

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
the Foundational 'Amen'!

April 2009, VOL. 51 NO. 10

A MOVABLE FEAST WHICH PROCLAIMS IMMOVABLE TRUTHS

Easter falls on April 12 this year (much later than last year when it fell on March 23).

Unlike Christmas which falls on the same date each year, Easter is a movable festival. It can fall on any date from March 22 to April 27. (In case you are unaware of the reason for Easter's wandering on the calendar—it is always observed on the Sunday after the first full moon on or after the day of the vernal equinox. This has to do with the phases of the moon.)

What matters, of course, isn't the date when Easter falls, whether early, late, or somewhere in between. What concerns us—and fills our hearts with joy—is the precious meaning of this high church festival. It's the day we commemorate a momentous event that transpired in a garden tomb outside Jerusalem's walls 2,000 years ago. The lifeless body of Jesus who was cruci-

fied, dead, and buried was restored to life, just as He had foretold: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:19).

Why do we Christians thrill to that message? Why does it prompt us to sing such happy hymns of praise to our God?

Jesus' bodily resurrection establishes the veracity of three important and extremely relevant Bible truths:

1) Jesus really is God's Son as He claimed to be. In answer to prophecy, Jesus is the world's Redeemer come from heaven to rescue poor sinners. He was no impostor, no fraud.

Only someone who holds in His hand the issues of life and death can promise to come alive after being killed...and then do it!

2) Easter's empty tomb also proclaims that Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the world's sin was

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accepted by the Father as fully sufficient to pay our sin-debt. It is like an exclamation point the Father placed behind the "It is finished!" which Jesus spoke from the cross on Good Friday.

Each and every sinner may find peace in this gospel message: "Jesus erased the record of my sin from God's ledger book forever. No doubt about it! His resurrection proves it!"

3) Another reason for our Easter joy: The Savior's resurrection is our guarantee that our last great enemy, death, has been vanquished. Death's sting has been removed, death's power destroyed.

For all who trust Christ as Redeemer, death has become a temporary sleep from which the risen Savior

will one day awaken them. Because Jesus lives we too will live ... with Him! ... forever! ... in the glory of Paradise!

What consolation these holy truths bring to our grieving hearts when a loved one falls asleep, trusting in the Lord!

What peace they bring to our anxious hearts as we contemplate the approach of our own departure day!

Easter moves around on the calendar from year to year (next year it will fall eight days earlier, on April 4). But the date doesn't matter. What does matter are the immovable truths which the events of Easter proclaim for all to hear and believe.

These truths remain steadfastly fixed, unchanging and unchangeable; they are as trustworthy as the promises of our faithful Savior-God who was once delivered over to death for our sins and has now been raised to life for our justification! Hallelujah!

—Pastor Thomas Schuetze
Coloma, Michigan



Christ's Resurrection— the Foundational "Amen!"

Our flesh betrays us. Our conscience rises up to accuse us. Society around us demeans and belittles us and our faith.

As the days of our lives become fewer, and as the world churns toward its inevitable end, how dark and dreary it would be without the assurance of God's grace and His abiding presence.

Thanks be to our Heavenly Father who, to see us through this life with its

many twists and turns, has left us with precious promises, of which the following are but samples.

- "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

- "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9).

- "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kind-

ness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD, who has mercy on you" (Isaiah 54:10).

- "The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore" (Psalm 121:7,8).

- God "who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

- "And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

- "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law..." (Galatians 3:13).

- "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." (Ephesians 1:7).

- "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin..." (1 John 1:7).

- "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

- "By His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

- "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

- "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11).

- "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives

and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25).

- "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19).

- "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

- "Do not fear, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

We have read many uplifting Easter devotions over the years. We have heard and preached many sermons declaring the Easter message. There are other Easter devotions in this issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. Nevertheless, no Easter message is grander or more eloquent than the promises of our God recorded in Scripture—promises which find their confirmation and validation in the "Yea and Amen" of our Lord's bodily resurrection from the dead!

Can we be sure of God's love, of His abiding presence, of our salvation? As one catechism declares, "Yes indeed; for my redemption is as sure as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity."

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus as Scripture prophesied and records is the Father's exclamation mark that guarantees every precious promise! Every time that we read a promise of God's love and salvation in Scripture, remember: the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the foundational "Amen"!

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas



A Day for Rejoicing

Waking up to a new day isn't always an experience that fills us with joy. Sometimes the prospect of another day fills us with fear and dread. This is so when the day promises to bring pain and misery, long hours of exhausting work, or strife at home or at work.

Yet, whatever the prospects of any given day, we know that each new day is a gift of God's grace. Each day we have the forgiveness of sins. Each day we have the certainty of God's help. Each day we have the privilege of prayer, the confidence that our prayers will be heard and answered. Each day we have the assurance that we are one day closer to the joys of eternal life.

What is it that gives each morning the promise of grace and blessings?

It is the event of that one great morning—the morning when our Savior Jesus Christ arose from the dead!

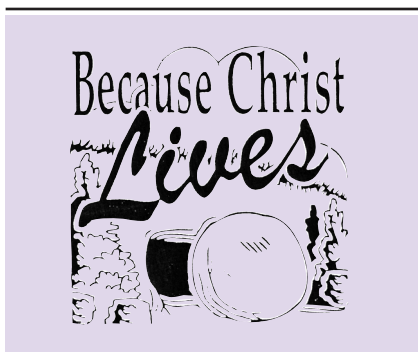
His resurrection was God the Father's proclamation that He accepted Christ's sacrifice as full payment for our sins; therefore we are forgiven.

Christ's resurrection is the demonstration of His victory over death; therefore we have eternal life.

His resurrection assures us that He lives; therefore we have Him to walk beside us and hold us up through the trials of each day.

The Day is an Era!

One Bible passage that serves as a good daily reminder of these things is Psalm 118:22-24. The psalmist proclaims, "This is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (v. 24). This is more than a general encouragement to thankfulness for each new day. The psalmist has in mind a particular day of rejoicing. It is



the day of a great event: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (v. 22).

Jesus and the apostles teach us that this verse is a messianic prophecy. Jesus was the stone rejected by the builders. The chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees rejected Him in their plan to build up God's people; they cast Him aside and tried to go on building without Him. They had Him crucified, put to death, and buried. But God made Him the chief cornerstone of His building, which is the Church. He exalted Jesus by raising Him from the dead. "This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes" (v. 23).

The day for rejoicing and being glad is the day of Christ's resurrection.

And the day of Christ's resurrection is not merely a day of twenty-four hours! It is an era that began with His resurrection and continues until the end of time. It is a season of grace in which life is offered and given to sinners through the gospel.

No matter what the prospects of our day may be, remember that we are living in the resurrection day. Any one day of twenty-four hours may be difficult, but the future is always bright. The trials of today and tomorrow will

finally give way to an eternity of joy.

We can always say, "This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

—Pastor John Klatt
Rapid City, South Dakota



A Good Friday Devotion—

Making Waves

Our family enjoys swimming during the summer. Though all may not be able to swim, even the youngest child enjoys riding the waves in the pool.

Waves are really quite amazing. The water can be completely calm until, with an action from just one individual, everyone else in the pool will feel the results of that action.

The bigger the action, the more clearly the results of that action are felt.

Let's consider the shock waves which were produced by God through the events of Good Friday. These were not visible waves, but invisible waves which spanned not just space but also time.

The effects of Christ's death have been felt in time—by Paul the missionary, Augustine the church leader, Luther the monk, and by us today as well as by every future generation to come along as this world endures!

But the waves of Christ's death also travel backwards in time and were felt by Old Testament believers as well—by Rahab the harlot, David the king, Abraham the landowner, all the way back to the first man Adam!

The effect of that one death is eternal life to those who believe. Jesus was



the One who died that we might live.

When we look at all Christ went through on Good Friday, it's important not to look at it through the eyes of human reason. Human reason tells us that Jesus was being defeated, that He was being crushed by His enemies. Rather, when we look at these last events in the life of Christ, look at them through the eyes of faith. Jesus did all this willingly—this was God's plan to gain victory!

In Jesus' suffering we see the appearance of defeat. We see Him being beat down as both the Jews and Gentile flex their political muscle.

Victor In Death!

But if that's all we see, then we overlook the real purpose of Jesus' sufferings. If that's all we see, we've missed the many times Jesus pointed out that this is the path to victory! It

may not look like it, but it's true!

The same is true of Jesus' death on the cross. As we read the Gospel records of Jesus' suffering, do we see Jesus being defeated by the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers? I would hope not. Rather, let us see Christ as the Victor who willingly made His way to the cross, doing everything necessary to complete the victory for us.

The victory He brings is eternal redemption for all people. Even when He died, Jesus wasn't being defeated but was conquering!

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Jesus) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release

those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14).

Yes, even in death it was Jesus who was doing the conquering! He was the Victor!

Through Jesus' death on the cross, the devil was defeated. Our sins were His, and His death was ours. He died so that we might live.

Whether we realize it or not, the shock wave of Christ's death on Good Friday has affected us. Through His death on the cross He has guaranteed us eternal life!

God be praised that our eternal life has been secured and that the victory has been won though the conquering death of our Savior!

—Pastor Nathanael Mayhew
Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Georgia



Concluded from Last Month

"A Sinner's Prayer, A Savior's Response"

Lenten Meditations

(Adapted from "radio devotions" prepared by some CLC Minnesota pastors)



Fourth Devotion:

"Do Not Take Your Holy Spirit From Me" (Psalm 51:11b)

Prayer: Lord God, "I need Your presence every passing hour. What except Your grace can foil the Tempter's power? Who like Yourself my guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!" [TLH

#552:6] Bless me with Your Holy Spirit, strengthen my faith, create zeal in my heart for serving You, enable me to identify and use the gifts You have given me, use me according to Your purpose, defend me against all attacks on my soul, and preserve me for Your heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

Luke 22:31-34—"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith

should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.' But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.' Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'"

Human pride is a problem. Peter—a man who had so eloquently praised his Savior and identified Him as the Son of God and the way to eternal life—struggled with pride. When Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him, Peter proudly responded that, even if all of the other disciples were to forsake Jesus, he would never do so. Not only did Peter have an inflated view of his own strength, he had a diminished view of the others. Peter exhibited pride in all of its self-focused glory. Scripture repeatedly warns against the dangers of pride. St. Paul warned, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Pride injects itself and makes us believe that we can do things on our own. Pride wants us to believe that we have the best wisdom—even better than God's. Pride wants us to rely on ourselves and our strength. Therefore, pride becomes a tool of Satan, because we cannot save ourselves, and all of our best wisdom is tainted by sin.

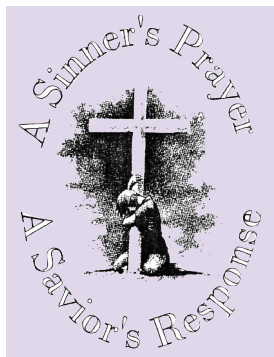
Better than pride is to "trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Pride suggests we should "go it alone." If we followed such proud independence, we would regard the gospel as foolishness, we would never find Jesus, and we would never have His forgiveness and life.

We need the Holy Spirit and His work to be brought to faith. We need the Holy Spirit's work to preserve us in faith. We cannot stand on our own. "The natural (and proud) man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

When a sinner remembers from where he came and how he came to be in the family of God, that sinner's prayer will always be: "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"; and the Savior responds by continuing to send His Holy Spirit through the gospel for our blessing.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
Mankato, Minnesota



Fifth Devotion:

**"Restore to Me the Joy of Your Salvation"
(Psalm 51:12a)**

Prayer: *O Lord God, when Satan assails me, do not let me fall. Uphold me and help me to resist his every temptation. Should I, through my own foolishness, turn away from You and fall into sin, lead me to repentance, renew me in my faith, and "restore to me the joy of Your sal-*

vation!" Then I will gladly serve You and proclaim Your saving name to all those around me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Luke 22:61-62—"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So Peter went out and wept bitterly."

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). If ever there were a situation to illustrate that principle, this is it! Beloved Peter, bold Peter, confident Peter, impetuous Peter...now the sorrowing Peter, remembering with regret the warnings of Jesus—and with shame his own ill-conceived boasts.

However—more than noticing the bitter tears of Peter mentioned in our text, notice our Savior's tender glance. It was not an angry and indignant glare Jesus cast in Peter's direction after his three-fold denial. After all, the denial was no surprise to Jesus, for He had predicted it: "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you (Peter) will deny Me three times" (Mt. 26:34).

No, Jesus' glance was an extension of His prophetic prayer: "I have prayed for you (Peter), that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22:32). Jesus wanted Peter to come with a repentant heart and to receive the forgiveness of his sins—the precious fruit of Jesus' redemptive work!

Yes, as Peter wept bitterly in the wake of his own weakness, Jesus wanted him to return and pray: "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation!" Such a prayer is pleasing to our Savior, and His response to that prayer will sustain the fallen sinner. His response enables the fallen sinner to continue in Christian service, even as Peter was able afterward to strengthen his brethren through his gospel preaching.

When troubled by the sorrows sin brings, may we look to Jesus to restore the joy of our salvation!

—Pastor Paul Nolting
Mankato, Minnesota



Sixth Devotion:

**"Uphold Me by Your Generous Spirit"
(Psalm 51:12b)**

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we are weak and You are strong. We falter and slip and fall and must be upheld by Your power and constant help. It is our constant prayer that You abide with us through Your Holy Spirit and steady us as we make our way through this life. Without You we can do nothing, with You we can do all things. Uphold us, Lord by Your generous Spirit. Amen.*

John 21:15-19—"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes,

Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'"

People turn to many places to find strength and support in their lives. In battle the General might seek strength and security in the might and speed of his horses and chariots. But the psalmist warns against putting our trust there, for the "horse is a vain thing for safety" (Ps. 33:17).

In times of distress, one commonly turns to friends for comfort and advice. But this too is often not a solid foundation and can easily lead to disappointment. The rich and wise trust in their wealth and wisdom, but the prophet Jeremiah warned against boasting in these things (cf. Jeremiah 9:23).

Peter himself had trusted in his own courage and resolve. He was willing to draw a sword against a crowd and scoffed at the very idea of denying his Friend and Teacher. Nothing, he was certain, could ever drive him to that! Yet that is exactly what he did under the pressure of the crowd and stress of the moment.

Peter learned that his ultimate strength was not in himself, nor in his deep friendship, nor his ready willingness to take the lead. He had nothing of which to boast.

What was his ultimate strength? What was the thing that could sustain and uphold him?

When Peter was restored by Jesus to a position among the apostles, he learned that his strength was to be found outside himself in the love of His Savior which lifted him up. He was recommissioned and sent on his way with important tasks to do and with the Spirit of God to assist him. Peter did not now look unto himself as a self-reliant man, but unto the Spirit and God through whose power he was indeed able to stand before kings and not be ashamed, to fight against principalities and powers and not be overcome, and to wield the Word of God with every expectation of success—for his strength was in God!

—Pastor Norman Greve
Eagle Lake, Minnesota



THE GOOD SHEPHERD—THE CROSS MEETS THE EMPTY TOMB

One of the most beautiful pictures of God's personal care is the 23rd Psalm. Countless believers have affirmed, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." This picture reaches its zenith in Jesus who assures us, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

Jesus is the Good Shepherd because of what He did for us. In John chapter ten the Spirit lays out the connection between Good Friday and Easter. We cannot have one without the other.

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (Jn. 10:17-18).

The disciples of Jesus saw the cross as the end of their hopes that Jesus was the Messiah. The enemies of Jesus saw Jesus' death as the end of their problems.

God the Father saw it differently. The Father loves Jesus because He laid down His life for the sheep. Jesus was not dragged screaming and helpless to the cross. He went to Jerusalem in order to die for the sins of the world. It was not that He could not have come down from the cross. Jesus as that lamb of Isaiah 53 did not open His mouth in protest. Silently He was led uncomplaining to slaughter. Jesus confidently asserted, "I lay it down of



Stained glass "Easter" window in the Immanuel
Lutheran College Library

Myself. I have power to lay it down."

The Confirmation of Victory!

How different it is for us. We do not lay down our lives. Death snatches our loved ones from us. Death strikes suddenly or after an excruciatingly long struggle. Death rules over us because of sin. We are helpless in the face of physical and eternal death. No one can escape the certainty of death.

Jesus rules over death because He is the Good Shepherd. This is the triumph of that day we call Good Friday. The Good Shepherd died to save His sheep. Easter is the confirmation of victory over sin, death, and Satan that Jesus won for us.

Jesus laid down His life so that He might take it up again. Easter is Jesus' victory over death. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." Remember how Jesus prophetically said at the beginning of His ministry, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:19)? Jesus revealed this power over death when He summoned Lazarus from the tomb after four days of decay and decomposition. The empty Easter tomb proclaims Jesus' power over death for Himself. Jesus lives! The grave is empty!

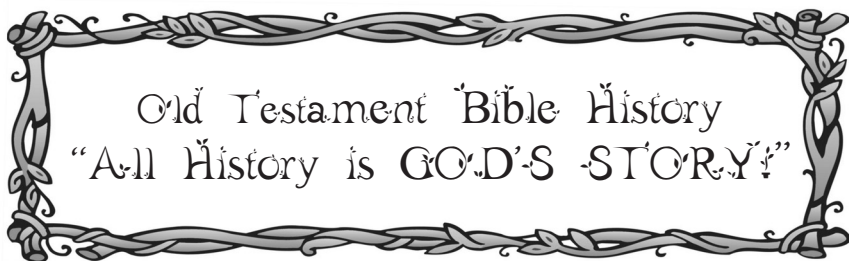
Jesus has power over death for us also. He defanged death by suffering death and hell in our place. Our sins have been washed away in His precious blood. He will give us life by

raising our bodies from the grave on the Last Day. Paul in 1 Corinthians proclaims Jesus' power over death, "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

Jesus' power over death will be revealed to all on Resurrection Day. "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

This Easter remember the Good Shepherd connection between the cross and the empty tomb—both reveal the power of Jesus who laid down His life that He might take it up again!

—Pastor John Schierenbeck
Winter Haven, Florida



Old Testament Bible History "All History is GOD'S STORY!"

No. 10 in Series: Genesis 21-23

"You Have Not Withheld Your Only Son..."

Please read Genesis 21-23.

How could God ask such a thing?
What parent could possibly go through

with such a thing? It is one of the more striking Old Testament stories as we read God commanding Abraham to

sacrifice his own beloved son as a burnt offering. The very thought of it makes parents uncomfortable.

Yet this is what God commanded Abraham to do: "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (22:2). And just as amazing as the command is the compliance of Abraham. The very next morning Abraham himself split the very wood on which he would burn his son!

"WE WILL COME BACK TO YOU."

How could a father do such a thing to his son?! We learn a little about Abraham's mindset in verse 5. After traveling for three days, they arrive at the land of Moriah (which by God's design is the same place where Jerusalem and the Temple would eventually be built). Abraham directed his servants to stay with the donkey and said, "*WE* will come back to you" (22:5). Abraham has the confidence that, while he would have to go through with the sacrifice, he and Isaac would return together.

The Holy Spirit further reveals Abraham's mindset in the book of Hebrews: "Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense" (Heb. 11:19). Abraham went through with this, convinced that if necessary, God would raise his son Isaac back to life.

"GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR HIMSELF THE LAMB."

As the aged Abraham and his young

"While God never intended any harm to come to Isaac, there is another Son who was not spared. He too was an only Son; He too carried the wood on which He would be sacrificed...."

son Isaac made their way to the place God had designated, Isaac began to realize something was missing. "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (22:7) He saw everything necessary for a burnt offering, except the most essential element—the animal to be sacrificed!

The aged father replied to his son with these simple words, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (22:8). Abraham believed that God, who had provided him with a son in his old age, could and would provide for this sacrifice as well.

Abraham built the altar, bound his son, and laid him on the wood. But God never intended for Isaac to die. As Abraham took up the knife to slay his son, the Angel of the LORD stopped him. "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me" (22:12). Abraham then lifted his eyes to see a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. There was the animal the LORD had provided for the sacrifice!

What is it that we find so striking about this account? Is it the faith of Abraham? God put Abraham to the test, for in that way Abraham's faith was strengthened. But what we may find all the more powerful is the thought of sacrificing one of our own

children.

Furthermore, the thought of it being our only child—a child that we had waited for our whole life—and now being asked to give up that child, is almost more than we can bear.

While God never intended any harm to come to Isaac, there is another Son who was not spared. He too was an only Son; He too carried the wood on which He would be sacrificed—but this Son did not ask where the lamb was for the sacrifice; He knew that He Himself was the Lamb!

God indeed did provide for Himself the Lamb to be sacrificed for the sins of the whole world when He gave His Son Jesus. Jesus too was the only beloved Son of the Father. He also—in the land of Moriah, at the Place of the Skull (Golgotha or Calvary)—was laid upon a wooden altar.

But there would be no voice from heaven to stop this sacrifice. The Father gave His Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. This the Father did because He loved us and wanted us to be with Him eternally in

heaven.

Even as Abraham had said, "we will come back to you," so Jesus promised His followers that He would come back. Three times we read in the Gospels that Jesus told His disciples of the sacrifice that would be made in the land of Moriah (Jerusalem). And each time He ended with telling them that on the third day He would rise again (Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19).

Just as Abraham and Isaac returned as Abraham believed they would, so too did Jesus. On Easter God's only beloved Son returned to life by rising from the dead.

While we find this test of Abraham's faith extremely powerful, may it be even more powerful as we consider how God the Father did not withhold His Son, His only Son whom He loved, for us!

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10).

—Pastor Nathan J. Pfeiffer
Hecla, South Dakota



Studies in First Timothy—

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work..." (1 Tim. 3:1).

Chapter 4: 1-10

Keeping In Shape

All our lives we have been nourished by the good doctrine of the Bible. Our spiritual frames are fleshed out with salutary teachings, with Jesus at

the heart.

In Holy Scripture the Holy Spirit often also advises and warns us that many believing Christians will fall

prey to satanic lies and delusions. The sinful flesh loves that kind of fast food, available everywhere in the world. There is a lot of spiritual obesity around us—people fat in head and heart who do not know what really good food God's doctrine is or what constitutes a good workout in that doctrine.

So let's talk about diet and exercise. No, not the usual talk about the physical concerns which are emphasized almost endlessly in print and on TV. Much of it may be good but we have a more vital area of concern, namely, our spiritual food and spiritual workouts. St. Paul focuses on it here in 1 Timothy 4:1-10, especially verses 6 and 7. Do you have time for a look at all ten verses?

All of us have met people who have been drawn away from Christ and His doctrine. They have succumbed to seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, hypocritical teachers with no conscience for God any more, who serve up empty tales, superstitions, and misguided regulations regarding many aspects of life. Over the recent past decades, false and dangerous spiritual menus have abounded. People caught up in them are hindered from displaying any real sense of thanksgiving to God, in Christ.

Frustrating the Devil!

You have also met many people who want to hold to the good doctrine of the Bible and to Christ—people who have had to leave a denomination because of its false teachings and practices (wrong food and exercise). They hope to find a good eating place, with good spiritual workouts.

All of this affects us, whether we realize it or not. And it forces a couple of questions: What is good spiritual food? What is good spiritual exercise? Good pastors promote these things, and good members will encourage them among other people. It simply means regular Bible listening, reading, and study, with regular focus on Christ and His work.

That latter point is absolutely essential. St. Paul harks back to verse 16 of chapter 3, where we link our food and exercise to the very "mystery of godliness"—namely, to Christ's incarnation and the demonstration of His salutary accomplishments for us, clearly revealed.

We know that regular good food and regular good workouts might become repetitious and boring, yet look at the accomplishments! So it is with a good Bible reading plan—and specific focus and discussion and



Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bowdle, South Dakota; showing the location of the life-size colored glass window (see p.17) over the chancel area.

reception of Christ and His successful work towards our salvation.

Like Martin Luther who found Jesus on every page of the Bible, we too frustrate the devil and his influence every time we use Christ and His Word

and Sacrament to keep in shape, as the Holy Spirit guides us through good servants of the Word.

—Warren Fanning, *Pastor Emeritus*
Sun City, Arizona



The Discourses of Christ

Luke 12:54-59—Discerning the Times

The Pardon Proclaimed in Jesus' Resurrection

Jesus' comments remain easy for us to relate to. While we may not have the same weather patterns in our part of the world, we all readily talk about the weather.

In the Midwest we know that storms often come upon us from the west—a southwest wind may bring more moisture, but the northwest wind a quick and cold storm. We also enjoy the advantage of weather forecasts. We check this information daily, and sometimes several times a day, keeping track of what's going on and adjusting our plans accordingly.

Around the world people are able to do much the same. Everyone watches the sky for signs of impending weather changes.

Is it any more difficult to discern the signs of the times?

Don't we all see the moral corruption of our race? Don't we all hear the reports of violence coming to us from throughout the world? Don't we know how the Scriptures and Christ are being blasphemed, even by churches

who claim to be speaking in His name?

As God's believing children see these things, they are reminded that this corrupt and evil world shall have an end. Things shall not just go on as they always have. There will a response—a divine and final response to all the evil that is taking place in the world. As we see the signs of the times, we do well to examine our lives and make any necessary adjustments in our life plan.

It also remains as evident today as when Jesus first spoke these words that many in the world are failing to discern the signs of the times. Even when the signs are pointed out to them, the significance of the signs for one's life seems to be missing.

When Jesus spoke these words, He was addressing the multitudes that were gathered to hear Him. These multitudes had been raised in the Scriptures and should have been watching. It was time for them to comprehend the salvation of God, the salvation that stood before them in the

person of Jesus Christ.

Today this gospel has gone out throughout the world. We rejoice to hear how the Spirit has opened so many hearts to believe and comprehend the salvation which God has brought us in Christ Jesus. Surely the signs indicate that the time is short and that the urgency of the gospel mission is ever increasing!

A Familiar Illustration

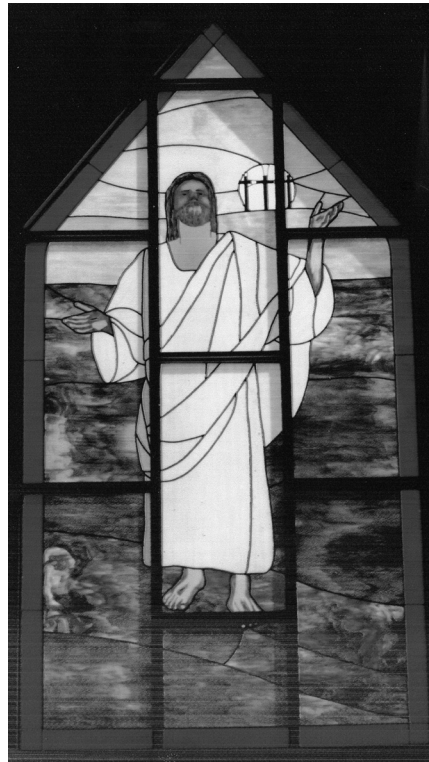
Jesus related this urgency to His audience with another illustration which is familiar to us as well. If we have an adversary taking us to court, wisdom dictates that every effort should be made to settle the difference before the judge imposes his settlement, a final settlement with the strictest of consequences.

In our day this happens not only in civil matters between individuals but also in criminal cases. Often, when one is guilty, the best possible outcome is to agree to plead guilty beforehand to a lesser charge and gain some leniency in sentencing.

Surely we know that we have sinned against the Lord. And we have been offered the greatest of plea arrangements. As we confess our guilt before the Lord, He has imputed that guilt to Jesus' blood poured out for us to satisfy divine judgment.

If we insist that God give us a trial before Him based upon our own righteousness and insist that we have no need of Christ's righteousness—only then will we be condemned. That is the insistence of unbelief. The end of unbelief will be a sentence to the prisonhouse of hell until one's debt of sin is fully paid. It is an eternal sentence.

Agree with the plea arrangement



"The Risen Savior" as designed and created by Prof. John Reim; installed by Bowdle church members in 1994 (cf. p. 15)

quickly! Hear the pardon which God decrees from the empty tomb and know that that pardon releases you from all condemnation before God!

As we observe the solemnity of Good Friday, we confess that it was our sin and guilt which brought this woe on Jesus; but we are also reminded of the love and grace which brought this about, that God might offer us pardon and peace through faith in Jesus' death as the propitiation for our sin.

That pardon proclaimed in Jesus' resurrection prompts the joyous "Hallelujahs" which shall spring from our lips again this Easter!

In His grace God has led us to see and discern the signs of the times. He

has led us to agree quickly with that perfect settlement which Christ, our crucified and risen Savior, provides that we might be free from the eternal

prisonhouse and live forever with our risen and glorified Savior.

—Pastor Theodore Barthels
Austin, Minnesota



DIVINE LOVE THE GREATEST GIFT
DEVOTIONAL STUDIES ON
1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13



"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13),



Third in a series:

Love does not envy; love does not parade itself

We've probably all heard the saying: "Pride goes before a fall." It is based on a word of the Lord written in Proverbs: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

Our heavenly Father counsels us to keep close watch over our hearts and guard them from the sin of thinking too highly of ourselves and looking down on others. He warns that those who are haughty, prideful, "full of themselves" (as we sometimes say), will eventually be knocked off their high horse. The sins of pride and envy often lead to other sins that cause their lives to spiral downward to untold misery and woe. (Remember the story of King Ahab, 1 Kings 21.) From this our Father would graciously preserve us.

Everyone's heart is by nature inclined towards sins of jealousy and pride. We Christians too have our hands full to keep this green-eyed monster under wraps. How naturally disposed we are to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, to

look out selfishly for "number one" while treating others as second-best.

Then too, when others are specially blessed by God with a particular blessing we don't have, we're tempted to say with discontented heart: "Oh, if only I could be in so-in-so's shoes!" Or: "Why couldn't I own a nice home with a two-car garage?!" Or: "Why couldn't I have been blessed with speaking/musical/athletic/computer skills, like he/she has?"

Where do we receive the impetus to refrain from sins of jealousy, pride, and egotism? As with every aspect of our life of Christian sanctification, it's the amazing *agape* (in Greek pronounced *ahgahpay*)-love of God as revealed in His beloved Son which is our inspiration. Though Jesus was the eternal God, rich in heavenly glory, He willingly made Himself nothing and became our lowly bond-slave. During His ministry He didn't put His powers as true God on display to enhance His own status in the eyes of others and make Himself look good. He didn't

parade His deity for selfish purposes. He exhibited a spirit of lowliness, always putting the welfare of others ahead of His own. Each of the miracles was performed in loving service to others, never for His own benefit. Finally, He walked the difficult road to the cross uncomplainingly, content with the lot His Father had chosen for Him. All this so that we might enjoy the high privilege, the exceedingly glorious status, of being God's children forever. This was *agape*-love in its purest and most beautiful form!

The *agape*-love Jesus exhibited during His ministry is what the Spirit teaches and graciously enables us—who by baptism and faith in the Savior are "new creatures in Christ"—to emulate. He leads us to follow Jesus' example in our daily dealings with our spouse and family members at home,

classmates at school, and co-workers at office or factory. He teaches us to be content with the station in life our Father has assigned us. If we are blessed to possess a skill that others don't have—musical, speaking, writing, drawing, sewing, wielding saw and hammer, whatever it may be—He prompts us to use it in loving service to our neighbor and for the praise of our Savior...with this prayer echoing in our hearts:

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Dwell in my heart eternally,
And reign without a rival there.
To Thee alone, dear Lord, I live;
Myself to Thee, dear Lord, I give.
(TLH #349:1)

—Pastor Thomas Schuetze
Coloma, Michigan



CROSS PURPOSES

TRYING TIMES FOR CHRIST-BELIEVERS

How serious are you about preserving the Holy Christian faith? How concerned are you about the witness of the truth of God's Word in our generation?

This leads to the next question. How much do you care about the future of the confessing Christian Church? How much do you care about the spiritual and therefore the eternal welfare of your children and/or your grandchildren?

No doubt you are very serious, and extremely concerned. Good! What are

you doing about it, and how intent are you to endure affliction for the faith?

We can safely say that the test of your resolve is going to increase. Simple observation tells us that it is becoming increasingly difficult to be a confessing Christian because Satan is waging a very savage war against the Christian faith and the Church.

Though we know that he will not prevail—for our Lord has overcome Him, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church—Satan contin-

ues his intense attacks against the Lord and His children.

Never is there a time to become lackadaisical. The apostle Paul put us all on alert. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine"...(2 Tim. 4:3). The lack of concern for sound doctrine manifests itself through the boldness of false teachers—outside the church as well as within the church—and the latter are the more dangerous, for they are those who engage, in the name of Christ, no less, in "profane and vain babbling" (2 Tim. 2:16).

We should recognize further "...that in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1). "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (vv.12,13).

Now is that time!

It is quite simple for Christ-believers who take their faith seriously to recognize the pagan and heathen philosophies rampant in our society and in the world. Such enemies can be resisted, as people of God clothe themselves in the armor of God and wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6). We can do the same against impostors, albeit they are more difficult to recognize because they cloak themselves in the mantle of Christianity and pious Christian expression. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. The most recent Presidential inauguration spectacle bore that out as "Christian" clergy tried to bridge the divide between heathenism and Christianity in prayers and as they politicized Christianity in their prayers as though they would be heard "for

their many words" (Mt. 6:7).

Beware Indifference!

Where God's Word is not respected as the Word of God—and where this Word is not the absolute authority in matters of faith and life, only evil can come. In the name of love, despisers of the Word of God count political correctness as justification for all kinds of aberrations which Scripture calls sin. We are not finished with the abortion issue. Again we are getting signals that "hate crime" legislation will be advanced which will make it illegal to bring Scripture to bear regarding homosexuality as well as the transgender perversion.

In the name of love the politically correct crowd violates love, as they promote, defend, and approve sins which God condemns and which, persisted in without repentance, "are worthy of death" (Rom. 1:32).

We can lament the deception of false Christians and the evils of society, but the fact is that the biggest danger to our faith is not the evil without, but rather the indifference, neglect, and malaise within the individual heart as well as in the church. These attitudes become dominant through neglect of the Word, through despising the hearing of the Word, through indifference to the sacrament, and through compromise with error for the sake of peace and in the name of love.

Unless we are immersed in the Word of God and are growing in understanding and faith, unless our children are fortified in faith and life from the Word of God, all our talk and concern are quite hollow.

Further, Christianity is more than being against the prevailing sins. By

itself, to be against evil does not separate us from those who profess Christianity but whose confession is lacking in understanding of law and gospel. It does not distinguish us from the heathen who have scruples.

Christianity is founded on the proclamation of the law which convicts the sinner and the gospel which comforts the troubled heart and prepares the sorrowing for heaven.

The precious promises of our Heavenly Father steel us against the attacks the devil directs at Scripture as well as against our faith and hope founded on Scripture.

If you care about your faith, about the proclamation of God's Word and your salvation, and if you truly care about your children, the Word of God will be the primary focus in the home

and in daily life. Only the Word and promise of God can see us through the difficult times that lie ahead, and on into eternity.

All excuses and all justifications for indifference or neglect notwithstanding, the issue is not debatable. Our Savior prays for us that our faith does not fail (John 17). The kingdom of God is here. It suffers violence at the hands of men. Yet all who are in Christ Jesus shall conquer!

Stand fast therefore in the Word!

Nourish your children in the faith!

Our Lord will keep us. He will see His faithful children through the evil until He calls us home. *"May love for God and His Word increase, and may He help us. Amen."*

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas



The Word From Immanuel!

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

"PARTS OF THE BODY ALL WORKING TOGETHER"

Lord, open our ears to hear, our minds to understand, and our hearts to believe Your Word. Amen.

As each of you walked into this building this morning, you were using many parts of your body: your legs and feet moved you along; your arms helped to maintain your balance; various muscles throughout your body kept you standing upright; your eyes searched for the best pathway; your

lungs provided oxygen; your digestive system provided food; your vascular system transported the oxygen and food to your muscles; finally your brain used your nervous system to coordinate all the parts of your body so that they acted in unison and for the good of the whole body. Truly the body is a marvelous creation of God.

Even more marvelous is that creation of God called the Holy Christian

Church. The Holy Spirit compares the Church with the body when He says: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ...But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually" (1 Cor. 12).

Think of all the people in this building as being parts of one spiritual body with Jesus as the Head, the brain. As for each of us, we are members of the body. Just as every part of your body has a particular function and each part works to serve the whole body, even so you and I are in the Church to serve the whole Church. Perhaps you are the hands of the body, reaching out to support others who are in need. Perhaps you are the feet, moving the body along, so that we do not sit in one place. Perhaps you are the eyes of the Church, looking out for obstacles in the path—that is, looking out for the enemies of Christ. Perhaps you are the mouth, speaking the words of God to the rest of the body.

Whoever you are, since you are a Christian, you have a place in the body of Christ. You have a service to perform which will be a blessing for all the rest of us.

One of the reasons why you are at ILC today is to find out about members that Christ has placed in the body here. Here you will find students, teachers, and staff members who serve as supervisors, cooks, librarian, maintenance men, and administrative personnel.

They are all working together to make ILC function as a place where young people can come and receive an education that has Jesus Christ at the

"...Whoever you are, since you are a Christian, you have a place in the body of Christ. You have a service to perform which will be a blessing for all the rest of us."

center of everything.

The Word Prepares Us!

Here you can learn more about your place in the body of Christ. You can learn how to be what God wants you to be...what He created you to be. Other than our sister school in Mankato, Minnesota, there is no other educational institution that I know of that can give you this kind of learning.

The reason that we can do this is that Christ Jesus Himself has given us what we need. First of all, He gave us Himself. He came to Earth as a human being, lived a perfect life, suffered and died for all our sins, rose again from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. From there He gives us the benefits of His sacrifice. He gives us forgiveness of sins; He clothes us with His righteousness; He fills us with a life that is eternal; He creates within us faith and love and hope; He promises us an everlasting place in heaven.

How does He give all these benefits? Through His Word! The Bible is His voice speaking to us. It is His power working in our hearts. Without the Word of God, ILC would be no different than any other school. In fact, ILC would not even exist.

The Word of God brought us together to form this school. It is the Word of God which has prepared men and

Continued on page 24

———— SURVEYING CLC History ————
FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET (1985)
“REFLECTIONS...PROJECTIONS”

Number Four: OUR MISSION EFFORT AT HOME

The Christians who organized the CLC in 1960 had earlier chosen the name INTERIM CONFERENCE for themselves. This name expressed the hope of eventual unity and the desire for a permanent organization. Although this early union was a loose one, obligations became evident at once. There were needs aplenty—pastors without congregations, pastors with too few numbers to support them, and isolated flocks without shepherds.

The INTERIM CONFERENCE appointed a Mission Committee in charge of distributing available funds. Where groups were very small or not yet organized, pastors sought secular employment. In several instances outside employment on the part of the pastor enabled teachers to continue full time in their day schools, thereby keeping them open. The Mission Committee also did its best to assist where need was greatest. The Eau Claire congregation was sent a monthly sum for a brief time, what with two pastors in its midst. None accepted more help than needed. For example, the Milwaukee group returned the checks it received. Their pastor had found employment, and they managed to pay the rental for their place of worship. Travel help was also given some pastors to assist in serving isolated and distant groups with occasional services.

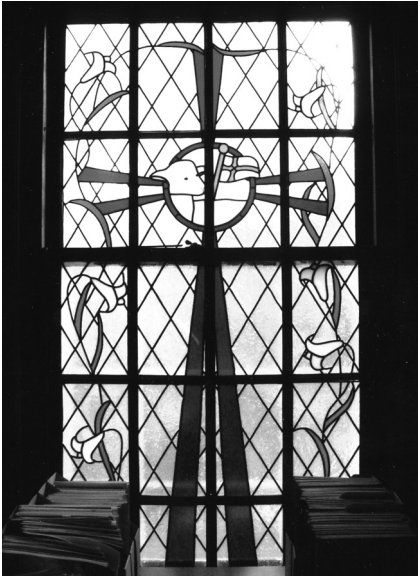
Loosely organized, indeed! But what love and concern, Christian to Christian! Circumstances caused these earliest mission efforts to be turned inward. In retrospect they might more aptly be termed survival assistance.

When the CLC was organized in 1960, a Board of Missions was elected and an orderly budget and mission program were established. Among the earliest congregations on the mission roster were those of Winter Haven, Fla.; St. Louis, Mo.; St. Paul, Winner, S.Dak.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Gethsemane in Spokane, Wash.; and Seattle. As these congregations became self-supporting, the Board of Missions was able to take on other newly founded groups. Our mission effort could at last turn outward. Finally we were beginning to reach out with the light God had entrusted to us.

Over the years there have usually been ten or more congregations under the supervision of our Board of Missions. In fact, almost half of our 66 congregations were at one time, or still are, a part of this on-going CLC mission effort. Under the gracious blessing of our Lord, the gospel light is now shining forth through the CLC from coast to coast and from Alaska to Florida.



—Pastor Carl M. Thurow (1914-1999)



ILC Library window depicting the Lamb of God

women to serve the Lord on this campus. It is because we have the Word of God that we are able to prepare students to serve as members of the body of Christ.

The Word of God is the blood that flows through the body, providing life and strength to every part of the body. And every part of this body is working to keep that blood flowing.

So it is that from your parents you have heard the gospel message; you have heard that message from your pastors, from your Christian day school teachers and your Sunday School teachers. Other people in your home congregations are doing many different things to keep them functioning so that the gospel will continue to be heard in them.

If you come to ILC*, you will find that here too the members of the body of Christ will continue to serve you with this lifeblood of the Church. And after you leave, you will do your part,

so that the lifeblood of the gospel can flow to others who can become what God wants them to be: members of the body of Christ. This will continue by the grace of God until the whole body is gathered together as the Church Triumphant in heaven.

If you do not come to ILC, may the Lord use the members of His body in your home congregations so that you will grow in spirit and be able to serve the whole body in whatever way the Lord chooses.

PRAYER: *Lord of the Church, fill the members of Your body with such faith and love that we will joyfully serve You and Your Church to the glory of Your name and the eternal welfare of Your people. Grant this for Your name's sake. Amen.*

—Prof. John Pfeiffer

**It was "Visitors' Day" for prospective students when this chapel talk was delivered.*



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