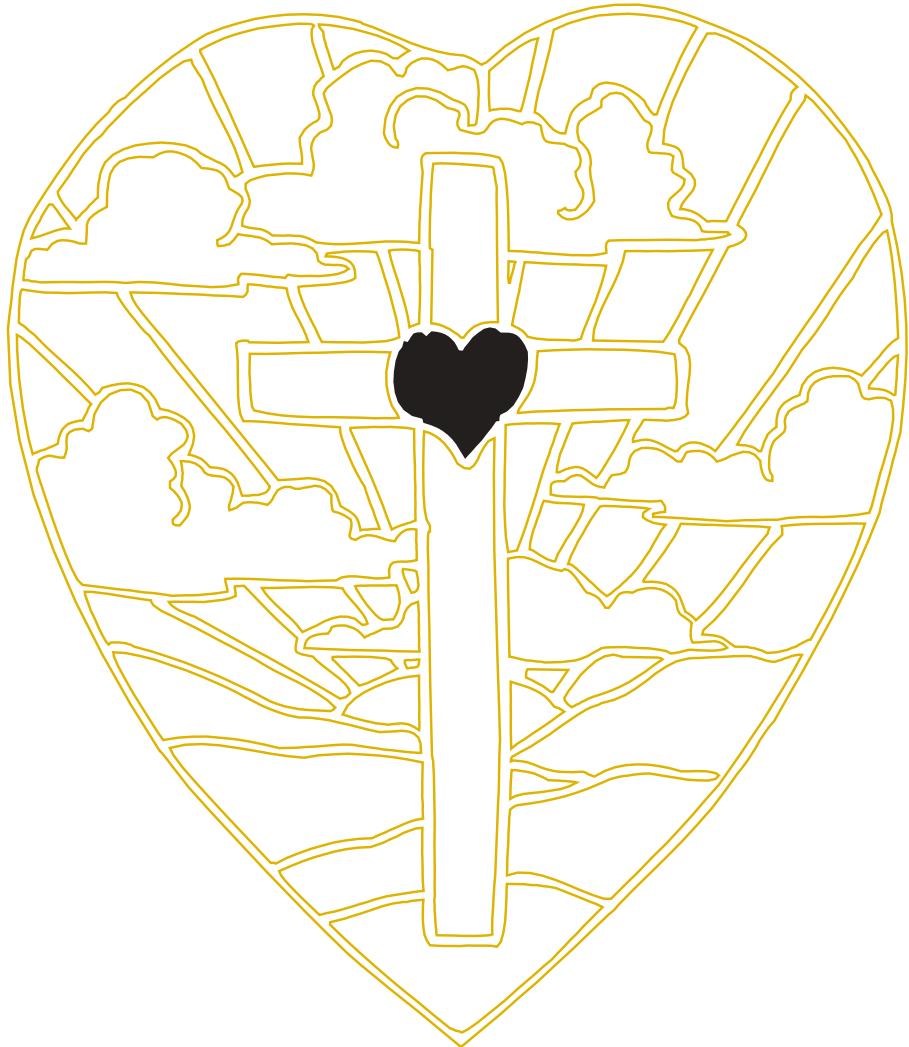


Lutheran spokesman



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“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened unto us the Scriptures?” — Luke 24:32

CHRIST MAKES HIS VICTORY OUR VICTORY BY OPENING UNTO US THE SCRIPTURES

When Jesus rose from the dead, it was a glorious victory! Death had been routed, sin nullified, and Satan's power crushed. Yet that splendid, objective fact of His victory still needed to be made the personal, subjective victory of each sinner. Until the end of time, His goal will be to *make His victory our victory*—and this He does by *opening unto us the Scriptures!*

Jesus began that work right away on Easter afternoon. In the eyes of the two disciples walking to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to be an ordinary traveler. When He approached them, their eyes were “held” so that they could attentively *listen* to Jesus expound unto them the Scriptures.

Notice, it is the *Word* that mattered!

It was more important for them calmly and soberly to consider what *Jesus* had to *say* to them, than for there to be an emotional outburst on their part.

The disciples wanted to believe the report of Jesus' resurrection, but they were slow to accept it. Human reason, fear, and emotion said that there was no way the bruised, pierced, lifeless body of Jesus was going to leave the tomb and walk again with them.

Isn't that also what our reason, fear, and emotion say to us when we gaze into the casket of a loved one, a believer who has succumbed to the ravages of cancer, old age, or some other malady?

Even then Jesus has the answer. He always has the answer!

What was the first thing that Jesus

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did? He scolded them, didn't He? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe . . ." (24:25). When we hear Him scolding them, we also hear Him scolding us. When Jesus scolds us, it really stings, doesn't it? That is good, though, for then He truly has our attention.

What does Jesus do when He has our rapt attention? He takes us back to God's Word. "He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (24:27).

Burning Hearts

When they drew near to the village, the disciples wanted this wise traveler to remain with them. There was no way they could get too much of what He had to offer them!

Isn't this the way we feel when reading our Bibles, and the Holy Spirit reveals something that we had not noticed before? It is the same feeling we get when we hear a sermon that really hits home. The disciples described this well when they said, "Did not our hearts *burn* within us . . . while He opened unto us the Scriptures?"

Even though Jesus had vanished from their sight, from that point on they truly *saw* Jesus by remembering and believing the risen Savior's *Word*.

There is no substitute for the Word of God. The victory Christ accomplished through His Passion and Resurrection becomes ours when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts through God's Word. Our saving connection with Christ is created and preserved only by the Word.

When our feelings and emotions are taking us on a wild roller coaster ride, so that we can't tell which end is up, what is the one thing that can give us

... There is no substitute for the Word of God. The victory Christ accomplished through His Passion and Resurrection becomes ours when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts through God's Word.

clarity, calmness, direction, and comfort? It's God's Word. We cannot afford to have it mingled with error. We dare not permit it to be diminished.

Emotions are an important part of who we are, and they naturally are a part of our Christian experience. What a joy it is to hear the resurrection story! It can make us feel so enthusiastic and energized that we want to share the gospel with others. Emotionalism, however, is no substitute for the faithful preaching, teaching, and hearing of the Word of God. At times our emotions, no matter how well intended, may lead us off course. God's Word never will.

In Luke 24 Jesus clearly shows how important the Word is. It is through the Word that He abides with us even now. If we are one day to rise and abide with Him in Paradise, then it will only be through this Word. We must cherish it, hold on to it, follow it, and keep it safe.

Let us take the time to walk with Jesus and listen to what He has to say to us.

—Pastor Delwyn Maas



The Authenticating Power of Jesus' Resurrection

Knowing that you have the “real thing” can be very important, especially when there are many cheap imitations around. Some will even steal the brand name or trademark of the genuine to pawn off the imitation or the counterfeit, to the great loss of those who have received the false product.

At the time of the Roman Empire there were many high hopes and expectations among the Jews for the Messiah to come into the world. But there also flourished many false expectations and ideas about the Messiah which encouraged cheap imitations to appear. Even the disciples’ concept of the Messiah involved the establishment of an earthly kingdom of the Jews.

Many turned away from Jesus in disappointment because they were misled by false Messianic claims and expectations.

Jesus had repeatedly taught His disciples that “all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles . . . And they will scourge Him and put Him to death. And the third day He will rise again” (Lk. 18:31-33). It is the fulfillment of Scripture in the death—and especially the resurrection—of Jesus that assures us that in Him we do possess the “real thing,” for there is an authenticating power in Jesus’ resurrection. It did fulfill the explicit promises of God in Holy Scripture.

One such Scripture to which the Holy Spirit directs our attention is the prophecy of David: “Therefore my

“. . . It is the fulfillment of Scripture in the death—and especially the resurrection—of Jesus that assures us that in Him we do possess the “real thing,” for there is an authenticating power in Jesus’ resurrection.”

heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Ps. 16:9-10, NIV). Yes, the Holy Spirit directs special attention to this specific prophecy as it was fulfilled in Jesus in order to demonstrate the authenticity of Jesus as the Christ.

In his Pentecost sermon it was from this Scripture that Peter was led to proclaim, “Therefore, (David) being a prophet and knowing that God . . . would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ. . . . This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:30-32).

Just as Peter’s evidence for the authenticity of Jesus was found in this Scripture, so also Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, preached to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia: “Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption,’ For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore

let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:35-38).

So the Spirit declares to us through the apostles Peter and Paul that this Jesus whom God has raised from the dead is the Christ! We are not being deceived by overactive imaginations (as some assumed of the women returning from the tomb), neither are we being beguiled by false hopes and dreams (as some today ascribe to the disciples’

“claims” of Jesus’ resurrection).

We see the power of God authenticating Jesus as the One in whom we should put our trust. The Spirit is letting it be known among us also that in this Man—and ONLY in this Man!—is preached to you the forgiveness of sins.

We are not deceived by false hope, but have been granted the surety of life and salvation in Christ Jesus, our crucified and yet risen (“ever-living”) Lord!

—Pastor Theodore Barthels

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But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you” — Matthew 28:5-7

COME AND SEE! GO AND TELL!

“Come and see!” That was a most gracious invitation! Think of the situation: The women had come to the tomb in sorrow and despair, to anoint the dead body of Jesus. When they got to the tomb, fear and perplexity were added to their sorrow. The stone was rolled away from the tomb. They looked into the tomb, and there instead of Jesus’ body they saw an angel standing. The angel was brilliant like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The women were filled with fear at the sight.

How startling the angel’s words must have been, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” Then the angel invited the women, “Come, and see the place where the Lord lay.”

God wanted them to know for sure

that Jesus was truly alive. He wanted to dispel all their fear and doubt, so He invited them to ‘come and see’ for themselves. They could see the empty tomb and the grave cloths neatly folded, lying there.

On the way to tell Jesus’ disciples, the women were allowed to see Jesus Himself. He said, “Rejoice!” Now they knew for sure that Jesus was truly alive from the dead, and their hearts pounded with joy.

God wants you to be just as sure that Jesus is alive and to have the same joy. As Paul says, “If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain.” So God invites you to ‘come and see!’

‘COME AND SEE’ JESUS ALIVE

There are still many scoffers who do not believe that Jesus is bodily risen

from the dead. It is tragic to see how many of these scoffers are leaders in the large church bodies today. But God invites us to ‘come and see’ for ourselves, so that we do not doubt but believe.

In the sure Word of God we can ‘come and see’ that Jesus is truly alive from the dead. In His Word we can see the angel who rolled away the stone and sat on it. We can see the empty tomb. We can see Jesus appear to each of the disciples over forty days to prove beyond a doubt that He is alive.

Even the doubt and unbelief of the disciples can help to make us more sure of Jesus’ resurrection. They did not just “imagine” that Jesus was alive because they wanted it so badly (as some claim today). That was the last thing on their minds, for they did not think it possible. They all had to see Jesus for themselves before they would believe He was alive. Each time Jesus appeared to them we too see Him.

‘COME AND SEE’ OUR SALVATION

This invitation to ‘come and see’ is also an invitation to see what Jesus’ resurrection means for us. Again we see that in the Word of God. God says, “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Jesus’ death and resurrection have secured our eternal salvation.

The resurrection is our guarantee that our sins are paid for and heaven is opened to us. The resurrection is our proof that we have been reconciled to God, that we are His children. Jesus’ resurrection is also the guarantee of our resurrection on the last day. As Jesus said, “Because I live, you will live also.”



‘Come and see’ so that you may believe and rejoice. Jesus’ resurrection is at the heart of all God’s blessings. Therefore, seeing Him alive gives us the greatest joy in life.

‘GO AND TELL!’

The angel also gives a command. He said, “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.” Jesus gave them the same command, “Go and tell My brethren . . .” (Mt. 28:10).

Can you imagine those women doing anything else? Can you imagine them going home and not telling anyone? Could they possibly act like nothing special had happened? No way! This was the most exciting and wonderful thing that ever happened. Luke tells us, “They returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.” They were so excited they wanted to tell everyone they knew.

Later that day Jesus gave the same command to the rest of His disciples. He told them “that repentance and

remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:27). Then He commanded them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Those disciples made it their life’s work to ‘go and tell’ everyone about Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Jesus has given us the same command. We too have come and seen the most wonderful thing of all history. By God’s grace we have seen Jesus die on the cross for the sins of the world, and we have seen Him rise from the dead to secure our eternal salvation. Now our Lord says to us, “Go and tell.” Can we go back to our homes now and act as though nothing great has happened?

Let us go home and rejoice together with our families in what we have seen. Talk together about what Jesus’ resurrection means for you.

- + Go and share with your friends and neighbors the excitement of what you have seen—that your Redeemer lives to save you from eternal death.
- + When others are faced with the sorrow of death, go and tell them

the joy of Jesus’ resurrection, and how He has conquered death for us.

- + When others are troubled by the pressures of life, go and tell them the joy that our Redeemer lives to “grant me rich supply,” “He lives to guide me with His eye” (TLH #200).
- + When others are sorrowful, assure them that Jesus lives “to comfort me when faint, He lives to hear my soul’s complaint” (TLH #200).

There is so much to tell!

This is still the most exciting news ever. God has saved us from hell and given us eternal life—all through Jesus who died and rose again.

May we continue to accept this most gracious invitation, to ‘come and see!’

Continue to come to God’s Word at home and at church and see all the glory of our God and all that He has prepared for us through Jesus’ death and resurrection. And may we follow this most glorious and joyful command: ‘Go and tell!’

—Pastor David Reim

An Easter Message from our CLC President—

Looking Forward Confidently

As you are reading this, Easter is already behind. You are coming down from the high emotions and renewing of spirit that you knew at Easter. You are looking forward to what lies ahead.

In youth we wondered when the next day was going to come or when the day of the anticipated event was

going to arrive. As we advance in years, we wonder where yesterday or last month went. Life just seems to move on more swiftly—but to what? While it is too bad that it apparently takes so long, the fact is that advancing years create within the Christian heart a more intense contemplation of that

“...As our days pass by, our future comes ever closer to being our present. ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus!’” (Revelation 22:20)

toward which one is moving.

As we look back, we have had many fine experiences. There are many things upon which we look back with favor, with a chuckle, and with fond memory. We also recognize that however fondly we look back, there may well be times that we would prefer to forget.

While we anticipate happy days, there will likely also be—numbered in our future days known but to the Lord—days of sorrow and affliction. Nevertheless, the Christian by faith looks ahead confidently and even with a degree of restlessness to what lies ahead. That reflects the apostle Paul’s attitude. Paul recognized that the span of his life was in God’s hands. Though he recognized it was more needful for the Philippians that he remain among them, that did not diminish his expressed desire, namely, “to depart and be with Christ which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

This life is darkness (sin) and cold (death). The message of Easter is this, that Christ has overcome sin, death, and Satan. Darkness and cold have been overtaken by light and warmth. Jesus Christ “has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). That truth carries with it a very present application. The Christian knows that here on this earth and in this life he is in a very foreign environment.

The message of Easter is what makes life tolerable for the waiting Christian, if even a bit impatiently. The courage of the Christian and the confi-

dence of the Christian in this life then have nothing to do with any inner strength, but have all to do with Christ Who through His resurrection has opened the gate of heaven, and Who promises to preserve the faithful unto life everlasting.

So while the Christian too has the same desire as Paul, he is willing to wait on the Lord Who in His time shall deliver us from the present evil world to heaven. It is a blessing for the Christian to know what it is toward which he is moving as the days of his life pass! There is warmth for the Christian in this world in which the cold shoulder is turned to the faithful child of God. There is light at the end of the dark tunnel. It is the divine glow of the New Jerusalem, the city that “had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light” (Revelation 21:23).

May the days of your waiting be days of joy, and above all days of hope in Jesus Who on the third day rose again from the dead, and Who will also raise us up by His own power (1 Corinthians 6:14).

In every church of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, the message this past Easter was the same! From every pulpit echoed the theme of resurrection. Christ is risen from the dead. In these days of general apostasy, it is a blessing (which we do not take lightly!) that wherever you attended service in our churches, you came away with the assurance “that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a

building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

As our days pass by, our future

comes ever closer to being our present. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer

(Editor's note: Some of our pastors write a special annual report for the congregations they serve. The following report was written by Pastor James Albrecht for the members of his flock—St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Okabena, Minnesota.)

An Annual Report

In many ways the year 2001 was a watershed year. Following the terrorist attack in September, certain aspects of American life will never be the same. Not only did the attack affect airline travel, it reshaped our thinking about national security. That our country, with all of its military prowess and sophisticated technology, should be so vulnerable to attack was a surprise to many. It has even led to the formation of a new office in our government dedicated to homeland security.

Many are the lessons that a Christian can glean from the events of last September. Primarily, we are reminded that this life is very fragile and its length is entirely unpredictable. Thousands of people stepped into the elevators of the World Trade Center that Tuesday morning, thinking only of the business at hand. What began as any other day of their lives was in fact their final day of grace, their last chance to prepare for the eternity that stretched out before them.

Values changed abruptly that morning. Business meetings that seemed so important at the time were soon to be of no importance at all. Paperwork that seemed so critical at the start of the day would become worthless fuel for the massive inferno that followed. Closing

a sale, charting a major financial move, monitoring a stock purchase or sell-off, planning for the weeks and months ahead—items so large on the priority list earlier—now meant nothing. Priorities changed. No amount of money, no prestigious position or lifestyle, no measure of earthly success is worth dying for.

Flooding the streets were men and women in a race for their lives. In relentless pursuit were thick, mushrooming clouds of soot and debris. As they ran for safety, one could practically feel the terror that was etched upon their faces. The site was surreal, and it was frightening. There was nowhere to go and no place to hide.

One is reminded of two other occasions when disaster struck so suddenly that there was no place to turn. In fact, Jesus used those two occasions to underscore our need to be prepared for the greatest calamity that will ever befall this sinful world: the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. In the one case, Jesus pointed to the Flood: "As it was in the days of Noah . . ." (Lk. 17:26), He warned, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. What was life like on the day before the Flood began? Perhaps it was very similar to what life was like on September the 10th. "They

Whether God delivers them from tragedy (as in the case of Noah and Lot) or delivers them through tragedy (taking them to heaven), His protective eye never wanders from His elect.

were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark" (Lk. 17:27).

On the day before the Flood, everything else seemed more important than heeding the warning of God through Noah. The message Noah had proclaimed for so many decades seemed to be foolishness to those around him. But then values changed abruptly. Suddenly the most valuable real estate in the entire world was aboard the ark that Noah had built.

And so the Bible nudges each of us with the twin questions, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt. 16:26)

"Likewise," Jesus said, "as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (Lk. 17:28f).

We are not to think that the fiery collapse of the Twin Towers was a specific judgment in the sense of the Flood or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But we are to learn that tragedies happen suddenly, and this earthly life can be lost in an instant. Therefore, we need to keep our priorities straight. What is important, really important, can never be measured by earthly standards. The temptation of

amassing earthly goods is especially powerful in the society in which we live. For that reason Jesus urges us, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come upon you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Lk. 21:34-35).

These are not the only lessons afforded by September the 11th. As children of God we should be especially grateful that in the midst of tragedy God never forsakes but always delivers His own. Whether God delivers them *from* tragedy (as in the case of Noah and Lot) or delivers them *through* tragedy (taking them to heaven), His protective eye never wanders from His elect. Even the evil happenings of this world are brought into the service of God and are used to bless His own.

We should also be grateful that God has created and preserved in us the one thing that truly does matter in this life: faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. It is no accident that you know the truth about Christ and His redemptive work. God in grace had chosen us from the foundation of the world. "Whom He foreknew, these He also called, whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

We should further thank the Lord for the confessional heritage we have received from those who walked before us. In a country where the majority consider themselves to be Christians, the aftermath of September the 11th revealed that the amount of doctrinal truth in America is alarmingly sparse. What a blessing that we are a part of a confessional church that val-

ues every word of Scripture and is determined to reject any ideas or teachings that contradict it.

Finally, we are reminded that the greatest and most important events in this life are all connected with the saving gospel. When the seventy disciples were amazed at the power of Jesus' Word in driving out demons, He reminded them that a much greater miracle took place than the physical

exorcism of devils. The greater work was visible only to Him, as He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

The greatest work is the work God has given us to do: to proclaim His Word and administer His Sacraments. Through these God the Holy Spirit drives the devil from human hearts and saves souls eternally. What a privilege to share in the work of His kingdom.



Parables Of The Master

Matthew 25:1-13

The Ten Virgins/Bridesmaids

At the outset we are tempted to enjoy the parable of the ten "bridesmaids" (NET) simply because it seems to be a story about foolish girls and smart girls. The casual reader may feel superior to the five foolish maidens while in the next moment he vicariously appreciates the good sense of the others.

But then comes the punch line, with the finger of God pointing directly at you and at me, dear reader. No serious-minded Christian can relax under the closing thunderclap, "I do not know you!" It sounds so awfully close to "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . ." And it's in the same chapter, too!

Shall we not be perceptive readers of the Word? The conscientious child of God wants to be ready and waiting for Jesus to arrive; willing to leave behind all the foolishness of this world in order to be taken IN WITH the

Bridegroom at His invitation, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. . . ."

Certainly, the theme of the parable is "Be prepared!" Being prepared means that your heart is "on the ready" for the moment when Jesus meets you face-to-face; it means that you have acquired *ahead of time* those God-sponsored resources available to you (in Word and Sacrament) *before* you face the Lord.

Bear in mind, those ten maidens were all expecting the bridegroom; Jewish wedding customs were so arranged that half the fun was in the waiting, with no one knowing the exact moment when the groom would come around the corner. Surprise!

But what fun would it be for those bridesmaids who had neglected something crucial to their being suitable celebrants? In our own wedding customs; what would you think if—at the very

moment when the organist begins the processional march—half the bridesmaids leave the bridal party and go off to Wal-Mart, shopping for . . . whatever?

Chance Acquaintances?!

That's worse than being dopey; it was insulting behavior for the five to be so unprepared that they went off shopping at the last minute. No wonder the bridegroom shut the door on them as refusal to honor their insulting conduct. Though it seems tough that he said, "I do not know you!"—it was certainly *true*, for they did not really know each other at all. The way those foolish maidens acted was proof that they were but chance acquaintances trying to pass themselves off as close friends. There are "Christians" who do not recognize Jesus' righteousness when it is handed them; they carry lamps, but they are empty of saving faith. When they are in the company of others well-prepared, they hope to borrow some Christian faith-life. It doesn't work that way!

If God Himself had not told us about hypocrites, we would not have believed it. We don't want to believe that any person who professes to trust in Christ Jesus for salvation could be a fake; the thought is abhorrent to us—

much worse than finding out that an American citizen has become a traitor to his fatherland.

Yet there stood the five; lacking in the true motivation of heart-felt dedication, their actions betrayed their bogus hearts. "Foolish is as foolish does," indeed!

Now, as I said earlier, the finger of God is pointing in our direction. Who among *us* suffers from such a puny interest in our personal salvation brought to us with Jesus? Who among *us* has but little heart for the opportunities offered to become a close friend of Jesus, the Son of God—and be won over to love Him as personal Lord and Savior?

Let us work and pray for such as those—as for ourselves—that all shallow show of spirituality and any self-deception in our hearts be converted into Spirit-sponsored bonding with our Savior!

And may such bonding prove so strong that we will let nothing rob us of faithfulness to Him throughout our long night of waiting, so that upon His surprise arrival He will find us well-prepared in heart and soul, ready to join the grand procession through the gates of death into eternal celebration with our heavenly Bridegroom.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!
Amen!

—Paul R. Koch



Color Guard at
Faith, Coloma,
Michigan
(story p. 17)

Studies In Philippians

**"Rejoice in the Lord always.
Again I will say, rejoice!" (4:4)**

Chapter 1:19-30

A WIN-WIN SITUATION: (TO LIVE IS CHRIST! TO DIE IS GAIN!)

The prisoner Paul was in a quandary. If the choice was his, would he choose to remain in the body on earth, or would he rather depart to be with Christ in heaven? To depart and be with Christ was far better for him personally. To remain, however, was more needful for the spiritual growth of the Philippians and the other recent converts to Christianity.

But the choice was not his—it was the Lord's. Paul understood this, and he was completely satisfied with either option. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul longed to see his Savior face to face. His citizenship was in heaven. How eagerly he waited for His Savior to take him home. But whatever God's plan for Paul, he joyfully asserted, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

What is our attitude in all this? We too long to say good-by to this world with all its hurts and disappointments. There are days when our hearts may cry out, "O dear Jesus, take me home! I can't take it anymore. I can't go on living with all this pain and turmoil." We want to be with Jesus. There are even days when we don't want to stay in this world one moment longer!

Look carefully at the preceding para-

graph. Does it express the same desire of Paul? Not quite. Remember, Paul was content either way. For him it was a win-win situation. Whether he remained or departed, he was well satisfied.

Truly we are pilgrims who rightly long for a better country. But the desire to die may actually be reflective of a selfish and impatient heart, which simply wants to escape its God-given responsibilities. Paul invites us to see that, while there is surely tremendous joy in departing, there is also real joy in remaining.

The Joy Of Our Salvation

Isn't this one of the areas in which we so often fail? We often fail to find joy in serving Christ. Pastors can easily find themselves complaining about their work. (No one seems to take my sermons to heart!) Parishioners can become disheartened when only they and a few others volunteer for work around the church. Christians in general can become down-hearted when everybody and everything seems against them.

Someone once said something to the effect that too many Christians look at serving Christ as a penalty they have to pay before they get to heaven. Is that the way we sometimes think? Do we forget

the words of Paul the prisoner: “Rejoice in the LORD always, and again I say rejoice”?

When we lack joy in serving Christ, we need His Spirit to speak to our hearts. The Holy Spirit, through Word and Sacrament, shows us Jesus’ cross and empty tomb, thus restoring to us the joy of salvation. Through the same Means of Grace, the Spirit convinces us that there is no higher privilege than serving Christ in the great cause of rescuing lost souls.

What we do for Christ here in time has eternal value. Working for Him in

His kingdom gives our lives meaning way beyond anything else. What greater joy could there be than serving the One Who would not even spare His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all?

The hymnist caught the joy of the prisoner Paul. May we catch it too:

Oh, let thy life be given,
Thy years for Me be spent,
World's fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent!
I gave Myself for thee:
Give thou thyself to Me. (TLH #405)

—Pastor Michael Wilke

SMORGASBORD

• REPORT FROM AND ABOUT THE CLCI (CLC E-news post by Missionary David Koenig, February 25, 2002; we leave the report of Pastor Benjamin largely unedited)

This is taken from Pastor Jyothi Benjamin’s Dec. 31, 2001 letter.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. . . . I take this opportunity to thank all the respected brothers and families of CLC. . . . US Mission, for standing with us all these years in our ministry . . .

We are encouraged that God is raising many second-line and third-line leaders, pastors and evangelists in the

CLCI . . . The prayer meetings in the newly started CLCI congregation at Sangamjagarlmoddi, Oct. 26-28, were an unforgettable event. All pastors and seminary staff, students are primarily involved. . . .

'Farewell to 2001' in December was a real hit. 200 boys attended this one-day camp in Nidubrolu. It was thrilling when 25 youngsters came forward to commit to fulltime ministry, and to join our CLCI seminary for Bible training. Similar programmes in Mudinepalli, Kakinada drew several hundreds of boys. . . . Discipleship Camps served as a follow-up. The VBS-2001 was quite



CLCI Representatives at the Joint India pastoral Conference



Pastor Jyothi Benjamin delivers a paper at the Conference

fruitful . . . The Sound Doctrine Catechism Seminar, November 3-7, in Nidubrolu, was a rich experience for the pastors and a few interested members also.

More than 40 pastors and delegates have written the catechism tests conducted by the Pastor V.S. Benjamin and learnt main (sic) to interpret the Bible and escape floods of false doctrine. Pastor V.S. Benjamin and Pastor Ruben ministered in the Bible Seminar in Hindi for Madya Pradesh Hindi Christians in November last week. The theme was, Ready for the Spiritual War . . .

Despite unfavorable political climate across the nation, cross-cultural evangelism leading to church planting had been quite successful . . . Many new villages were visited for the first time and numerous churches established in virgin soils . . . Sangupalemkoduru (Guntur District). There was a good response among the Hindus and Muslims in this Koduru area.

We received great response for the Jesus Telugu film . . . 65 seekers . . . were counseled . . . Poondla (Prakasam District). Around 75 villagers were reached through Jesus Telegu film . . . 13 villages for first time. . . . Three Sunday schools were

conducted for children. Around 30 children attended regularly. . . .

Kondabali varipalem. . . . 64 other religious people like Hindus and Muslims were followed-up. A big worship group have come up in this village. . . . Outreach camps were conducted in backward areas of surrounding villages. . . . Alooru. . . . 58 people were newly reached. . . . worship shed was erected. Over 30 children are in contact through Sunday school.

The overwhelming response from the Lambadi tribe . . . people has angered Gospel opponents. Nearly 20 men and women are ready to be baptized. The upper cast people repeatedly threatened the CLCI pastors and students in this area. . . . Yajali (Karlapalem area) . . . Regular outreach was done in 10 villages . . . Annavaram area . . . film was showed in 13 villages for about 1100 people. Five new preaching stations have been established. Over 125 children were taught Bible stories. . . .

We can say with our brethren in the CLCI, Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised for His work among the heathen. Pray for our brethren in India to continue in this most important work on the face of the earth.



Pharaoh and his Egyptian army chase the Israelites (see VBS story, p. 17)

Our Nation in Crisis; Our God still a Refuge— (#5 (and last) in a series)

FEAR ITSELF

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” With these words President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sought to calm a nation in panic, after a “run” on the nation’s banks during the time of the Depression. Fear can quickly take a life of its own—one fear produces another, and another, and another, until in extreme cases an individual is so consumed and seized by fear that any sense of “normalcy” in life ceases to exist.

Of all the emotions that have arisen since September 11, 2001, fear has been the most common. The fear that has thrived in our country over the past two months is fed by daily news reports of a new development on the “anthrax front” or a new threat breathed against the hated, arrogant Americans. If we “feed” upon and dwell upon every sense of danger and every bit of “bad news,” then fear is feeding upon fear, and we too might become seized with fear.

Consider an example: If we were to spend all day looking at pictures of car accidents and reviewing statistics of how many die on our state highways each year—not just any highways, but Minnesota highways—then getting in the car to go out for dinner that evening might be just a bit more difficult. If we feed on fear we will live in fear.

One evening several weeks ago cars lined up for blocks in Mankato and in the Twin Cities in order to get “cheap” gas because the rumor of fear was that we’d be paying multiple dollars for each gallon of gas by the next morning.

There was absolutely no reason for the gas prices to be raised, no truth to the rumor, and no basis for the fear—*none!* (Actually, the prices went down.) Hundreds of people were fearing fear itself and were pulled into that fear by a falsehood.

If falsehood so easily breeds fear, a vaccine for fear is *truth*. If fear is brought upon us by uncertainty and questions for the future, the antidote is *trust*. The place to which we turn for *truth* and for *trust* is to the Word and promises of God.

There are many passages in Scripture filled with the reassurance of God’s power to help and protect. There are many passages filled with God’s promises to always be near us and to help us by His grace in accordance with His will. There are many passages which are able to instill and strengthen trust. In other words, there are many passages to chase away *fear*. There are so many passages to chase away fear because God knows us and knows how many things there are to cause fear within us.

“Thus says the LORD who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you,



O Israel: ‘*Fear not*, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned’” (Isaiah 43:1-2).

The God who has formed and created you together with all the universe is the same God who uses the same power and wisdom to guide the Earth and promises to protect you. The God who so loved you and the whole world so that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to redeem you from your sin is the same God who out of the same love promises to be with you always (Matthew 28:20). It is impossible for your Creator/Redeemer to forget you. He knows *you by name!* You are *His!* He knows you, He knows your fears, and He offers to help you conquer those fears and to live a confident life of trust in Him!

There is very much in this wicked world over which we might be afraid. God does not want us to adopt a cavalier attitude that scoffs at danger and does not take proper heed to precautions and safety measures. To do so would be tempting God (cf: Luke 4:9-

12) and a sin. However, neither does God want us to live in fear and uncertainty, but rather to put our trust in Him—not just in regard to terroristic attacks, but in *everything!*

Our goal is certain. It is eternal life with Christ Jesus which He won for us through His life, death, and resurrection. We have that goal as a gift from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from that gift. “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

The gift from God, our goal, is certain. The only things that remain uncertain are what we will face in this life as we make our way heavenward. Yet even in the face of this kind of uncertainty for the future, we need not fear because God’s promise is clear: “The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul; the Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even forevermore” (Psalm 121:7-8).

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt

VBS In Coloma, Michigan

Following last year’s initial participation, it was decided that the children of Faith Lutheran Church’s Vacation Bible School would again put together a float to participate in the Glad Peach Festival parade.

This year’s float once again attempted to bring to life an Old

Testament story, so that all who saw it would realize the importance of teaching our children such accounts from the Holy Scriptures.

The parting of the Red Sea was recreated in fine fashion with water spraying out of the float to give the effect of water being parted. To achieve

Moses parting the Red Sea



this illusion, the special skills of various members of Faith congregation were called upon. The children of Israel were being chased by Egyptians in chariots and horses which followed the float. The new teacher in Faith school, Mr. Jamie Arndt, got in on the action, posing as Pharaoh. It was quite a sight to see—when Moses' (Pastor Gurath's) hands went up, the waters did part!

A new addition accompanied our float this year. The Faith Falcons Color

Guard, which consisted of upper grade students, preceded the float in the parade. The Falcons Color Guard participated in other area parades as well; they showed their “true colors” by flipping and turning Christian flags in choreographed fashion.

We thank the Lord who enabled the children of Faith to work diligently to complete this project. Let us do all things to the glory of the Triune God.

—Submitted by
Pastor Matthew Gurath

In Our CLC Classrooms—

Meet Nathan Wales

Nathan Wales is a first-year teacher at Holy Trinity School in West Columbia, South Carolina. He attended both Immanuel Lutheran High School and College in Eau Claire, and graduated in May 2001.

He married Vanessa nee Bernthal this past summer. Vanessa had been a teacher in our school in Watertown, South Dakota. Nathan's favorite sub-



jects to teach are history and English. Outside the classroom he enjoys strumming the guitar and sightseeing, as well as playing volleyball with his wife.

While walking through the halls of his school you may hear Mr. Wales use his favorite expression, “Practice makes

better." Seeing the spiritual and educational growth of his students is the most rewarding part of teaching for him.

May the Lord continue to work through him to bring about such growth.

Meet Lindsey Paul

Lindsey Paul is in her first year of teaching at Grace Lutheran School in Fridley, Minnesota. She graduated in May 2001 from the teaching program of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire.

She chose teaching as a career because she believes that is the path the Lord had chosen for her. She enjoys teaching Bible History and reading to her students at the end of the day.



Miss Paul finds teaching to be a new adventure every day (never boring!) and a huge blessing in her life. Living in the Twin Cities provides her with many things to do and places to see during her free time.

May the Lord richly bless her work.

Meet Neil Bernthal

Neil Bernthal received his teaching degree from Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, in May 2001, and was assigned by the Call Committee on Graduates to serve in the Christian Day School in Winter Haven, Florida.

Neil states that He "either wanted to be a pastor or a teacher," but was gradually led to desire sharing God's Word with the young on a daily basis.

Along with science, Neil enjoys teaching Bible History most of all. "Seeing students get excited about a Bible story is very rewarding." In his



spare time he enjoys painting and yard-work. He is the son of Pastor Mark Bernthal and his wife Ruth of Saginaw, Michigan.

Neil recently became engaged to Teresa Nelson, who currently teaches at Luther Memorial School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. A summer wedding is planned.

May the Lord richly bless this couple in their kingdom work.

Meet James Arndt

James Arndt is a first-year teacher serving at Faith Lutheran School in Coloma, Michigan.

He attended Immanuel Lutheran

Announcement

50 Years In Cheyenne

In thanksgiving to God for His multitude of mercies for the past fifty years, Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary on Sunday, August 4, 2002.

You are cordially invited to celebrate with us in a day of special services and activities in thanksgiving and praise. The first service will begin at 9:00 a.m.



High School in Mankato, Minnesota and Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, from which he graduated in May 2001.

He has been able to share his interest in music with his students, even introducing them to the electric guitar.

The most rewarding part about teaching for him is seeing students who put in the extra effort and then succeed.

Recently James became engaged to Rachel Dreyer, and a June wedding is planned. May the Lord bless James and Rachel and their work in Coloma.

Meet Erin Libby

Erin Libby is currently teaching in her first year at Trinity Lutheran School in Watertown, South Dakota. Erin is one of eight recent teacher graduates from Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, who is now serving in a full-time call in a CLC congregation.

Miss Libby notes that "it has been very interesting to see firsthand the many benefits of a one-room school." She enjoys teaching religion class most of all, and "seeing God's hand guiding



the students through each day."

Outside of the classroom Erin enjoys physical activities, including basketball, volleyball, and rollerblading. She is the daughter of Pastor Doug Libby and his wife Heidi of Mankato, Minnesota.

May the Lord bless her together with the lambs He has put in her care.