has given us all things	38
2	2Peter 1:16-21	His light shines in a dark place	290
3	2Peter 2:1-11	There will be false teachers among you	462
4	2Peter 2:12-22	Their end is worse than the beginning	20
5	2Peter 3:1-9	The Lord is not willing that any perish	352
6	2Peter 3:10-18	What manner of persons ought you to be	612

*As God's people in **Corinth** lacked much in holy conduct, the Spirit mentored them via the Apostle Paul, guiding them along through one crisis after another—with wisdom from their Lord and Savior.*

7	1Corinthians 1:1-17	God is faithful, by whom you were called	244
8	1Cor. 1:18-31	God's wisdom vs. man's brains is no contest	366
9	1Cor. 2:1-16	We have received the Spirit who is from God	609
10	1Cor. 3:1-11	We are God's fellow workers in God's field	46
11	1Cor. 3:12-23	You are the temple of God, holy and precious	467
12	1Cor. 4:1-13	What do you have that you did not receive?	485
13	1Cor. 4:14-21	Rich reminders of the ways in Christ	408
14	1Cor. 5:1-8	A little leaven leavens the entire lump	410
15	1Cor. 5:9-13	Do you not judge members of the church?	416
16	1Cor. 6:1-11	But you were washed, sanctified, justified	422
17	1Cor. 6:12-20	Glorify God in your body and in your spirit	447
18	1Cor. 7:1-9	It is better to marry than to simmer with lust	624
19	1Cor. 7:10-16	Marriage principles not found in the Gospels	625
20	1Cor. 7:17-24	Live as God wishes in your daily conduct	295
21	1Cor. 7:25-40	The Christian woman: married/single/engaged	348
22	1Cor. 8:1-13	Love for others governs our conduct	464
23	1Cor. 9:1-12	The apostles sublimated their "rights" to love	535
24	1Cor. 9:13-18	The gospel minister has a sacred trust	493
25	1Cor. 9:19-27	Everything measured by love for lost souls	499
26	1Cor. 10:1-13	Bible events were recorded for our benefit	290
27	1Cor. 10:14-22	Choose your fellowship: Jesus or Satan	314
28	1Cor. 10:23-11:1	Let each seek the other person's well-being	412
29	1Cor. 11:2-16	Headship as reflected in social norms	621
30	1Cor. 11:17-34	Holy communion can be marred by sinfulness	306



Announcements

GREAT LAKES PASTORAL CONFERENCE

September 19-21, 2006

Faith Lutheran Church, Coloma, Michigan

Agenda:

1. Book Review: Boundaries in Marriage (Cloud/Townsend) — Pastor David Naumann
2. Church History: Luther at the Wartburg — Pastor Timothy Holland
3. Were Circumcision and the Passover Old Testament Sacraments? — Prof. Em. David Lau
4. Resources for Teaching Our Sunday School Teachers How to Teach More Effectively — Pastor Philip Matzke
5. Interpretation of Catastrophes — Pastor David Schaller
6. A Study of Excommunication — Pastor Michael Eichstadt
7. Methods For Teaching Adult Bible Class — Attending ILC Professor
8. New Testament Exegesis (Romans 2:5ff.) — Pastor Joel Fleischer
9. Old Testament Exegesis (Daniel 2ff.) — Pastor Thomas Schuetze

Conference Chaplain: Pastor Gordon Radtke

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor Mark Bernthal

—Pastor David Schaller, Secretary

“Information”

The Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference Secretary sent the information below belatedly “in case anyone would like to contact any of the pastors for a copy of their paper.” —Ed

The Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference met at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Spokane, Washington, May 2-4, 2006. The following papers were presented:

- Old Testament Exegesis of Psalm 2:1-7 — Pastor Paul Naumann
- “A Red Herring In The Fellowship Doctrine” — Pastor Emeritus Bertram Naumann
- “What Is The Proper Role of Polemics In Preaching?” — Pastor Caleb Schaller
- New Testament Exegesis of 1 Peter 1:1-2 — Pastor David Reim
- “Luther on Angels, Devils, and The Devil” — Pastor Terrel Kesterson



**Poster at Synod Convention in June.
Next month is our Convention issue.**

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