

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



The Importance of Gratitude

In a newspaper column a woman wrote about a Christmas gift she had received from a friend. She made light of the gift, telling of how she had played catch with it and misused it in other ways, since she disliked it and had no intention of using it.

The author was trying to be funny, of course; that is her job. But the column didn't seem very amusing. Behind the lighthearted tone lay a meanness of spirit that would treat a friend's act of kindness with such contempt. Gratitude is important, even in small things.

The Scriptures teach the importance of gratitude in a variety of ways. There are exhortations to gratitude. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts . . . and be thankful" (Col. 3:15). There are examples of gratitude, such as the leper who, when he saw that he was healed, returned to Jesus to thank Him (see Lk. 17:11-19).

But especially powerful are the narratives and passages which teach the



wickedness of ingratitude. In the reference above nine other lepers did not return to thank Jesus. We also remember that Jesus pairs the unthankful with the evil (Lk. 6:35); and among the evils that will characterize this final age is that people will be "unthankful" as well as "unholy, unloving, unforgiving" (2 Tim. 3:2).

Why are the unthankful so worthy of condemnation? The unthankful person despises what is good: gifts and acts of kindness. He considers them too small to be worthy of gratitude, or he considers them his due. Why should you be thankful for what someone owes you?

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The unthankful person may be ungrateful toward his fellow man, but the unthankful heart is really unthankful toward God. The unthankful man does not appreciate God's gifts of food, clothing, and shelter. He thinks, "I worked for those things. I don't have to thank God for them." He despises the good things God has given him, always wanting more and coveting what his neighbor has. Worst of all, the one whose heart and life are characterized by ingratitude despises the spiritual gifts that God offers in the gospel.

Because of our sinful nature, we believers also are guilty of the sin of ingratitude. God also forgives our sins of ingratitude for Christ's sake.

And the Holy Spirit teaches us to be thankful to God. He humbles us by showing us our unworthiness, so that we do not imagine that we deserve anything from God. How can we, who know that we are sinners redeemed by the grace of God through the blood of Christ, ever imagine that God owes us anything? How can we despise any gift or blessing that comes our way, no matter how small?

A humble spirit is a thankful spirit. The Holy Spirit also opens our eyes to see how kind God has been to us and how much He has given us. He teaches us to acknowledge God as the source of all the good things that we enjoy, from the least of them to the greatest.

—Pastor John Klatt

GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS

Life in this sinful world can get pretty rough. Almost every day there is some trouble to face. Not a month goes by without us feeling some sadness in our hearts.

Christians are not immune to the hard knocks of life. We see this from the Bible. In its opening pages we read of murder in the very first Christian family. On the pages which follow we find a clear trail of tears left behind by God's people.

It is not much different for us today. Sometimes life pushes us around too. Each of us can relate to David when he said, "I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6:6).

But for all our bumps and bruises of body and heart, we can be thankful. Yes, you read the last sentence correctly. When hurt and heartache touch our

lives, we can praise God. Listen to what our Lord says through St. Paul, ". . . Give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20).

Please note, the passage does *not* say, "Give thanks for everything that goes smoothly in your life." No, it says "in *all* things give thanks." Why? Because God has a loving purpose behind everything He allows to happen to us, even the things that cause pain. All things work for the good of those who love God. When tough times come, we can be sure that God is working out some wonderful purpose in our lives.

As a pastor I have learned that adversity in my ministry has been a great blessing to my personal faith. There have been times where some looming problem has forced me to lit-

erally pray my way through an entire day. At these times I also find myself frantically reading my Bible for the comfort and strength I need to see me through dark days. What I find is that no day is truly dark with Jesus as my Lord and Savior. One passage of many that has been most comforting to me is found in Romans 8:32, “He 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?”

Troubles Needed

Because I am a great sinner I need troubles. I need troubles to get me back where I belong—close to the Word of God and on my knees in prayer. I’m thankful that God loves me enough not to let me wander too far from His side.

Trials serve not only to strengthen our faith in Christ, but they may also work to bring God’s kingdom to other sinners. Certainly it wasn’t a pleasant thing for the little Israelite girl in 2 Kings to be enslaved by the Syrians, yet through her troubles the great general Naaman was brought to trust in the only true and saving God (see 2 Kings 5).

The story is told of Betsie and Corrie Tenboom, two sisters who helped hide Jews from the Nazis during World War II. Eventually the two were caught and sent to a prison camp. By words and actions they boldly testified of their faith in Christ to the other prisoners and even to the guards.



Although in dire circumstances, Betsie was always finding something new for which to thank the Lord. One day she asked Corrie to join her in thanking God for the lice which infested their clothing and beds. Corrie refused. She saw no purpose in thanking God for lice! “Please,” responded Betsie, “let’s thank God for the lice.” Worn down by her sister’s pleadings, Corrie reluctantly consented.

Not long afterwards it was discovered that the two could freely lead their fellow prisoners in Bible studies and prayers without being bothered by the prison guards. Why? The guards did not want to come into a barracks full of lice! Indeed, in *all* things God is to be praised!

As we gather with family and friends around a delicious meal this coming Thanksgiving Day, let’s remember to thank God for everything! In fact, it might well be that we should be especially thankful for that which is most hard and most unpleasant in our lives.

—Pastor Michael Wilke

A Call To National Repentance

During the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the

Pentagon in Washington, D.C., there have been numerous questions asked about this great tragedy. Of all the

many questions posed, perhaps the most significant one is: Why would God permit such an evil, horrendous act that took the lives of thousands of innocent people to be committed against our nation?

An initial response to this question would have to include the fact that God hasn't provided us with any revelation concerning this specific incident. Also, when puzzling over the mysterious governing hand of God, we are reminded in the book of Isaiah concerning the LORD, "'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts . . .'" (55:8,9). The apostle Paul adds concerning the lofty ways of God, "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom.11:33)

While the LORD our God has not provided us with a direct answer as to why He allowed such a catastrophic event to strike our nation, still He hasn't left us completely in the dark. In His infinite love and mercy, He has revealed certain important truths in Holy Scripture which help us to have insight concerning His will and ways.

In God's many dealings with sinful man down through the centuries of time, His primary interest, concern, and will have been that He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

The LORD displayed this loving concern for Israel when during the period of the Judges He repeatedly allowed their neighboring enemies to attack them. The reason for permitting enemies to wreak havoc in Israel's native land time after time is that the people of Israel were so often guilty of forsaking the LORD by running after false gods and giving themselves over to worldliness of living. God used the attacks to serve as a spiritual wake-up call for them to repent and turn back to Him in faith and love.

A Wake-Up Call?

Has our country been in need of a spiritual wake-up call to national repentance as in the period of the Judges? Consider the national sin of citizens murdering countless numbers of unborn babies through abortion under the sanction of civil law, or the national sin of condoning sexually immoral and perverse ways of living—or, worst of all, the national sin of religious groups across this land not acknowledging the Triune God as the one true God and Jesus Christ as man's only Savior from sin, death, and the devil.

When speaking of a national call for repentance in America, it is not only the unbelievers who are in need of repentance, but also we Christians as well. We all are in need of humbling ourselves in the sight of God in contrition and repentance, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

"... When speaking of a national call for repentance in America, it is not only the unbelievers who are in need of repentance, but also we Christians as well. We all are in need of humbling ourselves in the sight of God in contrition and repentance . . ."

Listen to the prophet Isaiah as he makes confession to God for the national sins of Israel in his day, “You are indeed angry, for we have sinned—in these ways we continue; and we need to be saved. But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities” (Is. 64:5-7).

Ever since the attack on our nation, the thoughts of increasing numbers of fellow citizens have been tending upward, using such expressions as “God Bless America.” And yet how many of them know who the true God

is, and how many know that God’s ultimate blessing of salvation comes through repentance over sin and faith in Jesus’ gift of forgiveness that He worked out for us on the cross of Calvary?

Along with the many different measures of providing a helping hand after the attack on our nation, as Christians we are called upon by the LORD to help our fellow citizens by following the example of John the Baptist who proclaimed a message of repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ. This message may not always be well received or be popular. But this is the kind of help that everyone needs in our country if America is to be truly blessed by God in the highest form.

With this in mind—May God bless America!

—Pastor Mark Gullerud

THE WORSHIP SERVICE

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

Psalm 95:6

Tenth in a Series—

The Offertory and the Offerings

The Offertory

“And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

These are the words generally spoken by the worship leader immediately following the “Amen” at the end of the sermon. The words are a prayer that the words of the gospel spoken in the sermon may give to the hearers that blessed peace in heart and mind that

only God can give; this is a peace which is beyond anything that one will ever find in this world of sin—a peace which can only be found by faith in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

The worshipers respond with a prayer of their own, which is called the *Offertory*. This prayer is the beginning of that part of the service in which the worshipers respond to the gracious goodness of God as presented in the sermon by offering of themselves and

their possessions to the Lord.

This prayer is taken from Psalm 51:1-12. *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.”*

This prayer is first of all a plea for spiritual renewal. After David prayed, “blot out all my iniquities,” he now begs for spiritual renewal. This is the nature of a true spiritual life. Not only are we truly sorry for our many sins and repent of them, but we pray that the Lord by the power of His Spirit will cast every evil and godless thought, word, and deed out of our lives, replacing them with a spirit of Godly obedience, as well as with love toward God and our fellowman.

Secondly, this prayer addresses our need for continual spiritual preservation. We know that we need the strength which God alone can provide through His means of grace every second of every day. Therefore, our prayer is that the Lord will never remove His Holy Spirit from us, but rather that He will *“Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free spirit.”*

David knew from experience the tragedy of willful impenitence and the spiritual suffering which accompanied it. But he also experienced the joy of God’s salvation when he heard those words of God through the prophet Nathan, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die” (2 Sam. 12:13).

So it was David’s prayer and it is ours that the Lord God will *“uphold me with Thy free Spirit.”* Indeed, may

He ever dwell in us and sustain us in our life of faith and love, that His name may ever be glorified in us!

The Offerings

The offerings of thankful hearts are gathered. This is that special time when the worshipers are given the opportunity to offer to their Lord a portion of their possessions as God has blessed them.

Our Lord clearly urges us through the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7-8: “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.”

The Lord’s work is carried on by His people in simple thankfulness to their Savior-God for the blessings—both spiritual and material—which they have received from His gracious hands. Heartfelt thankfulness will follow when His blessings are experienced.

We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate’er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,
To Thee our firstfruits give! (TLH 441:1-2)

—Pastor Em. L. D. Redlin



THE LORD'S PRAYER—A Series

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

7th Petition "But deliver us from evil"

The 7th Petition of the Lord's Prayer is one to which every Christian will subscribe and one which he will pray most earnestly. "But deliver us from evil," the Lord taught His disciples. Our Lord knew the power of Satan, not because He was inclined to sin or had sin, but because He was confronted by the deceitfulness of the devil whom He

overcame perfectly when He was tempted in the wilderness.

Jesus knew that in this world His disciples would have struggles and difficulties, both physical and spiritual. Whereas Jesus had the inherent strength to overcome because He was true God and true Man, we by contrast do not have the strength within our-

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S *Small Catechism*
(Concordia Publ. House, 1943)

The Seventh Petition

"But deliver us from evil."

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil to body and soul, property and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a joyful end and graciously take us from this valley of sorrows to Himself in heaven.

—MARTIN LUTHER'S *SMALL CATECHISM*
(Sydow edition, 1988)

A comparison of two currently used versions

selves to overcome the deceit of the devil or to bear the burdens of life ourselves. Because of Who He was, Jesus was not swayed by the devil in any way. On the other hand, we are easily beset by the devil, the world, and our own flesh, because of what we are—mortals, subject to sin and the consequences of it.

By instructing His disciples and preserving that instruction for us in the Bible, our Lord is putting us on alert that He wants to help us and is able to help us. Regardless of the evil with which we are confronted, our Father in heaven is willing and able “to deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor,” as Martin Luther put it in the catechism.

The Lord delivers us in His own way and in His own time according to His good and gracious will. He delivers us from evil, keeping it from us; He delivers us by helping us to bear it, or by making it work to our ultimate

good. The Scriptures abound with historical, real life events of God’s people that demonstrate His love—Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Paul, and many more. Finally, He brings us the ultimate deliverance—that for which we pray with earnestness. We pray that “when our last hour has come, [He] would grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.” Death is the ultimate tragedy and evil for those who reject Christ. For the believer in Christ it is the ultimate victory over evil and freedom from evil. We express our faith with the apostle who said, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better” (Php. 1:23).

All the people of the world live in an evil world and are confronted by it regularly. We pray to the living God, the Triune God, the God of strength, of mercy, and of love: “Deliver us from evil.” To whom do they pray who construct a god of their own imagination?

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer

LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

First Kings, Chapter Eighteen

“How long will you waver between two opinions?”

It is not surprising—knowing the political and religious climate in Israel at the time—that the people didn’t answer Elijah with so much as a word. The fierce animosity that King Ahab (and Queen Jezebel!) had for Elijah

was not a secret. In the three years since it had rained last, Ahab had left no stone unturned in his quest to find Elijah, whom he blamed for the drought. We read in this chapter that Ahab had sent someone to every nation

to hunt for Elijah, going so far as to compel them to take an oath that Elijah was not there.

Of course, the truth of the matter was that the drought had come as a result of God's judgment on Ahab and Jezebel's promotion of heathen worship. In the time since the resulting famine began, Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord (except for the 100 prophets hidden by Obadiah, Ahab's servant, who worshiped God secretly himself). And in their place the monarch and his wife had taken on 850 other prophets to serve the Canaanite idols Baal and Asherah.

The people were no fools. From Elijah's question it seems that both the worship of the true God and that of Baal and Asherah were going on simultaneously; and we can imagine how that happened. With the political establishment being pro-Baal, the people paid at least lip service to him in order to save their jobs, their homes, perhaps even their lives. They saw what had happened to the Lord's prophets. They saw the huge numbers of people employed in heathen worship. Many found trying to "serve" both the Lord (in secret) and Baal (publicly) was the thing to do.

No, it isn't surprising this is what happened, but that does not make it right. Jesus once spoke of how impossible it is to divide one's loyalties. In Matthew 6:24 He says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." God also addresses this scenario in the first commandment in which He forbids worship of any other so-called god: "You shall have no other gods."

"It is for you and me living in these latter days for whom such an account is recorded. . . You may have heard it said: 'I and God are a majority.' God give us the spiritual strength to stand up with an Elijah and proclaim God's name without fear."

But was it ever difficult to do what was right! The philosophy of "might makes right" was carrying the day. Almost one thousand priests, plus the king, plus the queen, made a powerful majority that was very hard to take a stand against. Not one of the people stood up. There on Mount Carmel it was only Elijah who stood up before Ahab and his entourage of religious leaders.

God Answers

And it was through the hand of that lone prophet that the Lord gave unmistakable proof of His existence as the only true and real God in that miracle so well-known to us. Both "sides" made the same preparations. Each built an altar, laid wood on it, and slaughtered a bull which was laid on the altar for sacrifice. The challenge was this: "You call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God" (18:24). What happened would be hilarious, if it weren't so pitiful—those prophets of Baal spent the entire day pleading and dancing and leaping, "cutting themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. . . . But there was no voice; no one answered,

no one paid attention” (18:28).

It was then, after dousing his offering three times with buckets of precious water, that Elijah offered a simple prayer. God’s answer was quick and complete: “The fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. . . . Now when all the people saw it, . . . they said, The Lord, He is God!” (18:38-39)

What a patient, long-suffering God the Lord is to help His people in their weaknesses! Once again we see Him going way out of His way to help them, not to stomp on them; to build them up, not to tear them down.

It is for you and me living in these latter days for whom such an account is recorded. It is not hard to see the vast majority today bowing down before

the altars of money and convenience and pleasure and recreation. And we know how strong the temptation is to fit in—to hide our worship of the true God simply for the sake of avoiding what we see as potential problems: ridicule, questions, etc.

You may have heard it said: “I and God are a majority.” God give us the spiritual strength to stand up with an Elijah and proclaim God’s name without fear.

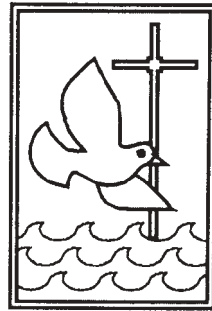
But also for those many times in which we show our sinful weaknesses, may our God give us of His grace and kindness and patience and forgiveness in Christ. May He speak to us loudly and clearly through His Word, as He did to those Israelites through that miraculous sacrifice; may He reconfirm us in our trust in Him—the Lord who is God!

—Pastor Paul Krause

Your Valuable Christian Baptism

More than thirty-five verses in the New Testament speak about your Christian baptism. Verses recorded in Matthew chapter 28 and Mark chapter 16 teach that *Jesus* started this Sacrament *after* His resurrection. Acts 2:38 shows that Christians should baptize *repentant* sinners.

The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, attached His good news of salvation to the water used with your baptism. He poured forgiveness of sins upon your head. Galatians chapter 3 declares: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ.” Baptism placed the robe of Christ’s sinlessness about your shoulders.



According to verses in Acts chapter 22, Titus chapter 3, and First Peter chapter 3, God’s gospel-water washed away your sins, enabled you to rely on Jesus, and made you an heir of heaven. Baptism has enabled you to talk confidently with God.

Use your baptism wisely. The first

two verses of Romans chapter 6 warn Christians not to misuse God’s full forgiveness as a license for intentional sinning. Jesus and baptism provide you with deliverance *from* sin, not with permission to *commit* sin. Unless repented of, willful sinning nullifies the saving work of Jesus and baptism.

Baptism Enables

Through baptism God Himself enables you to lead a God-pleasing life. God’s washing not only delivered you from sin’s guilt and punishment, but also from its power and control.

Romans chapter 6 relates how the forces of evil attacked and humiliated Jesus at His crucifixion, death, and burial. But on Easter morning the Heavenly Father raised Jesus to a life entirely free from Satan’s attacks.

In a similar way your inherited sinful nature had control over you, but through God’s washing of regeneration He gave you a new spiritual life free

from Satan’s tyranny. Now you can say “no” to evil temptations and “yes” to God’s ten commandments.

Finally, highly value the generous outpouring of the Holy Spirit which accompanies your baptism.

Your valuable Christian baptism includes the renewal of the Holy Ghost, which God shed on you abundantly through Jesus Christ your Savior. The Holy Comforter warns you during times of temptation. In days of trouble He reminds you of God’s promises in Scripture and urges you to pray. Through the gospel He keeps your Christian faith alive and enables you to abound more and more in godly living.

Baptized into Thy name most holy,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
I claim a place though meek and lowly
Among Thy seed, Thy chosen host.
Buried with Christ and dead to sin,
Thy Spirit now shall live within (TLH 298:1)

—*Pastor Em. Robert Mackensen*

Studies In Ephesians

Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of Christ (See 3:8)

Chapters 6:1-9

Children and Parents

(Please open your Bible and read Ephesians 6:1-4)

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering

and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

The above verses provide the necessary context for Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1-4, in which Paul shows us God’s will concerning the parent/child

relationship. Christ loved us. He gave Himself up for us. Our sins have been wiped off the books.

This gospel context is necessary because only when the Spirit through Word and Sacrament impresses these truths upon our hearts can we be moved to imitate God's love in our human relationships.

Our sinful nature, of course, does not want to imitate God in anything.

Paul's words in chapter six condemn us all, for we are still sinners. In our duties as children or parents we are miserable failures. And yet as we turn back to Christ and His cross, we find forgiveness.

At Jesus' cross we also find the grace to open our hearts to Paul's words and to follow them. What a blessing it is when the Spirit makes both child and parent willing to follow God's instructions.

To children who honor and obey their parents out of love for God, God gives the promise of a good and long earthly life. God is not saying that obedient Christian children will be without trouble in this world. They will, however, avoid some of the pitfalls that rebellious children bring upon themselves. For example:

- + Because they refuse to listen to their parents, and to warnings about drugs and alcohol, the health of rebellious youth may suffer greatly in later life.
- + Rebellious children often grow up to be lawbreakers, their lives plagued by legal trouble and even imprisonment.
- + Not willing to respect their parental providers, they, as adults, are likely to have little respect for those who provide

them with a paycheck; The predictable result is financial headaches due to the loss of one job after another.

- + Most tragically, a disregard for human authority shows itself in a lack of respect for God and His Word; rebellion against authority leads to plenty of earthly trouble; unless there is repentance, it can also lead to eternal damnation.

A Critical Need

Certainly it's true that not every dutiful Christian child lives a long life. Some of God's most obedient lambs die at a very tender age. When this happens, we trust that God knows best. And when we search His Word, we find at least one reason why God may see fit to bring one of his faithful servants home at an early age. ". . . Devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil" (Is. 56:1)

Paul's words to Christian parents—in particular, to Christian fathers—are never outdated: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

But so many fathers—even Christian fathers—are MIA, missing in action. Sadly, the spiritual training of the children is often left to the mother. To be sure, Mom is to play a vital role. But Dad is to take the lead, making every effort to show his children how deeply concerned he is for their souls.

Who can deny that this is one of the most critical needs in the church today? Families and congregations are in decline because too many fathers have been negligent in their God-given duty. Fathers need to become the spiritual

leaders of their families once again.

Following God's instructions does bring blessings. If the hearts of the fathers would again be turned back to the children, the blessings to family, church, and state would be innumerable.

Dads, remember the context of Paul's instructions and turn to God's awesome love in Christ! His rich supply of love will help you love your children in the way God designates here in Ephesians. Your heavenly Father sacrificed His best for you—His Son. May His love move you to give your very best to your children.

Parents and children alike inherit

eternal salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Being a faithful parent or an obedient child does nothing to earn us a place in heaven. Yet God's Word shows us what great damage—especially spiritual damage—is done when either parent or child sets aside these divine instructions from Ephesians 6. It shows also what wonderful blessings come when they are taken to heart and followed.

Forgive us, Jesus, where we have disregarded Your guidance for the family. Move us, Jesus, by Your Word of love to cherish and follow Your guidance.

—Pastor Michael Wilke

SMORGASBORD

• PERSPECTIVES

Much has been, and will continue to be, written about the September 11 terrorist attacks. As Christians we yearn for biblically-based perspectives about these happenings.

The writers of our *Spokesman* devotionals will surely make periodic references to these things in their writings. Below are a couple other responses. One is from the bulletin of a CLC church—by a pastor; another is from the Newsletter of a CLC Christian Day School—by an eighth grade student!

As we observe the national holiday of Thanksgiving—and pray again together the Lord's Prayer—let us remember everything we include in that prayer, including everything in the words "Give us this day our daily bread." Under this fourth petition in his *Large Catechism*, Luther says:

"A long prayer of many words could be made out of (this petition) by listing all the things it includes. For example,



we could pray God to give us food and drink, clothing, house and home, a healthy body; to let the grain and the fruits of the field grow to maturity; to help us to manage our household affairs well; to give and preserve to us a good wife, good children, good servants; to cause our job, trade, or occupation to succeed or prosper; to send us good neighbors and good friends, and so on. We could continue our prayer by asking God to give wisdom, strength, and success to emperor and king and all authorities, particularly our gover-

nors, counselors, magistrates, and officials, enabling them to rule well and to be victorious over aggressors and all enemies; to enable their subjects and people in general to live together in obedience, peace, and harmony; on the other hand, to guard us against all manner of harm to our body and means of subsistence, against storm, hail, fire, and flood, against poison, pestilence, and cattle disease, against war and bloodshed, famine, savage beasts, wicked persons, and similar evils. It is well to impress on the people in general that all the above good things and others like them do come from God and must be prayed for. . . .”

So let us pray.

• **RETALIATION?** *(From a Sunday worship bulletin of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota; the writer is Rev. Wayne Eichstadt)*

In the two weeks since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C., our nation’s leaders have been preparing for what President Bush has called a “war on terrorism.” President Bush and other leaders have left no doubt that it is our government’s intention to strike back at those responsible for this and other terrorism in our nation and around the world.

Many “experts” have been offering their opinions about our country’s “best response.” Leaders within the so-called “religious community” of our country have not been without their opinions either. Opinions are useful and interesting for debate, but when considering what would be a proper response we can do much better than opinion—we have GOD’S WORD! God’s Word clarifies many of the questions that have been recently voiced

concerning the United States’ response to terrorism.

God alone rules heaven and earth and everything in them. In order to provide law and order, protection, and leadership on the earth, God establishes governments. The governments of the world exist and have their authority by God’s ordinance. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Rom. 13:1).

Governments function as God’s representatives on earth, and He has given them a specific and significant responsibility: “He (earthly government) is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Rom. 13:4). God gives governments the responsibility of providing peace and safety for their citizens. God gives authority to governments and the responsibility to execute justice upon evildoers.

There is no doubt that the terrorists of September 11th committed great acts of evil. The legitimate authorities of the world have every right—and indeed they have the responsibility—to their citizens to respond and execute God’s wrath upon the criminals.

This authority to “execute wrath” belongs to governments, not to individuals. No individual has the authority from God to take matters into his own hand and execute justice. The examples of “ethnic retaliation” that have taken place in our country since September 11th are therefore sinful even if the people being attacked were responsible for the terrorism. These

actions are all the more sad and reprehensible because the store owners and others who have been attacked are not at all responsible for the loss of life in New York and Washington.

Our government's leaders and those of other countries around the world have the authority from God to retaliate against the criminal acts of terrorists. The weighty responsibility that faces them is to determine how best to accomplish this in a just way. The difficulty of this task and the wisdom that is needed to make such decisions are why our prayers rightly include petitions on behalf of our country's leaders.

"I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

• **COMFORT IN CHRIST** (*From the Silicon Times, newspaper of St. Stephen Lutheran School, Mountain*

View, California; by 13-year-old Danielle Ryan; sent to us by Mrs. Ida Drews who wanted to share her granddaughter's thoughtful Christian expressions; after recounting the "shocking" events of September 11th, Danielle continued to write . . .)

"In (our school's) devotion we discussed how blessed we were that we had the Bible to comfort us. Whatever happens we can root ourselves in God's Word. We have a reassurance that no terrorist can take away. We can also help the world by sharing the assurance of the Bible, especially during this time of uncertainty."

Then, after quoting 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, Danielle continues:

"Let us remember this in all that comes: we have God on our side. God says that nobody can take us from His arms, not even the devil.

"We as Christians should also remember, however hard it may be, that our first thoughts towards these terrorists should be forgiveness. Just as Christ forgave His enemies as He died, we should also forgive those who harm us. One student sums it up, 'we really need to pray for them.' Pray not only for our friends, but for our enemies as well."



Missionary Koenig shared this picture, showing 14 of Jyothi Benjamin's 18 seminary students at Nidubrolu, India. Three will graduate from the three-year course in May 2002.

THE BILLBOARD GOSPEL

As a child I well remember the well-spaced “Burma Shave” road signs—little gems of advertising wisdom which caught our curious eyes as we drove, particularly in areas where little else did. Recently some of you may have noticed the large, strategically-placed billboards all over the country bearing brief religious messages, all signed “God.”

Some of them include:

- * We need to talk — God;
- * What part of “Thou shalt not . . .” don’t you understand? — God;
- * My way IS the highway — God;
- * Let’s meet at My house next Sunday before the game — God;
- * Loved the wedding; Invite Me to the marriage — God;
- * Keep using My Name in vain, I’ll make rush hour longer — God;
- * Have you read My No. 1 best seller? There will be a test — God;
- * Don’t make Me come down there — God

No doubt these billboards catch the eye of many and get them thinking about such spiritual matters as Prayer, God’s Law, Church Attendance, God and Marriage, Sinful Tongues, the Bible, and God’s Judgment. And these billboards may ultimately get people thinking about things they otherwise don’t consider. Yet, upon further reflection, this “Madison Avenue” religious promotion leaves us with some serious concerns.

- 1) Once again—as is always the case when you seek to reach and not offend a religiously pluralistic society—both a generic god and a generic religion are being promoted. While many of these religious witticisms could be properly understood by a Christian, they also could be accepted and embraced by just about every religion on earth. No mention of the true Triune God; no mention of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him alone; in fact, no real message of redemption whatsoever. Rather, the impression is left (and likely intended) that one god is as good as another, one religion is as good as another, and therefore one church is as good as another.
- 2) While there are references to God’s book (we assume it to be the Bible), one senses a predominant emphasis on the Law and work-righteousness at the expense of the gospel and its biblically-focused message of sin and grace, of forgiveness, life, and salvation found in Jesus Christ. Without this, any and all religion simply becomes meaningless and leads only to spiritual futility and hopelessness.
- 3) The catchy ad-agency approach seems to promote a kind of superficial religion that seems far removed from the living, life-long faith and deep spiritual commitment which character-

izes the biblical disciple of Christ. It's almost like the difference between a fast-food, drive-through restaurant and a full-course restaurant or home-cooked meal. Overwhelmed by busy lifestyles and commitments, many are looking for a fast-food religious experience—one that is easy, convenient, and inexpensive—surely not the full-service commitment of Christian family and church life. Yet the creation and preservation of the gift of faith is a deep and lifelong Spirit-effected effort, accomplished only by faithful exposure to God's Word and the Means of Grace. To regularly worship with one's fellow Christians (and all that this

entails) and to absorb God's Word into our hearts and lives usually create a depth of wisdom and understanding that will serve our faith well in its many and mighty life-struggles against the forces of evil.

Once again, nothing against the use of billboards. We ourselves have used many outreach tools to reach precious souls. Yet the focus of our message is significantly different than much of "the Billboard Gospel" we are seeing.

—Pastor David Schierenbeck

From the Editor: *A while back we saw the road signs referred to in this article frequently in our area; lately we have not seen as many; yet the author's message remains pertinent, for it can refer to superficial religious messages wherever they are found—including on bumper stickers.*

Mission Helper Trip to India—2001

The Mission Helper Program was established several years ago to provide opportunities for members of the CLC to assist in the mission efforts of our church body.

About a year and a half ago the Mission Helper Committee proposed a change in the direction of the program.

In the past individuals would volunteer, and the committee would assist in making arrangements for a trip.



Members of the Mission Helper Team get ready to board the plane following a special Mission Festival at Faith in St. Louis. Pastor Todd Ohlmann and Mike Schierenbeck (back), with Nathan Greve, Karl Koenig, and Peter Evensen.



New group of pastors at Ambattur, Chennai area, India, study each Saturday to become part of the Bharath Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC)

Participants (including the Mission Helper Team) in the first Joint English Pastoral Conference of the CLCI and BELC in Chennai; another conference is planned for next year in Guntur.



This year's trip to India was the first of what is hoped will be many more "group" mission trips. The committee plans to arrange a group foreign mission trip every two years and to publicize the trip and the need for volunteers. This will allow time for prospective mission helpers to consider the needs and their gifts, and at the same time to pray for guidance in making arrangements and preparations.

The Mission Helper Committee will continue to make individual opportunities known as they arise.

As the name of the Mission Helper Program indicates, the goal and purpose of the program is to help our missionaries. During our time in India, it became obvious that we were doing exactly that—helping our missionary. In addition to attending and delivering papers at the first annual Joint India Pastoral Conference of the BELC and

CLCI, the mission helpers were able to accomplish many of the things that Missionary Koenig just doesn't have the time to do.

Mr. Peter Evensen of Faith congregation in St. Louis, Mo. along with Pastor Mike Schierenbeck and the undersigned were able to give approximately sixty combined hours of instruction to the pastors and students of the BELC and CLCI on such subjects as the Sacraments, Pastoral Counseling, and the Pentecostal movement. ILC students Nathan Greve and Karl Koenig spent their time with the orphans of the BELC. They taught the orphans lessons in English along with filmstrip Bible stories, catechism lessons, and hymns.

Exploratory work done in the Andaman Islands will allow Missionary Koenig to spend more time working in mainland India.

Another aspect of helping our missionary is the Christian fellowship that we were able to share with him. Having spent just five days away from the group in the Andaman Islands, I can only begin to realize how lonely it must be for Missionary Koenig and his wife, Mary, while they are away from family and friends.

Of course, the greatest benefit of this trip was the spreading of God's saving Word to our fellow Christians and to the lost souls of India. This truth was made so evident as we visited our last congregation. We were especially invited because there were to be ten baptisms that day. As Pastor Schierenbeck preached, I noticed out the front door of the church building that several men dressed in saffron robes were passing by. They were walking barefoot on their one hundred-plus kilometer Hindu pilgrimage to honor the false Hindu god Ganesha.

On our way out to the church we had been detoured through a dry river bed. We were delayed about an hour to avoid the thousands of people who were gathered to honor—and make offerings to—an idol erected in the village. It was somewhat surreal, to say the least.

As we sat in the midst of such an obvious display of Satan's darkness and deceit, I couldn't help but get a little teary eyed as I sat and listened to God's Word being proclaimed in truth, boldness, and love. I know I speak for all the mission helpers when I give thanks to our God for the privilege, opportunity, and joy that this trip provided.

—Submitted by Pastor Todd Ohlmann
Mission Helper Committee Chairman

Cover: John Fox

**Your 40th Anniversary
Thank Offerings Provided...**



...this Tata Sumo for the CLCI



...a future roof for churches like this in India