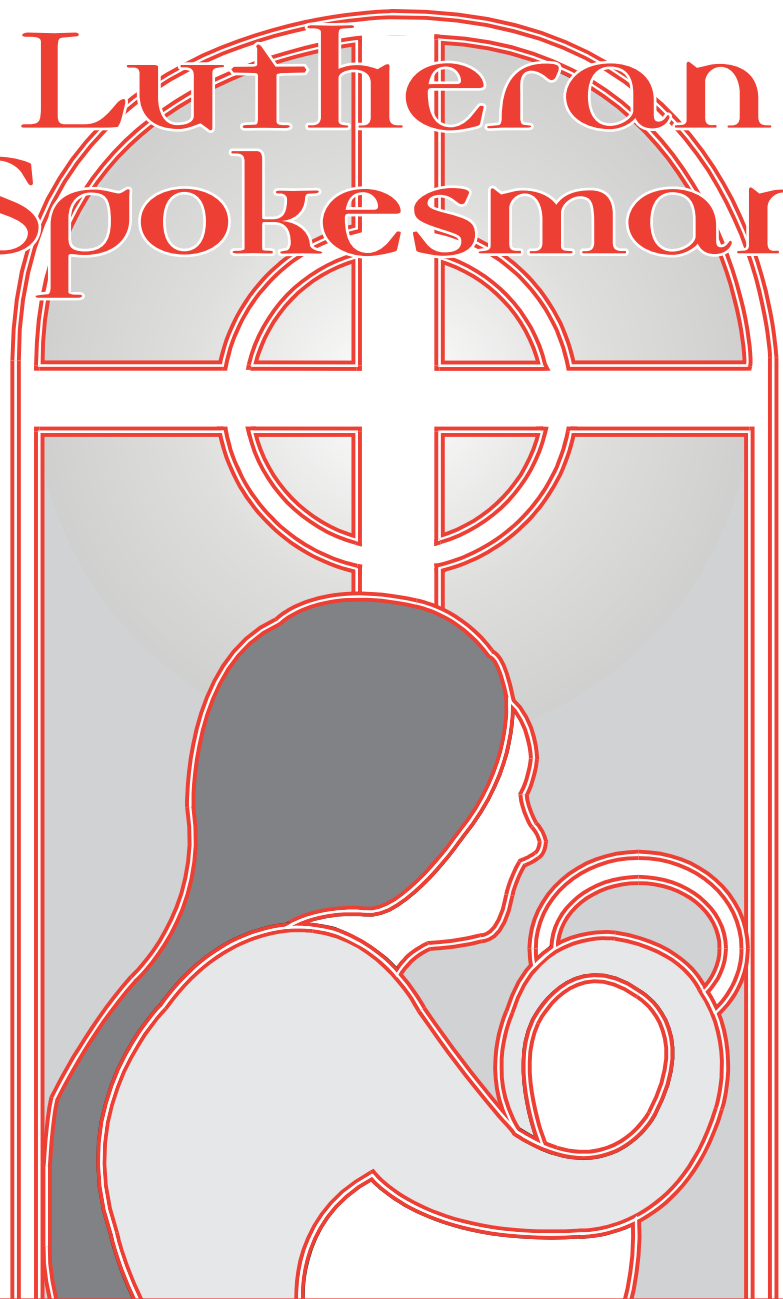


Lutheran Spokesman



"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

“But when the fullness of the time had come...” (Galatians 4:4).

Too Early for Christmas?

I heard a D.J. on the radio the other day complaining about how early the Christmas decorations go up in stores every year. Each year I seem to hear people make comments about the holidays being pushed earlier and earlier.

I myself have been known to lament the commercialism/exploitation of Christmas, threatening even to cancel the gift-giving side of it one year. (This is possibly why my children purchased a pair of “Grinch” socks for me that particular Yuletide.)

But all this begs a question. Can Christmas come too early? We know by the passage cited above that Jesus was born at the right moment, “when the fullness of the time had come...”—or as a contemporary translation has it: “But when the time was right...” God gave to us His Son.

What were you doing nine months

ago? Thinking about Christmas? With the possible exceptions of a Christian Day school teacher that has to write his own Christmas Eve Service or a Type A personality Christmas shopper, not many of us think much about Christmas that early.

Yet if we were to assume Jesus was born on the 25th of December, do you remember what was happening in (say...) April? Our Lord and Savior, present and participant at creation, was being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of His mother Mary! Nine months for the infant Jesus to grow and draw nourishment from his mother; nine months for Mary and Joseph to prepare themselves for the task of being the parents of the only Son of God.

God allowed these nine months for the Roman Empire (virtually most of the civilized world!) to prepare to liter-

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ally revolve around the birth of this child, our Savior.

Ever Earlier Plans!

Nor was this the earliest of plans that God had made for His Son's arrival—not by a long shot! Remember when Moses, many generations before Christ, addressed the Children of Israel, saying, “God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst”? That was a Christmas preparation! The Children of Israel knew that the One who was to be born would take away the sins which had separated them from their loving Father.

And hundreds of years before Moses, God had spoken of His Christmas plans to our spiritual father, Abraham. “In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”—a message to give comfort to God's people for their salvation and to remind them that this message is indeed for ALL people.

Just how early can one plan for an event? We know that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were prepared by God for Christmas more than 4,000 years before “the fullness of the time” would come. Yes, their sin of rebellion hung heavily upon them, yet they could look into the face of a loving God, knowing this blessed event would occur in God's good time.

But this still wasn't early enough for God! The Scriptures clearly teach



us that in eternity our loving and merciful Triune God had the plan of our salvation worked out. Christ would be born, live, and die for rebellious man. The Holy Spirit would give faith to trust in His redemptive work and strength to live according to God's will.

Christmas was indeed a long time coming!

Because of God's plan—His Christmas which He gave to mankind at just the right time—we may have Christmas every day in our hearts. Similarly, for Christians every day can be and is Thanksgiving, Pentecost, Easter, Ascension Day, and all the blessed promises of our Lord fulfilled!

So, when I see Christmas decorations go up early in the future, I am going to see if I can't take the opportunity to say to someone, “May I tell when and why Christmas was really prepared?”

—Teacher David W. Bernthal



In His Hands

He's got the whole world in His hands. So says the familiar spiritual. The same thought has been

expressed in a picture of a globe resting in a pair of hands.

It is a comforting thought for the



believer: no matter what evil forces seem to be running the world, God is still ultimately in control. In his commentary on Ephesians, E. K. Simpson makes this point in a striking way, saying that “ours is not a ramshackle universe.” It is not to be compared to an abandoned house that is slowly deteriorating and falling apart because of neglect.

Ours is a world fallen into sin because of disobedience. Yet into this fallen world God intervened with His grace. He sent His own Son into the world so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The victorious Son now sits at God’s right hand and governs the world for the benefit of the Church. He makes all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:32).

In the account of Jesus’ birth we see God intervening in history to fulfill His promises and accomplish His gracious purposes. “And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1).

The evangelist connects the birth of Jesus to an event in history—a decree from the center of worldly power. It was a decree that set the Roman empire in motion, with people traveling to their ancestral homes in order to

register for taxation.

God In Charge!

All that movement included one seemingly insignificant trip in a remote region of the empire. Joseph and Mary traveled from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem, because Bethlehem was the city of David, and Joseph was of the house and lineage of David.

When Mary gave birth to her first-born son, it had to be in Bethlehem, for God had long before spoken through the prophet Micah that the Christ would be born there. The Son of David must be born in David’s city to show that He was the true heir to David’s throne, the one who would “order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forth, even forever” (Isa. 9:7).

Christmas teaches us that God is able to move kings and empires for His own purposes. It shows us that it is His grace, His love for a fallen world, that moves Him to intervene so powerfully in human affairs.

This assurance reassures us who live today as believers in a fallen world. Our world is full of evil, violence, suffering. Yet it is not spinning out of control. God is still firmly in charge, and the divine hand that moves, controls, and restrains is the hand of a gracious God. To save us He did not spare His own beloved Son.

The same Savior-God will also surely order and direct all things for our eternal welfare. Jesus assures His believers that they are in the Father’s hand, and that no one will be able to snatch them from that safe place (John 10:29).

—Pastor John Klatt



Advent:

Christ Came—Comes—Is Coming

As a novice driver I was warned by my father not to spend too much time staring in the rear-view mirror. When you are driving, it's important to be aware of what's going on behind you; yet a driver must be focused primarily on what is going on around and in front of the vehicle.

In a rather limited way, that is an illustration of what the season of Advent is about. The word “advent” means “coming.”

First, we look in the rear-view mirror. We look at how Christ came. John writes that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Son of God came, born of the virgin Mary. He came to be our substitute. He came to be our righteousness. Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. He came to die as a sacrifice to God for our sins. He came to rise again for our justification. He came to open heaven for us. He came to be our Savior—and it all began with a manger in Bethlehem.

Furthermore, when driving it is important to be aware of your surroundings. Advent is not just about looking in the rear-view mirror, but also about looking at our surroundings. As we “drive” through this world, around us we see many things that endanger us. However, Christ our Lord has not abandoned us. He continues to come to us today to provide peace for our troubled hearts. He comes to us in the gospel. He comes to infants and adults in baptism. He comes to communicants “in, with, and under” the



bread and wine. In all these ways He comes to assure us that all is well between us and God.

However, Advent does not end here! Even as we look ahead while driving, even so in Advent we look forward. Christ promises to come again. When He first came to this world He came in humility. He continues to come to us through the Means of Grace.

Christ's coming on Judgment Day will be quite different. In Matthew 25 He tells us, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.” He will come in all the glory that is His as true God. As the angels were present at His birth, so they will be with Him when He comes again. But when He comes the second time, it will be to “judge both the quick and the dead.” For us, this means salvation: “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

What a blessed season Advent is in the Christian church year—

- We look back and consider the tremendous the love of God as Christ came to redeem us.

- We consider the love of God as Christ continues to come to us assuring us of our redemption.

• We consider how Christ will come to take us from this vale of tears to enjoy eternal life with Him, our loving God and Savior.

Say to those who are fearful hearted,

“Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come and save you” (Isa. 35:4).

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer



“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.’” —Hebrews 10:5-7

The Christmas Story According to Jesus



Have you ever read the Christmas story according to Jesus? I don't mean the Christmas story according to Luke, or Matthew, or John, but the Christmas story from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself!

Wouldn't it be great if we could bring back the people that took part in the first Christmas and be able to hear them tell us the stirring account? Mary could tell us of her feelings when the angel appeared to her, of her visit to Elizabeth, of the birth of Jesus, of the visit of the shepherds. But wait, we have that history already recorded in God's Word!

What if we could interview the shepherds? They could give us the details surrounding the angel's appearance; they could tell us about their excitement as they ran to Bethlehem and as they spread the Good News. That, however, is also unnecessary, for we have it recorded for us in the Scriptures!

What about Joseph? What thoughts did he have as the angel announced to

him that his fiancé was expecting a child by the power of the Holy Spirit? Well, we have his thoughts and actions also recorded in the Bible!

But what about Jesus? Where are we going to find the story of His feelings, His thoughts? In the Christmas story according to Jesus found in Hebrews 10:5-7 (a quotation from Psalm 40:6-8)! Here Jesus clearly states His reason for being given a human body. He says, “I have come to do Your will, O God.”

And what was the will of the Father? It was that Jesus would be the perfect sacrifice, the perfect offering for the whole world. In the tenth chapter of Hebrews the author contrasts the sacrifices that took place in Israel before the coming of the Messiah (Christ) with His great and final sacrifice. In the Old Testament the sin offerings and burnt offerings testified to the people that God would accept them only on the basis of the death of a perfect, innocent substitute.

The burnt offerings and sin offer-

ings in themselves meant nothing. They simply pointed ahead to the One who would be the perfect sacrifice. In that context the author to the *Hebrews* quotes Psalm 40:6-8. He is showing the contrast between the Shadow of the Old Testament and the Reality of the New.

Note the Contrast!

The Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem to be our substitute Savior, to die as a sacrificial payment for our sins. We miss the most important message of Christmas if we fail to see the Cross!

Modern liberal scholars would have us believe that Jesus had no idea of His person or purpose, suggesting that Jesus was “caught off guard” by the events surrounding His suffering, death, and crucifixion. Like a pawn in a chess game He was not in control. No! Jesus knew the plan; He was in full agreement with it and accomplished His Father’s will!

Jesus could do this because He was unlike every other person in all of history. He was the God-Man in one Person. As Man He was placed under the Law of God and kept it perfectly, and as God His perfect obedience has been applied to us. As Man He could die upon the cross as our substitute, and as God His death paid the infinite price necessary for our salvation. And He did all of this willingly.

Wonder of wonders, Jesus delighted to do His Father’s bidding even though it meant suffering, death by crucifixion, and damnation. He delighted to do it because He knew that He was redeeming the whole world of sinners.

No wonder the angels were so joy-filled as they announced the good news to the shepherds—they were announcing the news that a Savior was born who would be delighted to accomplish man’s salvation, to bring about peace between God and sinful mankind.



**Sunday School
children at Faith,
St. Louis, Mo.
posed for a nativity
scene last
Christmas**

We too will be filled with joy and happiness as we meditate again on this Christmas account according to Jesus—how He willingly came into this world and lovingly obeyed His Father’s will! What perfect love! What a perfect Savior!

That is why the Christmas story is alive and so relevant some 2,000 years later. The One who came as that little Baby is the God-Man, the same Savior who still comes into the hearts of His children today through the work of the Holy Spirit in His Word.

“How silently, How silently,
The wond’rous Gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in. (TLH #647:2)

May the Holy Spirit humble us with a repentant faith so that with meek hearts we receive our Savior, Christ the Lord.

—Pastor Mark Bernthal (Vice
President of the CLC)



“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

A GIFT UNIQUELY WRAPPED

Christmas gift-giving is appropriate when we realize that it is meant to focus attention on the fact that we have received from God the most marvelous Gift ever given.

How a gift is wrapped can say something about the giver. This is true also in a spiritual sense. God’s gift to mankind in the mangerbed came wrapped in a most thoughtful and unique way—in the garb of humanity and in a divine plan.

...In the Garb of Humanity

St. Paul reports, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...” (Gal. 4:4) In the 2nd chapter of Luke we read how an angel suddenly appeared to the shepherds, saying: “I bring you good tidings . . . for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior . . . you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” What an incredible way for God to come to men—born of

a woman and wrapped in swaddling cloths, the first-century equivalent of diapers.

Other religions of the world have spoken of gods visiting the Earth. Christianity stands alone in its claim that God not only visited our planet, but that He actually became a man! St. Paul writes: “...Being in very nature God . . . He emptied himself, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...” (Php. 2:6-7).

The fact that God’s “indescribable gift” was wrapped in the garb of human likeness brings with it many comforting truths. Jesus did not just pretend to be a man. He WAS and IS a man. This means, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it: “For because He himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted” (2:18).



Because Jesus was and is real man, He is able to understand and help in our every need. He came to bear our infirmities and sicknesses (Heb. 4:15). We could say of Jesus that He can relate to our problems because He “walked in our moccasins”—He shared and is sharing in our hungers and thirsts, our pains and disappointments, our burdens and sorrows. Plainly put, He knows very well what we are going through, whatever our situation or circumstances.

...In a Divine Plan

Also unique about God’s Christmas gift is that it came wrapped in a divine plan. The angel appeared to Joseph, saying: “. . . You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21).

According to some other religions, when their gods visited the Earth, they often did so to punish somebody for offending the god(s).

Unique to Christianity is the fact that God’s Christmas Gift in the person of His Son was not for the purpose of punishing sinners but for rescuing them from the perils of sin and its ugly wages. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:18). “Since the children have flesh

and blood, He too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb. 2:14f). Jesus was “born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5).

And doubt not the Savior had a clear sense of the purpose of His mission to Earth! Standing on trial before Pontius Pilate, He said: “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (Jn. 18:37). Jesus knew He was born to die—to die an innocent death on the cross, suffering the curse and penalty sinners deserved. He once told His disciples: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (Jn. 12:24).

Centuries before Christ’s birth, the Father had pointed to this divine plan. Through the prophet Isaiah (ch. 53) God declared that One would come who would be a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” One who would be “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities,” One through whom poor sinners would be made whole.

Truly, if how a gift is wrapped says something about the giver, this uniquely wrapped Christmas gift can only lead us to exclaim with the apostle: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable Gift!”

—Pastor Paul Fleischer

What's in a Name?

The names of Jesus Christ our Lord—
There's many to be found;
Throughout the words of Holy Writ
The names of Christ abound.

What's in a name? In this case much
For each describes God's Son,
And everything He came to do
For sinners, everyone.

"Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel!"
We sing with all our heart.
God with us, come and stay with us;
Remain and ne'er depart.

For without You we cannot live
Our hope is gone, we're lost;
That's why You came to be with us
And pay what our sins cost.

So stay with us at home, away,
Console us in our fear.
Watch over us and keep us safe
Until we're finished here.

Oh come, Thou Rod of Jesse, come,
Spread forth Your branches wide;
That they may cover all the Earth
We pray this Christmastide

For though You were a tiny sprout—
One born of David's line—
You are indeed the Son of God,
The Savior of mankind.

So Jesse's Son, please come to us
As Man and yet true God.
We need Your life, we need Your strength
While here below we trod.

"Oh come, Thou Dayspring from on high,"
Each day shine in our heart;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of sin;
Death's shadows will depart.

We want each day to start with You,
As with the morning star.
Come, shine through everyone of us,
At home and then afar.

For there's no light in all the world
Except for this bright Sun,
Which will not be extinguished 'til
Both heav'n and Earth are done.

"Oh come, Thou Key of David, come."
Unlock the door of life,
And fasten tight the gate of death
Of misery and strife.

You are the Key to life with God;
May everybody see
Without You we cannot reach God
Nor from our sins be free.

But Satan's prison You have razed
And we have all been freed.
You are the Key for all mankind,
The blessed Woman's Seed.

Be with us now throughout our life,
Grow in our heart and stay
To guide us ever as our light
Unto that perfect day.

About this poem — *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel* (Hymn #62 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*) is a well-known twelfth century hymn. The names used in this hymn are Emmanuel (God with us), from Isaiah 7:14; Rod (Branch) Of Jesse, from Isaiah 11:1; Dayspring (Morning Light), from Luke 1:78; Key of David, from Revelation 3:7.

—Rev. L. D. Redlin

***Some pictures of work among the Masai tribe in
the last few months Missionary Koenig***



**“Only 10% of
the Masai are
Christian.
The book they
have is the cat-
echism in their
language.”**

**“The Masai
tribe herds
cattle in the
Rift Valley of
East Africa”**



**“These are
among our
sister church,
the CLC of
East Africa”**

**“Masai work is
also carried on
in the LCEA
(Tanzania) and
the CLCK
(Kenya)”**



The Discourses of Christ

The World's Hatred—John 15:18-25

The World Invades the Church—Beware

Please take your Bible and read the above verses. And take several minutes to read also chapters thirteen through seventeen.

It makes you feel as if you are right there with the disciples in a very important meeting. There's the Supper, then the foot-washing, then some solemn warnings, tender admonitions, plus encouragement to pray.

The whole session is encased in Jesus' love and compassion for His disciples and for us today.

The aim was to give strength for mission outreach. Some terrible hours lay ahead for the disciples—then the joy of Jesus' rising, the commission, His ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Then they went out into “the world.”

In the middle of these five chapters Jesus says: “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (15:18). And He ends this section at verse 25 with a quote from Psalm 69:4: “They hated Me without a cause.”

Notice that in these chapters Jesus refers several times to Satan as the ruler of this world. Martin Luther makes the point that whereas the Church is the Bride of Christ, the World is the Bride of Satan. And whereas Jesus uses the gospel in Word

and Sacrament to keep us in His gracious Kingdom, Satan uses the world as his instrument to keep us in his hellish realm.

Luther's sermons on these chapters shed much light on what “the world” is and does and how dangerous it is to us in our day.

The world always has, always does, and always will invade the church. Read 2 Peter 2 (especially v. 20) and the book of Jude. So often Jesus—and later, Luther like Him—saw church leaders themselves as “the world” which had pushed out the gospel. Israel and Judah had been doing that for centuries. So had “Christian” Europe. And so has so-called “Christian America”—causing one to recall what a Lutheran professor wrote fifty years ago: “Our world is kind of churchy, and our church is kind of worldly.”

It's “right there”!

The world's influence is not always easy to detect, because it is a composite form of the sinful flesh of individuals and thus very strong in its allurements. It is always right there—even as we worship, conduct meetings, and visit with one another. Think of it as inherent (and note the “in-here” syllables!).

The world's hatred is real. The “if” in Jesus' words does not refer to a slim

possibility, but to an actual, permanent, earthly condition. Recall another “if” recorded by John in his first Epistle (3:13): “Do not marvel if the world hates you.” The world’s hatred is offered freely, without a cause, gratis—as the psalm and Jesus pointed out.

At the devil’s instigation, the world cannot stand the preaching and teaching of the forgiveness of sins, of grace and justification, of God’s promise of life everlasting.

Knowing all this, we turn back again and again to Jesus’ compassion,

back to the Lord’s Supper, back to the praying that the Word teaches us to do, back to recover the mission we have from Jesus, to the world.

If we will not serve Him, His displeasure will turn out to be worse than the world’s hatred. But His displeasure is not what motivates us, and the world’s hatred is not what hinders us.

The motivation which overrides all is the compassion of our Lord who freely went to the cross for the world.

And for us—for me, for you!

—Warren Fanning,
Pastor Emeritus



The Cure for Insomnia

If anyone ever had a reason to battle insomnia, it would have been King David.

The inspired heading to this psalm tells us David wrote it “when he fled from Absalom his son.” 2 Samuel chapter 15 narrates the sordid tale of how Absalom had slowly but surely won over the hearts of the people from his father. Then under the pretense of paying a vow he had made to the Lord, Absalom left Jerusalem for Hebron. There he gathered a conspiracy about him and made a move toward the capital city, forcing his father—and compelling his forces—to flee. (For the whole account of the David/Absalom relationship, be encouraged to read 2 Samuel 13-19.)

King David had many concerns on his mind as he fled—not only the imminent attack from his son’s forces but also the morale of his own people.

THE PSALMS THE CHRISTIAN’S PRAYER BOOK

—Please read Psalm 3—

Fleeing at a moment’s notice—and having to witness their king being pelted with stones and curses by Shimei from the hills along their escape route—David’s band was no doubt very discouraged and down-hearted.

It is almost a surprise to hear David write, “I lay down and slept; I awoke...” (v. 5). With his plate so full, how could he even have thought about sleep? We would much rather expect David to report on the night’s horrible sleeplessness, or to hear others around him speak of how ‘owl-ly’ David was in those days, with circles under his

eyes from his bouts of insomnia.

But such was not the case! How could that be? How was David able to say, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around”? (v. 6) Supposedly, no one in his right mind would get any shut-eye under such circumstances!

We Are Not Immune

Our world is full of things which cause many to face insomnia: pressures on the job, family turmoil, student deadlines, health concerns. The October 8th issue of *Parade* magazine (which comes as an insert in our local Sunday paper) reported that “the National Sleep Foundation finds that the incidence of insomnia in the U.S. is steadily rising, with 75 per cent of adults in the U.S. experiencing sleep problems at least a few nights a week.”

As Christians we are not immune from insomnia-producing worries. So the way that David was able to handle the situation and get some sleep is of vital interest. What David did will serve as a good example to follow.

The first thing he did is turn his concerns over to his God. In prayer he lays out before the Lord exactly what is going on, in all its terrible detail. Not only was he under attack physically, but also there were those challenging

his right to trust in God—”many there are who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God’” (v. 2).

And once David had poured out his heart before the Lord, he acted on those words of spiritual advice which would be penned later by the apostle Peter: “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). David called to mind how much his God cared for him, and how He had shown that care so many times in his past. “But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill” (vv. 3-4).

It was in that hope, knowing that his cause was the Lord’s, that David was able to say, “Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!” (v. 7)

From where does your help come? As is recorded several times in the Psalms: “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (124:8). It is that same sentiment which David expresses here: “Salvation belongs to the LORD” (v. 8).

Let’s join King David in keeping that closing thought in mind! And then, when the storms of life beset us, we can join him in a good night’s sleep, saying, “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me” (v. 5).

—Pastor Paul Krause



SMORGASBORD

From the Editor’s Desk

• **“THE BREAD OF LIFE” FOR 2007**—We express our gratitude to Paul R. Koch, assistant editor of the

Spokesman, for once again accepting the assignment to provide our readers with daily Bible Reading suggestions

and hymn “prayers.” Please see Prof. Koch’s lead-in comments explaining the program of Bible readings for 2007.

Long-time readers know that the *Spokesman* has gone back and forth between printing daily Bible readings in each monthly issue, and printing a removeable “booklet” containing all twelve months in one issue. For 2007 we revert to the booklet layout (see pull-out in this issue); it is felt that in some ways this provides a handier format for faithful users.

• DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS—

The chairmen of the respective synodical boards generally add devotional thoughts to their reports to the Coordinating Council. We print here Pastor Vance Fossum’s inspirational comments in his report on behalf of the Board of Regents for ILC, September, 2006.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Herod promised to give the daughter of Herodias whatever she wanted if she danced for him. But the young girl didn’t know what she wanted, so she asked the advice of her mother. You know the rest of the story (Mt. 14:1-12). Sometime, somewhere, somehow, every young person will say: “What shall I ask for in life? What is it, Mom, Dad—what is it that you want me to do and to be?”

Children have keen senses. They can see what a parent really wants. If the furniture of the home is more important than the spiritual climate in the air, children can smell it. If getting the best for ourselves is more important than giving our best for others, our children will develop the same touch. They can tell if appearances are more

important than character; or if the right hairdo means more than a right-thinking head under it.

What goals do we have for our children, those “little ones who believe on” Him? What do we want for the children we are teaching at Immanuel? Surely we all want for our children what Paul wanted for the Philippians—that they “may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” That they might “shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (Php. 2:15-16a).

If we wish anything less for our children, they may remain undeveloped as servants of their Savior. They may become as immoral as the daughter of Herodias. They may enjoy the bright lights of this world but never shine in it or see the lights of heaven! Christian education begins with the distinction and separation that God Himself makes—that “stand out” quality of the child of God: “blameless, harmless, without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”

We and our children are to shine like stars in this world, not blend in with the grayness of its pollution and the blackness of its perversions. How is this done? By “holding fast the word of life,” as Paul says. This “word of life” is what makes the Christ-believer stand out from the world. It’s not the “word about life” that we have, but “the word that is life” (John 6:63), “the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23), the Word that brings the good news of forgiveness of sins straight to the hearts of sinners, causes them to believe in their Savior, and changes their lives.

Neither you, your children, nor

Immanuel Lutheran College has picked up this word of life in a bargain basement book sale. It's a gift straight from heaven. The world has not received it but despises it. By His grace alone and through this Word of Life, God has made us different from the world. Therefore, let this be our great goal for our children: As they look to us in life and say, "What shall I ask for?...What shall I do or be?", may we all receive grace to say by our teaching and example, "Be a stand-out star for your Savior! Hold fast the Word of Life!"

May the Lord preserve and bless ILC that she may continue to bless our children. Amen.

• A BLESSED CHRISTMAS —

We recently came upon a twist of the phrase "Keep Christ in Christmas." It said: "Keep Christ in Christmas and God in Christ."

Who, after all, was this Babe in the manger? Just some one-time great prophet and preacher of peace, love, and good will among men? Such claims could be made by and about any number of religious leaders in world history.

But no, Jesus Christ is—as the name "Christ" implies—the Anointed of God. He was and is the holy Son of God sent to this Earth on a mission from the Father to save a doomed and dying world of sinners. The one whom the Christmas angel identified as "Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" is that Promised one, that "Christ" anointed by the Spirit of God to be our Savior from sin and its wages, to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. Yes, let's keep Christ in Christmas—and God in Christ!

While we're at it, also this saying can be misleading: "A changeless Christ for a changing world." Jesus Christ is indeed changeless—the same yesterday, today, and forever. Yet this fallen world is hardly changing, at least not for the better. Sure, as the Lord allows man to have dominion over His creation, there are advancements and progress in science and technology, yet when it comes to the spiritual and man's personal relationship with his Creator-God, the world of sin(ners) remains ever the same. "The whole world lies in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19). Evidence of that wickedness: sinful mankind with its war and violence, its materialism and greed, its worship of multiple false gods—is all around us.

Yet we can and do go confidently forward into 2007, keeping CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS and GOD IN CHRIST, knowing that THE CHANGELESS CHRIST is just what those who live in a CHANGELESS WORLD need.

In the CHRIST-child,
a blessed Christmas
and New Year!





CROSS PURPOSES



On Getting the Most Out of Life

Many people live their lives by the philosophy, “Get the most out of life.” Generally it is pursued with the attitude that says, “...and get it as fast as you can.”

This philosophy is fraught with all kinds of snares for society because of unscrupulous pursuit of the things that are perceived necessary for life, as well as frequent heartache and stress for the individual who engages in such pursuit. We do not do well to promote that philosophy or to pursue it.

Nevertheless, we wish that we could awaken such a single-minded purpose when it comes to things spiritual. Too frequently in matters of the spiritual another philosophy prevails. It is the attitude that says, “Put off today what you can do tomorrow.” That was the attitude of Felix, the Roman governor who told Paul, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you” (Acts 24:25, NKJV).

If it were possible, it would be interesting (in the context of the spiritual) to ask the person who died yesterday what he gained by such delay!

In a sense we do have the answer from the grave to that question. It comes from one who got the most out of life that he could possibly get. We are told, “He was clothed in fine linen and he fared sumptuously every day” (Lk. 16:19). If indeed the fellow even had a spiritual thought, it was not

enough to convince him to pursue it, for “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (19:23). Thus it is for those whose whole purpose in life is “to get all you can get out of life,” and who give little or no thought to getting out of life, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt. 16:26)

“Getting the most out of life” without the Word of God as the most essential part of one’s “getting” is a wasted life. It is difficult to convince people of that who think themselves to be getting along well without it. The proof of a wasted life without the Word of God and faith in the Savior may not make an impression on them until it is too late—until judgment day, when they are confronted with “I never knew you” (Mt. 7:23). The “convenient time” will have passed them by.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, God from all eternity, came down to Earth. He was not about promoting His self-interest. He came to do the will of the Father in the Father’s time. So He lived according to the Law, and under the Law. He fulfilled all and died, not at His time but the Father’s! He redeemed us, rose again, and ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. He who never slumbers or sleeps (Ps. 121:4) guards and keeps us, always having at heart our

best interest for time and for eternity.

Life is a time of grace. It is a gift of God. Enjoy your life on Earth under the Father's watchful eye. Use your gifts to the best of your ability to accomplish whatever it is that the Lord determines.

Yet if you would be truly rich, give up the attitude that says, "Get as much of this world's treasures and pleasures and do it as fast as you can." Forsake the mentality that says, "When I have accomplished for me what I want for me, then I will have time to address the greater riches, eternal in the heavens." Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God..." (Mt. 6:33).

They who have accumulated through faith the riches in Christ that the Lord has laid up in store are truly rich.

Child of God, pursue divine riches as

quickly as you can. Faithfully hear and heed the Word, for no one knows what tomorrow will bring—whether life or death. Do not waste your life away pursuing the things of this life with an all-consuming passion that causes loss of focus on the one thing needful.

The things of this life that one may not get today will be of little consequence if today is one's last day on Earth. The eternal things that one may lose because he has been too busy "getting the most out of life," will not be here tomorrow if there is no tomorrow.

In matters of faith, today is the day! The day of the Lord is drawing nearer. You think not? Have you ever walked through a cemetery and read the dates on the stones?

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



The Word From Immanuel

*Chapel Talks to the student body of
Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire,
Wisconsin*

To our young readers - This is for you!

"This world's younger generation, like many generations before them, wants to find real life and freedom....Ecclesiastes reminds us that without Christ all life is an empty illusion—every pleasure, when opened, bruises and breaks."

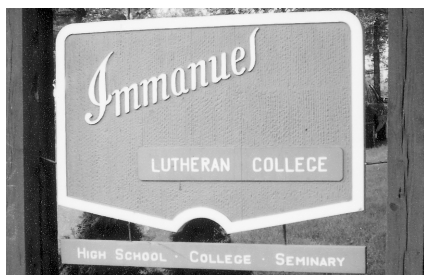
From the Inside Out

"We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:11)

In the name of Jesus...

A little girl was trying to open a rose

bud with her fingers. But as she pulled the petals open, they would bruise or



break. Finally she said, “Gramma, when God opens a flower, it looks so beautiful, so when I try, why does it just come apart?” “Well, honey,” Grandmother answered, “God works from the inside out!”

A few weeks ago we considered how the LORD at the first Pentecost was giving the apostles and the crowds—then and now—the tongue of faith, the Bible Teachings. With them we behold how He opens the rose bud from the inside out.

The Jewish people had been given every advantage (see Rom. 3), blessed with the oracles of God, the temple of His gracious presence, and the Light of the world walking in their midst. Studying these treasures, their spiritual leaders wrote huge volumes of their wisdom. With great zeal they pursued their own righteousness. Yet, because they were trying to open the rose bud from the outside, it all came apart, bruised and broken.

We are also enjoying the blessings of the oracles of God, the temple of His gracious presence, and the Light of the world walking in our midst. However, so corrupt are our hearts and minds that the greatest zeal to open these treasures with our wisdom and righteousness will make the treasures all come apart, bruised and broken.

Yet how often are we tempted to think “I can take care of my own faith;

I’ll open it up when and as far as I want to.” Like the Jews, we are then relying on ourselves, bruising or breaking the rose petals. But now they and we hear the wonderful works of Christ, crucified for our sin, raised for our justification, and seated on the throne of heaven to pour out His Spirit and open us from the inside out with the gift of faith in Jesus. Three thousand believed, then five thousand, then fragrant fields of roses in every land.

Have you contemplated what that meant for them? Bloody persecution followed in the next decades. How many were immediately shunned by their families and business associates? But they followed Christ. Would you and I open ourselves to such persecution? Not without God opening us from the inside out to follow Christ through death to life.

So what is going to open us up? When axes, saws, and hammers are used to cut hardened iron, they themselves are quickly chipped, worn, and broken. But the fire warms and softens the iron from the inside out. The gospel—the wonderful work of Christ—is the powerful fire of the Spirit that is still working from the inside out to melt and warm our hearts.

Through the Word of Jesus, who shed His holy blood to wash us clean of all our sins, our hearts are warmed and melted to walk in God’s commandments. Through the Word of Jesus who rose from the dead to declare us righteous before God, the fragrant beauty of the rose bud is opened within us. In fact, the miracle of the cross and empty tomb has opened the hearts of believers for two thousand years so that His Word might come to us here today.

What's the benefit of this opening for you and me? It's been said that the movie from a few years ago, *The Matrix*, is a metaphor for life in this world—namely, a joyless, uninspiring illusion of life enslaved to machinery.

This world's younger generation, like many generations before them, wants to find real life and freedom, wants to open the rose bud to find some beautiful fragrance in this world. Ecclesiastes reminds us that without Christ all life is an empty illusion—every pleasure, when opened, bruises and breaks.

But the wonderful works of Christ open the world's matrix to show us the real life in Christ, yes, a beautiful fragrance. In Him alone is freedom from sin and death, now and eternally. In His love alone we are opened from the inside out to truly live our lives to His glory. By leading us into all truth through the Word, the Holy Spirit enables the fragrant beauty of Christ to be dispersed around us.

So let the Spirit through the fire of Christ's Word open your heart like a beautiful rose bud of faith, from the inside out. Amen.

To God alone be the glory.

—Prof. John Ude

Announcements

Correction:

Please make the following correction in the October 2006 issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. Page 23, right hand column, seven lines down, strike the word "being" from the copy. According to the author's original wording, the line should read: "...He (Jesus) was even devoid of God for a little while..." - We regret the error. Another note for clarification purposes: The last two lines in the "original translation" box, same issue p. 21, is a prayer added by the author. - Editor

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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Traveling Vacation Bible School (TVBS)

The TVBS program needs your help to continue its work in the kingdom. Please visit the TVBS website at www.ilcactivities.org/tvbs/tvbsopening.htm to see how you can help. Look for more information in an upcoming *Spokesman* article.

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Paul Tiefel III, who was called by Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wis. to teach grades 5-6 in its school, was installed on September 10, 2006.

—Pastor Paul Tiefel Jr.



Principal Seth Schaller with two Paul Tiefels

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