

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

Thou holy Fire, Comfort true
Grant us the will Thy work to do

And in Thy service to abide;
Let trials turn us not aside.

Lord, by Thy pow'r prepare each heart
And to our weakness strength impart

That bravely here we may contend,
Thro' life and death to Thee, our Lord, ascend.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

COME, HOLY GHOST, GOD AND LORD! — T.L.H. 224:3



PENTECOST

the Resurrection Connection

Strains of “Jesus Christ is Ris’n Today” and other Easter anthems have barely faded from my ears, and here I find myself working on a Pentecost devotion! The Editor says it has something to do with a ‘deadline’; well, that may be, but when you think about it, it has more of the sound of a ‘lifeline.’

You see, the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost have a vital (“life”) connection. Without one the other becomes a pretty ‘dead’ affair.

What value would Pentecost have, were it not for the fact of the Resurrection? We are told (Acts 2:1-13) that the disciples, seven weeks to the day after Jesus’ resurrection, were gathered together in one place in Jerusalem. There was the sound of a rushing wind; tongues of flame appeared on the heads of those present, and a startling un-babble of untrained men suddenly spoke in a variety of languages.

But all spoke intelligibly with one uniform message! The reader is told

that foreigners who heard these men testified that “we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (v. 11).

One might think that that is a pretty general statement, but it shouldn’t be hard to guess what the central topic—the most wonderful of all the works of God!—would have been. As the weeks in Jerusalem follow, the fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, came up in every sermon the apostles preached (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30 etc.).

But the resurrection of Jesus is not a stand-alone event. Now, after forty days of instruction from the risen Christ, the disciples were in a better position to understand that Jesus’ resurrection was really the culmination of God’s age-old plan. As Jesus told the disciples: “Thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day” (Lk. 24:46).

Jesus’s resurrection also gave them

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a framework for their own mission and message: "...and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations... you are witnesses of these things." That early outburst of *glossolalia* (tongue-speaking) would have been silly and fruitless had these witnesses been able to speak only of a charismatic Leader whose mission had been brutally cut short; or of a moralizing Preacher whose saving solution remained bound to some notion of work-righteousness.

the *Wonderful* **Works of God**

So all the fireworks of Pentecost would have meant little had the speakers not been able to point to the "wonderful works of God" exercised through the ministry of "Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). But indeed they had very good news to share on that Pentecost day: a living Savior gave life to their astonishing testimony!

Another way to look at this is, what value would the Resurrection have, were it not for Pentecost? Even before Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist was testifying that "I baptize you with water, but there comes one after me who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk. 3:16).

Having finished His work by which sinful men are reconciled to their Maker and God, Jesus imparted the Spirit by whom those who hear the gospel are convicted of their sinfulness and are converted to faith in His saving work. The Holy Spirit creates the fire of spiritual life within; the miraculous signs of that first Pentecost Sunday simply represented the continuing work of the Spirit wherever Christ's gospel would be preached.

The Word of God—another blessed

gift of the Holy Spirit—is clear on the fact that we who are dead in trespasses and sins are not capable of turning from sin; we are not, by ourselves, willing to believe God's promises; not able to accept that "the wonderful works of God" are all that wonderful or that they personally impact us. Had the Spirit not been given to work faith through Word and Sacrament, Jesus really would have died in vain, for nobody would have believed.

But the Spirit's outpouring works faith—and faith in wondrous measure! Many of those first Pentecost speakers had previously deserted Jesus. They went into hiding for a time. But now the Comforter opened their mouths to speak of the salvation to which God calls all people, regardless of who they are or what they have done, to believe and be saved.

Even more, this same Spirit who works in me, works in you. He "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." Just as those first disciples, even while speaking in different languages, were united in a perfect harmony of message, so the true Church on Earth is equipped by the Spirit to confess "one body and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

The Holy Spirit, whose outpouring at Pentecost represents His ageless work of sanctification, creates and sustains the faith that trusts in the Resurrection. The Spirit then is our resurrection connection.

—Pastor Peter Reim
Loveland, Colorado



THE MIRACLE *of Sanctification*

Our church family just celebrated Easter. We were reminded of how Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection as well. All will be raised, some to eternal damnation in hell, others to eternal salvation in heaven. So where will you and I end up?

As important as Christ's perfect life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection are for us, without the work of the Holy Spirit—the miracle of sanctification—Christ's work would not have answered the question above. Before Christ ascended into heaven He promised His disciples that He would send them the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. This was visibly demonstrated on Pentecost.

Of course, the Holy Spirit has been at work since the beginning of time and will continue to work until the Last Day.

Way back in confirmation class we learned that the primary work of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is sanctification—the act of making something holy. Since the fall into sin all people are born unholy. In fact, by nature they are enemies of God and of anything good. It is the Holy Spirit working through the Word and sacraments, the Means of Grace, that hearts dead in sin are made alive again in Christ. Talk about a miracle!

In the Old Testament it was the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of unbelievers that led them to faith in the promises of the Savior to come (read Hebrews chapter 11). The Holy Spirit sanctified the hearts of the faithful, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and so forth. This work was done from the beginning. "...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth..." (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

the *Powerful* **Word of God!**

Today we have the recorded Word of God to use in our testimony. We give credit to the Holy Spirit for that as well. "...Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21b). "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches..." (1 Cor. 2:13).

What a blessing to have at our disposal the very Word of God to use in our own faith-life and in the preaching of the gospel! Not only that, but we have the promise of God that His Word "shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11b).

As those who have been "made holy" by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, we will want to share what we have with others. Christ's love for us compels us to do so.

How is this best done?

God has placed each of His children in situations in life that enable them to bear witness of Him to the unbelieving world.

To some, a sanctified life may simply involve faithfully performing to the best of your ability, living a life of humility and service to others, as Christ did.

Others God may have blessed with financial resources to support His Kingdom work around the world. For example, the Missionary Helper program could use more sponsorship, as could the Student Aid Fund for Immanuel Lutheran College.

Others may have been blessed with abilities in speaking, art, music,

science, or the building trades which could be put into service in Christ's kingdom.

Let us not forget about the "still, small voice" as well. Perhaps your particular gift is a word of comfort or encouragement for those suffering, or a greeting card with a Bible verse, or a visit to a shut-in. If we are observant, God provides many open doors to His children. May the Holy Spirit lead us through them!

*Thou holy Fire, Comfort true,
Grant us the will Thy work to do
And in Thy service to abide;
Let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by Thy power prepare
each heart
And to our weakness strength impart
That bravely here we may contend,
Thro' life and death to Thee, our
Lord, ascend.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! (TLH #224:3)*

—Prof. Joseph Lau
Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Confirmation: *a most beloved tradition*

"Tradition, tradition.....tradition!"

Some of you may be singing, or at least humming, the opening tune from the popular musical *Fiddler on the Roof* about now. The story revolves around a poor Russian/Jewish milkman and his desperate attempt to cling to the traditions of his faith in an ever-changing world. The song "Tradition" runs as a theme throughout the musical.

Traditions or customs can be wonderful vehicles for expression of ideals, values, and religious beliefs. Most of the main events in our religious lives revolve around traditions as well as the Word of God. From Sunday morning services to weddings, funerals, and holiday celebrations, our Christian heritage is rich with symbolic traditions and customs.

We must take care, however, to remember that traditions are the trap-pings or outward expressions of something far more valuable. As long as a custom or tradition does not impede the understanding of God's Word—nor become cumbersome, distracting, or outmoded—it may retain its value.

However, it behooves the custodians of the customs to pass on to future generations an understanding of their meaning so that value will not be lost.

One such beloved tradition of the Lutheran church is the rite of Confirmation. Confirmation is neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. Its beginnings have come down to us from the early Christian church. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church has held that confirmation is a sacrament. However, since confirmation was not instituted by Christ, does not necessarily involve an earthly element, and doesn't give or convey the forgiveness of sins, it does not match the definition of a sacrament.

Many nations and cultures throughout history have and still use rites of passage or coming-of-age type ceremonies. These rites are used to show the community that the young people presented are now recognized as adult members of some particular organization or group.

Was this the purpose behind our confirmation? Is confirmation simply to signal to the congregation that we now have some new adult members?

the Main Purpose

The main purpose of confirmation lies in an understanding of the sacraments. Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Mt. 28:19-20).

Parents and Christian congregations join in the task of teaching our youth the truths of Holy Scripture. In home devotions, Sunday school classes, Christian day schools, and especially in confirmation classes, we seek to carry out the Lord’s command to pass on the blessed truths of His Word to the following generations.

Unlike baptism—which is to be shared with all nations and its promise “...is to us and to (our) children...” (Acts 2:39)—holy communion is to be received only by believers who are able to examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28), confessing both their sins and their Savior.

When children are brought to the Lord in baptism, our Savior-God makes a covenant with the individual that He will never break. Parents or sponsors spoke in the place of the child as saving faith was created in the heart of the new member of the Holy Christian Church.

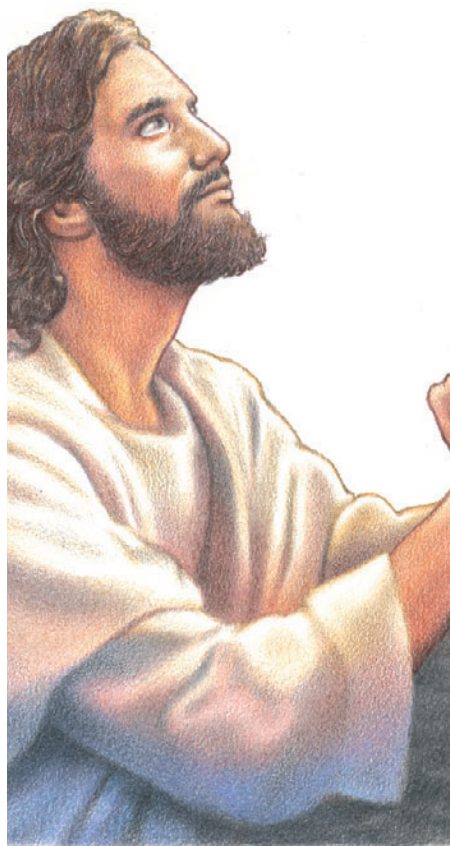
In the catechism instruction which precedes confirmation, our youth are thoroughly instructed in God’s Word. Our intent is that our confirmands become “self-examiners,” as well as workmen thoroughly equipped to rightly divide the Word of Truth. It is our prayer that they become the best possible tools in the Hand of their Savior—knowing doctrine, hymns, and Bible passages both for their own understanding and benefit as well as for their becoming witnesses and ambassadors to all whom they meet.

After years of studying at the feet of their Savior, our confirmands have the opportunity to publicly proclaim the faith given to them at baptism. They also profess the desire to continue in that faith, being willing to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from the Savior.

It is by God’s grace that we are children of God—believers in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin. It is through the freedom earned for us by our Savior that we may use traditions to convey the messages of the Scriptures to others.

And it is also by His grace that we will be able to continue to properly use the blessed tradition of confirmation.

—*Teacher David W. Bernthal*
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin



A FATHER'S *day devotion*

It's the Thought that Counts

Father's Day is coming up.

It's time to be thinking about what you will do for your father this year. It's time to start looking for a good card that will tell Dad that he means a lot to you. It's time to start thinking of a gift that he could use.

And it wouldn't be a bad idea to mark June 21st on the calendar and plan to spend some time with Dad that day, if you can. Remember to call him on the phone and talk for a while, if you can't go to visit him.

If you pick out a shirt or tie for Dad, he will probably tell you that he doesn't really need any new clothes. If you offer to take him out to eat, he will probably say that it isn't necessary. Even if you only give him a card, you may hear a "You didn't have to do that." But Dad will almost certainly appreciate the thought behind any gift or gesture that you choose.

It is true—as is often said—that it is the thought that counts.

If good thoughts are obviously missing, even the most expensive gift is an empty gesture. A gift can even be insulting. But when a gift is given with good thoughts, even the humblest gift becomes something not only acceptable but precious to the one who receives it.

Higher thoughts

In the case of a Father's Day gift, the thoughts that we want to express and protected us. They trained and disciplined us. They counseled and guided us. To do all of this, they made sacrifices; they put our needs above their own; they were patient with us and forgave us.

It is only right that we should remember these things and acknowledge them.

But believers can have thoughts higher than those of our fathers and the good that they have done for us. Human fathers are far from perfect. We have thoughts of our heavenly Father and of His love for us. We are moved by thoughts of the sacrifice that He made for us when He offered up His own Son to save us from our sins and free us from death and hell.

We want to honor our earthly fathers because we know that this is what our heavenly Father wants us to do. We appreciate our earthly fathers because we recognize them and all they have done for us as gifts from a good and gracious heavenly Father. It is He who gave us to them to care for us and bring us up. It is He who gave them to us and blessed us through them.

If these are the thoughts behind what we do for our Dad this Father's Day—or any other day—then whatever we do will show him the honor that we owe him.

—Pastor John Klatt
Rapid City, South Dakota

Pray and give thanks for Godly Fathers
FATHER'S DAY
Sunday, June 21

THE DISCOURSES *of Christ*

Luke 17:1-4—Jesus Warns of Offenses

Forgive How Many Times???

Your personal Judgment Day is coming. That gives you a start, doesn't it?!

And if it did give you a start, what did you start to do? Start running? Where?

As you know, there's only one place to run. And it's a lot better than running to yourself, to hide somewhere inside, as you sometimes have done. Lots of people do that—even some who call themselves Lutheran.

By the way, have you ever seen a real millstone? Those things are heavy rock, circular, about three or four feet across, one or two feet high. They come in pairs, one set on top of the other; the bottom one fixed, the top one moveable, each weighing hundreds of pounds. One of them has grooves. There's a hole in the top one for an axle. Power from a windmill or mill-stream—transferred by gears and belts—keeps the top one moving round and round over the bottom one. Grain is slowly fed into the top center hole, and as it works its way to the outer edge it gets ground (milled) into flour. Millstones have been used for thousands of years.

The reason for the "Judgment Day" reminder above is that you deserve to have one of these stones chained around your neck (one would be enough!) and then to be tossed overboard.

You might well ask, "Why should that happen to me?" Well, if you continue in your self-righteous, pharisaical smugness, which at times reaches an annoying level...if you no longer

are aware of your damnable sins, but only of your goodness ("inherent" now, you may think!), so that you are no longer sensible of your guilt and shame and offensiveness to God—even though you are a "fine, upstanding Lutheran!"—well, you get the picture.

You should know the scene well. You quit being loving and forgiving to people—even when they say over and over again, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" You stop being gentle, especially to the young and tender. When you speak, it is sharp and offensive, and it scares people right over to the outer edges of God's gracious Kingdom, if not out of it altogether! And the worst of it is that you think you are licensed to act like that! This idea grows among Lutherans quite easily—it always has.

It's time for the Law of God to punch your old Adam—or old Eve, as the case may be—right in the solar plexus, to knock the wind out of you, to knock you down, so that all you can think of is to crawl, to drag yourself away.

It's mercy if you happen to remember—at Christ's beckoning, of course—to flee to the cross. And in the very moment you start to do that, you find yourself asking Him to "renew a right spirit within" you (Psalm 51).

And behold, Christ has already come to you! There are His feet, right by your groveling hands. And there He kneels down towards you. And look! There are His gracious hands, reaching down to take yours and lift you up. And lo and behold, He has brought His Word and Sacraments along...

in order to *Forgive you*
Again! And Again!

But that's His very business! And, miracle of miracles, it also becomes your business again! And again! Doesn't it make you want to run to Luke 17:1-4 and re-read it? Go—and read verse 5 too! And review the Fifth Petition of your Small Catechism while you're at it.

One test of the worth of this article is for you to ask yourself if you know any people who really, really should read this.

Because you noticed that this really, really applies to someone you know!

Of course, I had you in mind when I wrote it. And I'll probably have to read it myself a couple of times today yet. Not just to check the spelling and punctuation for the editor. He's a good judge of things like that.

But there's another Judge. He's coming, as you know.

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



OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE HISTORY

all history is God's story

No. 13 in Series: Genesis 25-27

Isaac Blesses His Children

Deceit...lies...intrigue. The latest Hollywood movie? No, family life in the home of Isaac and Rebekah!

The history of this family was colorful from the beginning: an arranged marriage, twin sons who struggled together in the womb so much that Rebekah asked the LORD, "Why is this happening to me?"; and Esau selling his birthright to Jacob.

As we read the account of Isaac blessing his sons, we see the next chapter of God's salvation story unfold, but we also see that sinfulness continues even among faithful children of God.

When Rebekah asked the Lord about her struggling twins, God made it clear that it was the younger son (Jacob) through whom God would establish His promise and from whom the

promised Savior would come. God told her, "Two nations are in your womb... one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Over the years as their sons grew into men, Isaac and

Rebekah developed a fondness and favoritism toward different sons. Isaac favored Esau—the outdoorsman, the hunter, the rugged man of the field; while Rebekah favored Jacob—the quiet man who stayed closer to home, tending to matters there. "Isaac loved

Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28).

When Isaac became old and felt that his earthly days were nearing an end, he intended to bless one of his sons, thereby conveying God's blessing and the Messianic promise to him. Isaac knew that it was God's will



that Jacob receive this blessing but, because he favored Esau, he acted contrary to God's will; he instructed Esau to hunt and prepare a meal for him and then to come and receive the blessing.

Rebekah heard the conversation between Isaac and Esau. Because Rebekah favored Jacob, she immediately sprang into action to assure that Jacob would receive the blessing. By dressing in Esau's clothes, covering his arms with goat hair, and outrightly lying about his identity, Jacob and his mother were able to deceive the nearly blind Isaac into believing that Jacob was Esau; thus Isaac, contrary to his own intention, blessed Jacob.

Isaac blessed Jacob (whom he thought was Esau) saying, "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!" (Gen. 27:27-29)

Isaac's blessing mirrored what God had first told Rebekah before the boys were even born, and it echoed the first promise God had given to Abraham when He called him to leave his homeland (cf. Gen. 12:1ff). This blessing was fulfilled as the descendants of Jacob became a great nation—when the people of Israel ruled over their "cousins," the descendants of Esau, and then generations later when the Savior was born from that nation.

When Esau returned from his hunt, it was too late. The blessing had already been given to Jacob. In anger Esau vowed to kill Jacob after his father's death. This threat caused Jacob to run away from home to protect his life. A distraught Esau begged his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also!" (Gen. 27:38), and he wept aloud, Isaac replied

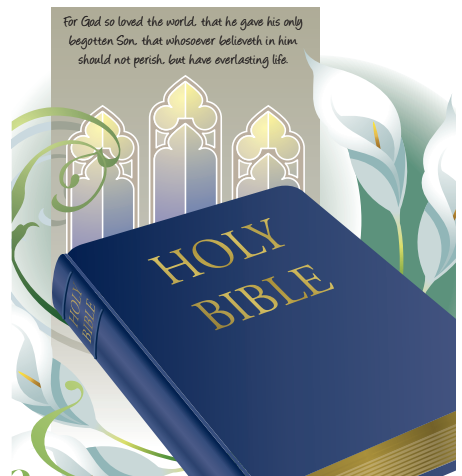
"...Our sinful foolishness cannot stop God's will and plan, but it does lead to sorrow. Our attempts to "take control" won't change the fact that God is the One in control, yet prideful self-control in our lives will fail and often cause pain."

by essentially repeating Jacob's blessing, but this time from Esau's perspective, though he does also look ahead to a time when Esau's descendants would get out from under the rule of Israel: "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck" (Gen. 27:39-40, NIV).

Through their sinfulness Isaac and Rebekah brought sorrow into their family. Isaac did not heed God's clear direction and will. To counter the actions of her husband, Rebekah took matters into her own hands. These parents and their children reaped what they sowed.

But did all this affect God's plan and the course of His Story? Not at all.

God would bless the younger son, Jacob, according to His will regard-



less of what Isaac did. God did not need Rebekah's scheming to accomplish His will, though He did use it. Our sinful foolishness cannot stop God's will and plan, but it does lead to sorrow. Our attempts to "take control" won't change the fact that God is the One in control, yet prideful self-control in our lives will fail and often cause pain.

And yes, even a man and a woman who so trusted the Lord's guidance that they married one another "sight unseen" still shared in a sinful weakness that doubted His wisdom

and ability to accomplish His will.

Deceit, lies, and intrigue are the fruits of sin. Oh, how sinful and foolish we can be! Oh, how gracious and faithful God is in bringing His Story to pass so that our sins are forgiven in Christ. As Isaac blessed Jacob, the magnificent promise of God's special people and the coming Savior passed on to the next generation—one step closer to the "fullness of time" when that Savior would be born.

—*Pastor Wayne Eichstadt*
Mankato, Minnesota



THE PSALMS

the Christian's Prayer Book

Please read Psalm 18

Deliverance from Our Enemies

This psalm of thanksgiving written by David characterized more than an event or two from his life. It characterized his entire adult life. Saul turned against David because of the praise David received after defeating Goliath; until his dying day, David faced enemies and conspiracies, plots against his life and his throne. Even his own sons (most notably Absalom) plotted against David, seeking to usurp his throne right up to the end of his life.

In this psalm David does not take credit for defeating his enemies. He does not take pride in his own cunning, prowess, or might of arms. He gives glory to God. He trusts in the Lord as the Almighty who has revealed Himself as a terror against the enemies of His people.

Time and again David conveys images of the great power and terror of the Lord that is brought to bear against the forces of evil who had at tempted to destroy David, displacing

him from his throne. They could not prevail against David. David was safe and secure in the protection of the Lord who had placed him in a broad and safe place (v. 19).

The force of the Lord protecting David was far greater than the forces that were aligned against him. And so, not only was David inspired to write this psalm, but the Spirit caused this psalm to be repeated as a summary of David's life and reign in 2 Samuel 22. David saw the Lord's protection and blessing as characterizing his life; he knew God's protection to the very end of his earthly sojourn.

In our modern world the forces of evil that oppose the children of God



are many and fierce. Children of God face severe antagonism from the scientific community concerning issues of the sanctity of life. Children of God are ridiculed not only as ignorant but as imposing antiquated values into the private decisions of other people, and hindering significant medical advances that could alleviate so much of the world's suffering. The world almost recoils when believers take a stand against the sins of society that have become socially acceptable, almost taken for granted. Everywhere one looks the evil of the world is almost celebrated. Believing children of God may feel besieged by the forces of evil in this world.

blessed be our Rock

This intimidation and ridicule assault the Christian community. It is a danger to the faith of many simple Christians who have fallen under the spiritual care of those who no longer regard God's Word as the sole authority for faith and life.

We are concerned for the spiritual welfare of our young people attending colleges and universities where the prevailing philosophy serves the purposes of Satan. However, no one is immune or out of range from these ideas and the ridicule of the world.

Early this year much was made of the observance of Darwin's birthday; that occasion was seen as the perfect opportunity to point out how supposedly ignorant, backward, and silly Christians—especially American Christians—are to believe in such an “outdated book” as Holy Scripture.

With recent political changes on the American scene, it appears that the forces of evil have been emboldened to strike back against those who refuse to endorse the evil of the world as a wholesome blessing of a diverse society. Christians who object to giving their blessing to perversion and filth have had their churches picketed,

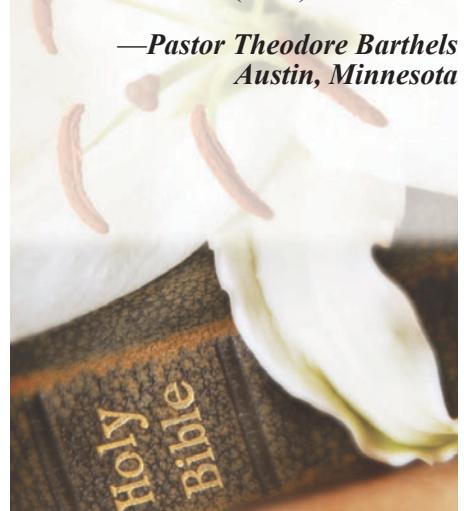
and they have suffered verbal and even physical abuse.

We should not expect anything less from the world. As it hated Christ, spurned our God, and attacked His Anointed since the days of old, so it shall do to the end of the Earth.

However, neither should we be intimidated by them, assuming that they are going to overpower and destroy us. The forces of the Lord are still awesome and far more powerful than the forces that are against us. We live under the Lord's protection. He who has saved us from sin shall keep us safe unto everlasting life. He has put us in a safe and broad place because He has delighted in us (v. 19). He has dealt with us according to His grace in Christ and not according to our sin. In Christ He sees us as faithful and righteous. He has made us His children and empowered us to live in this world as His beacon leading to the truth, to glorify His name. His protecting care is with us always even to the end of the age.

This truth which characterized David's life is a valid and certain for us also. “The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted” (v. 46). Great deliverance He gives to His King, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore (v. 50).

**—Pastor Theodore Barthels
Austin, Minnesota**



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 4:11-16

In Pursuit of Progress

Any time one talks about 'progress,' a debate is sure to ensue.

What is considered 'progress'? The real estate developer sees progress as an office park, with roads and shiny buildings; the environmentalist might count it progress if the same tract of land were designated 'open space' or 'wilderness.'

Progress in ideas or even in theology can also be controversial. One would think that the very point of theology would be to progress to a better understanding of the eternal, unchanging God as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

The trend in our modern world, though, is to continually find new ways to cast doubt upon the revealed knowledge of God, until the student of theology is no longer certain of anything concerning God.

It was Paul's counsel to Timothy that he progress as a pastor, and he gave the young pastor some sage advice as to how true progress is achieved. The danger, of course, was that Timothy—through latent pride or influence from the Foe—might bring into doubt and disrepute his ministry or even the very faith he professed.

A major concern was that Timothy's youth might give opportunity for some to disdain his ministry and the eternal message he proclaimed. Paul, in effect, says, "don't let it happen"; rather, instead of infecting his young co-worker with self-inflated defiance, he counseled pursuit of a progress which would silence their words with his deeds: "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, Paul reminded him of the holy and precious gift be in spirit, in faith, in

purity."

In all these areas, a quiet sincerity can speak volumes of the reality of Christ's love and righteousness. Even in our age, people are surrounded by the coarse and selfish, the greedy and conniving. The one who is genuinely free in Christ to be a minister to his fellow man will convey his message with respect for every individual; he will measure his words, conduct himself with thoughtfulness and prudence, demonstrate his faith in "the one who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23), always looking on his neighbor with genuine and selfless interest.

helping the congregation!

Timothy is also responsible to help the congregation progress in its theology/spirituality: "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (v. 13). He is not to wait for an expected visit from Paul to help the congregation advance in its comprehension of the Word of Life.

Here in the Word—which is useful "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 2:16)—we have the means of grace. As Paul dramatically reminded the Galatians (3:1), through his preaching "Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among them as crucified." Paul's point is that the message of the cross is intended to—and would!—invigorate and mold their Christianity as a whole.

If Timothy was minded to take his office for granted or to allow himself constant distractions, stowed on him at his ordination. After Timothy spent his youth learning the Word on the

knee of his mother and grandmother and being instructed by Paul, it became evident he was blessed with the spiritual wisdom and grace that suits one for the work of the ministry.

This gift was affirmed “by prophecy” when Timothy was set apart for the public ministry, when the hands of the elders were laid on him, symbolizing the blessing and selection of the Lord.

“Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” A half-hearted ministry will not progress; it will not win hearts; it will not fully build on the solid foundation of Christ. A faithful servant’s service

may but he will find his reward, ultimately, in the salvation of both his hearers and himself.

Have you known a teacher, a pastor, a fellow Christian whose faith, whose faithfulness, whose grasp of the Word, or whose Christ—like love for others caught your attention and/or inspired and nourished you?

Let the example of such a one be the start of your progress, but not the end. “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.” Then your progress will leave no room for doubt or dispute or debate—only for blessing and faith.

—*Pastor Peter Reim
Loveland, Colorado*



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),

fifth In a series

(Love) thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13:5b-6)

Your one-time friend who just yesterday dissed you in front of the whole class was picked up for speeding on the way home from school this afternoon. “Ha! He had that one coming!”

You have a co-worker who seems to be after your office job. She takes every opportunity to point out your weak spots whenever the boss is around. But just last night she was caught in a lie that cost her her job. “She deserves what she got—after all those times she’s tried to make me

look bad....”

It just seems so natural for the old nature within-to respond like that!

And don’t you and I, according to that same old nature, also find it natural to keep track of those bad things that others have done (especially if they were done to us!)?

Many popular reality-type programs on night-time television have “oneupsmanship” as one of their recurring themes. There are the shows in which teams are challenged to “survive” against improbable odds, only to end up voting that weakest link off the team because of what he failed to do. Or it might be the chef in the kitchen who couldn’t keep up and dragged the rest of the team down, or that one who failed to lose enough weight, causing his team to lose that round.

Keeping an account of the wrongs others do is so easy, but at the same



time according to the new nature the Holy Spirit has given us, it is so out of character for us as Christians.

There is a place for keeping track of pluses and minuses, but it is in our checkbook register, not in our day-to-day life.

In our home there happens to be a Pure water filter attached to the kitchen water faucet. I don't claim to know exactly how it works, but it separates out various pollutants while at the same time it lets the water flow through, taking the iron taste out of the water.

The apostle Paul would have us place a kind of "love filter" in the flow-line of our interactions with others, holding back the impurities of sin. Wrongs done to us? Sins committed against us? Divine love "filters them out" and disposes of them in the fires of repentance. Temptation successfully avoided by us? Sin repented of? Along with the angels of heaven, let us rejoice!

On average, a water filter should

last for hundreds of gallons; the filter on a furnace or central air unit for several months. Our "love filter," however, needs to be restocked every day!

Think of it: Every conversation, every passing encounter, every family event is a potential line-clogger. Do we not all too often take notice of how we have been wronged, even keeping a mental record of it for future reference or revenge?

How blessed we are that "the LORD does not impute iniquity" to us (Ps. 32:2)!

How wonderful to have a God who forgives!

How fathomless is God's grace and love toward us who so often fail as "love filters"!

God does not keep track of our sins; His divine ledger shows nothing but credits—the successful payment of all of our iniquities by Jesus Christ!

"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!" (TLH #175:4)

**—Pastor Paul Krause
Markesan, Wisconsin**



CROSS PURPOSES *Evangelical Collapse?*

Part II—concluded from last month

Recently an article appeared (online) entitled, "The coming evangelical collapse." The writer suggested that within ten years "evangelical" Christianity in the western world will basically be dead. Christians, he wrote, will be living "in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century."

We do not know if he defines "evangelical" as we do. We think of

the word in terms of the proclamation of the blessed gospel of redemption given by the Father and expressive of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ—the glad tidings of free salvation in Jesus Christ.

To be an "Evangelical" Lutheran Church is quite different from the manner in which the word "evangelical" is generally used—or abused—today. Nevertheless, we in the Evangelical

Lutheran Church dare not take the alert lightly. Consider some of the points made by the writer of the article (cf. last month's issue also):

**** "Being against gay marriage and being rhetorically pro-life will not make up for the fact that massive majorities of Evangelicals can't articulate the gospel with any coherence. We fell for the trap of believing in a cause more than a faith."***

**** "Christian education has not produced a product that can withstand the rising tide of secularism."***

**** "Charismatic-Pentecostal Christianity will become the majority report in evangelicalism."***

Within the Lutheran Church—we exclude our own to our own peril!—how many know what it means to be a truly confessional, orthodox Lutheran Church?

It is observable that most Roman Catholics do not exhibit an understanding of what Roman Catholicism is beyond tradition, doing and believing what the church says and what the pope declares. The same mindset is generally the case within Protestantism!

However—and this is critical—how many of our Lutherans, older adults and young people, can articulate the faith in a clear, if simple, confession of the Reformation principles "scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone"? Dare we ask how many even care? How many among us can tell why and what we believe beyond "because my church teaches it"? How important to us is regular Bible study and regular, faithful worship around Word and sacrament?

How many among us are willing to stand alone if we are forced to move away from our church, rather than join the church closest in proximity and/or closest in doctrine?

How many among us appreciate the faithful proclamation of law and gospel—and see such proclamation as relevant to one's life now and in eternity? How many among us can give a simple statement of faith about how one is saved? How many of us are faithfully training up our children in the Word and demonstrating the authority of the same Word in our own lives?

If we are concerned about an evangelical collapse—and God grant that we are!—such are some of the questions that need to be asked when we look in the mirror! And more importantly, such are the questions that need to be asked if we are concerned about eternal salvation for ourselves, our children, and our children's children!

This writer has posed these questions many times: "Will there be a church like ours when our children are our age?" And, "Do we care?"

Even more important is the question our Savior asked—it's a question which transcends the future of evangelicalism and even the Evangelical Lutheran Church: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8)

The Lord will have His faithful when He comes. The question is whether we will be among those who call upon Him night and day for deliverance.

Least pastors fail to see themselves in the mirror, we ought to remember that to a great extent what we see as the emphasis of our ministry will be reflected at least in part by those for whom we are responsible under our respective pastoral calls!

The time is growing short. God help us all to give attendance to those things that contribute to faith and salvation. Neglect and indifference is a dead end road...!

***—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas***

Report of Board of Regents for ILC

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

God Lives on Earth in Us

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“If God lived on Earth, people would break His windows.” So goes an old Yiddish proverb.

In fact, our God does live “on Earth.” The only true and living God has made us His temple—His “spiritual house” of “living stones” through our risen Lord Jesus Christ. When the people of this world complain against our God, walk in darkness, and openly oppose the authority of His Word, they are “breaking” the windows of our house!

We and all His believing children throughout the world feel the pain of these broken windows.

Like the persecuted Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor in Peter’s day, we are also “strangers and pilgrims” in this world (1 Pet. 1:1,17; 2:11), because God has chosen to make His saving presence known in and through His Christ-believers. The modern world will continue as it did in Noah’s day before the judgment--“marrying and giving in marriage” (Mt. 24:38).

This does not mean that it will be easy for the members of God’s spiritual house and kingdom. As we see increasing harassment of the Christian faith and the cause of the gospel in our own time, we may become discouraged in our faith living and laboring.

How often we need to remember our Savior’s words to that first “little flock”: “Do not fear, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Surely, we are told by Christ to “seek” the kingdom-rule of God (Lk. 12:31) through faith in His Word. But it is also our heavenly Father’s good and gracious “pleasure” to give us His kingdom—the kingdom of grace here, and the kingdom of glory hereafter.

There is no need to have fear of any kind where the spiritual house of His kingdom-Church is concerned—no fear of losing our place and inheritance as we abide in His Word; no fear that our cause will fail as we go forth with the gospel to enlarge Christ’s kingdom in a hostile world; no fear that we shall lack workers or financial means or anything else necessary to accomplish His “good pleasure.”

Yes, God lives on Earth in us. Yet He is also the One who fills “heaven and earth” (Jer. 23:24). He is the “LORD of heavenly armies” who promises to “shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land” and “all nations” throughout this New Testament period (Heb. 12:26).

This shake-up of nations, rulers, institutions, and the physical Earth itself is intended to “break the windows” of every worldly kingdom and stronghold, that men may fear Him and begin to know the Wisdom that is Christ. His kingdom, on the other hand, shall “come” and keep on coming; that is our Lord’s Prayer and ours!

“Since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have gratitude by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28). With confidence in the promise of our God’s “good pleasure” working itself out in us and in the world, may we receive more grace to serve our God with cheerful, thankful hearts!

—*Pastor Vance Fossum*
West Columbia, South Carolina

SURVEYING CLC HISTORY

from the 25th anniversary booklet (1985)

“REFLECTIONS....PROJECTIONS”

Number Six: Building Projects at ILC

The Interim Conference members wanted to reach out to others with the gospel. “Christ’s love compels us.” Thus our Immanuel Lutheran College was established to install Jesus Christ and His Spirit into our youth and the future workers in the Church.

The school started when four members of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato assumed financial responsibility for the project. A private association was formed to operate the school through a Board of Directors from Immanuel Lutheran Church. A piece of property with an old frame building was made available. The members of the Interim Conference promised moral and financial support. Professors were called and the school year started in 1959 with 45 students in the high school, college, and seminary departments. Out of town students were housed in private homes and later in two dormitory homes. Full responsibility for the school in Mankato was assumed by the Church of the Lutheran Confession when it was incorporated in 1960. During the fourth year of the school’s existence over 100 students were enrolled.

Space limitations had prompted the 1961 Convention to choose an Expansion and Relocation Committee. In December, 1962, the Ingram Estate in Eau Claire came to the attention of the Committee. A special Convention in January of 1963 decided to purchase the beautiful 75-acre property with the building for \$85,000. During the following summer, volunteers were busy with remodeling and converting the on-site buildings for school and dormitory use. Immanuel Lutheran College was moved from Mankato to Eau Claire. The buildings and campus were dedicated September 1, 1963. Professorages were added as the need arose. Today there are 12.

The “Cottage” (3 classrooms) was built in 1965. Reim Hall was added in 1969 and the gymnasium-auditorium in 1970. Northwest Hall was remodeled to serve as the men’s dormitory in 1971 and the rotunda in Ingram Hall was enclosed in glass to serve as an additional dining area. The former president’s residence was used as a dormitory for women in 1973 and called Birch Hall. South Hall, completed in 1976, was built as a dormitory for the ladies. The men’s dormitory, North Hall, with the potential to house 80 students, was dedicated in 1981.

“The Lord has done great things, and we are filled with joy” (Psalm 126:3).

—*Pastor Maynard J. Witt (1913-1992)*



BELC SEMINARY GRADUATION

february, 2009



D. Koenig, awarding diplomas

One of our sister church bodies in India, the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC), operates a full-time, 2-year pastoral training course in the city of Nagalapuram. On February 20, 2009, the first graduating class of sixteen men received their diplomas, and will soon be assigned to congregations. Missionary David Koenig describes the happy occasion below, for which we thank the LORD.

We just finished the graduation at Nagalapuram and returned to Chennai. That is the way to spend the day. The sixteen graduated, except Suresh was absent to take an examination for his teaching, and Chellaiah was absent due to a child being ill. We gathered on the roof of the building we rent for classes with awning overhead to protect from the sun. It was a beautiful day with the fine breeze blowing to keep us cool, fluffy clouds going across the azure blue above. Four of us spoke: Pastor D. Paul read the responsibilities to the men and they answered they would carry them out. As the men knelt for blessing, seven of us proceeded individually to each man to pronounce a blessing with prayer, laying on hands to each. I was granted the privilege of handing out the diplomas. At the close student Edwin Raj spoke, thanking each for the teaching and help, including the CLC USA. Pastor Aseervadam closed the program with a more casual talk. Afterwards we ate a meal cooked by D. Paul's wife. The devil certainly took it on the chin today as these men went forth to serve the living Lord. —*Missionary David Koenig*



A banner greeted us on arriving



Announcements

CLC General Pastoral Conference
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
June 16-18, 2009

Agenda:

* Old Testament Exegesis: Joel 2:21ff—
Prof. Paul Schaller

* New Testament Exegesis: 1 Thessalo-
nians 4:1ff—Pastor Eric Libby

* 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, Study what is the
“setting” for this section? Public worship? If
so, how is this determined?—Professor Paul
Sullivan

* Engaging in Mission Work while Main-
taining Confessional Integrity—Pastor Luke
Bernthal

* Survey of Millennialism (History, current
state etc.)—Pastor David Schierenbeck

* The Need for Balance in our Pastoral
Practice in Dealing With Applications of Fel-
lowship/Confessional Principles (Presentation
and Discussion of Current Issues)—Pastor
John Schierenbeck

Chaplain: Pastor Neal Radichel

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor Mark
Gurath

Communion Service Liturgist: Pastor Scott
Schiermeister

Program Committee: Pastor Robert List,
Jay Hartmann, Norman Greve

Excuse Committee: Pastors John Johannes,
Andrew Schaller

Organ Coordinator: Professor John Reim
—*Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Secretary*

“Name” Correction

Our November 2008 issue had a report
on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Faith Lutheran
Church of St Louis, Missouri. An incorrect
name appeared in the listing of pastors who
had served. Serving from 1965-1969 was not
Louis Bernthal, but Leonard Bernthal.

Exploratory Services

Exploratory CLC services are being held
Sunday at 9:00 a.m. in Eden Prairie (SW Twin
Cities Metro), Minnesota. Services are held
at the Albin Chapel, 6855 Rowland Road in
Eden Prairie. For more information, contact
pastor David Schierenbeck (651-454-7689) or
Pastor John Hein (763-784-8784).

Worship Service Time Change

Berea Lutheran Church, Inver
Grove Heights, Minnesota, has moved its
summer service time (through Labor
Day weekend) from 9:30 a.m. to 9:00
a.m.

Correction

The words, “Now, since Sarah
bore only two children...” (May, 2009
issue, p. 8, second column) are incor-
rect. Hagar was Ishmael’s mother, not
Sarah. To reflect the historical facts,
please make the following correction:
“Now, since Abraham had fathered two
sons, but God had disconunented Ishmael
from...”. We regret the error. — editor

Send Change of Address to:

Lutheran Spokesman
2750 North Oxford Street
Roseville, MN 55113

Cover: Matt Schaser