

Lutheran Spokesman



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THE LORD MAKES HIS LOVING PRESENCE KNOWN IN HOLY COMMUNION

We find great comfort in the intimacy which Christ has created between Himself and us. The children of God are not left to "go it alone" during their earthly pilgrimage. "The Lord . . . forsaketh not His saints" (Ps. 37:28). He is reliable and trustworthy. Regardless of whether we always feel His presence or not, He assures us that He absolutely is with us every step of the way.

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20). The Lord Jesus allows for no scenario in which He is sometimes there and sometimes not. He who has redeemed our souls with His very life is not about to be a casual acquaintance. He is steadfast and committed to our eternal welfare. From this pledge His followers can derive great comfort even in the most troubling of circumstances.

The Lord's sheltering presence is always true regardless of our current emotional state. Nevertheless, it can be so calming when we do in fact sense His presence and feel the assurance of His closeness. The Holy Spirit creates

this awareness through the Word of the Lord Jesus.

For example, we understand from John 15 that we are as close to Jesus as branches are to the vine from which they draw their life. At what point can they be separate from the vine and still live and bear fruit? Never! That is why He is dedicated to staying connected to us constantly.

Scripture portrays the closeness of the Christ with His followers when it refers to them all as members of His own body. Jesus compares His closeness to them to the intimacy of a husband and his bride and refers to how we depend on Him just as a building

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depends on its cornerstone.

These descriptions (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 5:23-32; John 3:29; Ephesians 2:19-20) are used to encourage us with the invariable fact that Jesus really is with us!

Instituted By Jesus Himself

For many believers there is no time that we are more aware of the closeness of our Lord than when we partake of the Lord's Supper. When partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are receiving a sacrament which was instituted by Jesus Himself. We come as His invited guests, arriving with penitent hearts and craving that which only He can give—the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins.

The Lord Jesus certifies our forgiveness by giving us His true body and blood in the Sacrament. We believe that we receive His body and blood with the bread and the wine, because He says this is so—just as He says that He is with us always even unto the end of the world. When Jesus says that it is so, we believe that it is just as He says—nothing more, nothing less.

When we come to Holy Communion, we are in a sense gathering together under His cross. Nothing is to be gained by trying to excuse our sins or deny our culpability, so we readily own up to our sins and openly confess them.

This is important to do, for it is our sin that threatens to come between us and our Lord. As hard and as painful as it is to really admit to everything that is sinful about us, this is the very way to draw closer to the Lord. We assemble below His cross to admit our guilt, and when "we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and



to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

Through the forgiving power of Christ, manifested in Word and Sacrament, we are assured that we are no longer foreigners and strangers to God's household, but truly members of His own family. There is nowhere we can go, no challenge we can face, no trial we must endure, where we will ever be alone.

Earthly friends and family have been known to disappear when needed the most. But there simply is no situation in which the Christian will ever be left alone by the Savior. We recall what the Lord said to Joshua, a servant of the Lord in the Old Testament: "I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee . . ." (Josh. 1:4).

"Along life's road — There will be sunshine and rain — Roses and thorns, Laughter and pain — And 'cross the miles — You will face mountains so steep — Deserts so long and valleys so deep — Sometimes the journey's gentle — Sometimes the cold winds blow — But I want you to remember — I want you to know — You will never walk alone . . . Jesus knows your joy — Jesus knows your need — He will go the distance with you faithfully . . . You will never walk alone" (by Lowell Alexander; sung by Point of Grace on the 'Free To Fly' album; 2001 Word Music, Inc.)

—Pastor Delwyn Maas

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16).

THE MEANS OF GRACE

We might liken the gospel to a huge reservoir of living water. This reservoir holds an inexhaustible supply of forgiveness—forgiveness purchased and won by Christ. Christ's sinless life and sacrificial death supplies the reservoir with forgiveness and salvation for all people. This reservoir is filled with the promise that Christ has paid for all sins once and for all.

But now God intends for this living water to be piped directly to the hearts of individual sinners. A reservoir of H₂O may hold enough water for an entire city, but unless you have a pipeline that leads from the reservoir to your house, you'll go thirsty. Similarly, the sinner who does not have the gospel flowing personally into his heart stands in danger of dying in his sins. That's why God has established the Means of Grace.

As we learned in our catechism classes, the Means of Grace is the gospel in Word and Sacrament. Through the Means of Grace God brings the saving work of Christ to the individual sinner.

Using our analogy, the Means of Grace is the way God channels the Water of Life—the gospel—directly and personally into the human soul.

Three Pipelines

There are three distinct pipelines through which the gospel is brought to mankind: The Word (heard or read), Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The first two—the Word and Baptism—are



to be dispensed to each and every sinner.* The third one—the Lord's Supper—is to be dispensed to those who know Christ by faith, who understand the *real presence* of Christ in the Sacrament, and who also trust in the Sacrament's promise of forgiveness.

More and more we hear of the benefits of drinking plain and pure water. Other beverages may appeal to the taste buds, but they do not profit the body like water. In fact, these others may do more harm than good. Water is so simple, yet so very powerful in keeping us healthy.

The gospel is a simple message of a wonderful Savior, Who died that we might live and lives that we might never die. The Means of Grace is God's way of bringing to us the spiritual health benefits of that gospel, namely, forgiveness, faith and salvation.

It is also God's way of maintaining spiritual health in the believer. All other "beverages" for the soul—false religions, false teachings, humanistic philosophies—cannot quench man's

spiritual thirst. They lead only to eternal death.

How blessed we are when the gospel's life-giving water flows freely and continuously into our hearts. How privileged we are to be able to attend houses of worship from which flow the pure truth of the crucified and risen Christ. How good it is to gather the family together at devotion time so that the love of Christ may flow into the

hearts of parents and children alike.

Thank God for His precious Means of Grace!

—*Pastor Michael Wilke*

***NOTE:** While Baptism is intended for all, we do not randomly baptize every person. We baptize children brought to us by their parents. We baptize adults who have made a confession of Christ.



GOD BLESS AMERICA 9/11 and 7/04

The events of September 11 have changed the America psyche and the American political scene. The original fear and panic has been replaced by a renewed sense of patriotism in the United States. In the months following 9/11, flag manufacturing plants running overtime could not keep up with the demand for American flags. Patriotism became something to be worn on the sleeve, and something to be commercialized and exploited.

The Christian is commanded to love and honor his country because government—no matter what its form (democracy, monarchy, communistic, Roman Empire)—is the God-ordained representative of God.

Paul says, "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7). Peter encourages, "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). The purpose of government (Rom. 13:3-4) is to protect its citizens from those "who practice evil."

The Christian especially gives

thanks for the blessings God has poured down on the United States of America. We should especially be thankful for the freedom to practice our religion without fear of government intervention and control. The freedoms we enjoy can so easily be lost. As individuals, we as God's people have the privilege and duty of citizenship in this great land. Our forefathers, many of them immigrants, appreciated this country and the freedoms and opportunities it offered.

Patriotism is good. It is especially refreshing for someone growing up in the tumultuous sixties to see the flag, the symbol of this country, flying high again. My generation on college campuses across the nation spit on and burned "Old Glory" as a protest. It is good to see those who serve in the military appreciated and recognized again. Those who came back from the Vietnam War were shunned and derided by a society that ridiculed absolutes and those who enforced the law. There has been in the last forty years an erosion of responsibility and accountability in our society.

... For the Christian the greatest danger is the linking of a generic, one-size fits all kind of a "god" with patriotism. ... In the Old Testament God's people were condemned because they elevated the idols of their heathen neighbors to the same level as Jehovah.

A Downside

However, there is a downside to blind patriotism. The climate after 9/11, just as after Pearl Harbor, demanded total adherence to the government without any possibility of questioning what the government was doing. There is a very real possibility of the loss of civil rights and a new kind of patriotic correctness. The issue of patriotism has been commercially and politically exploited. The governor of Minnesota, a former Navy Seal, brought down a hailstorm of protest by vetoing a law requiring school children to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, because true patriotism can never be demanded by the state.

For the Christian the greatest danger is the linking of a generic, one-size fits all kind of a "god" with patriotism. Following 9/11 there were all kinds of external religious posturing. Religious services multiplied in the days following the destruction of the Trade Center. All of these services had one thing in common. They all paid homage to a nameless, faceless "god" that would fit every religious need. Moslems, Jews, and Christians were gathered together in the name of a generic "god." Instead of personal repentance because of sin and a turning to Jesus for forgiveness, we were given a superficial and political religiousness and righteousness.

In the Old Testament God's people were condemned because they elevated the idols of their heathen neighbors to the same level as Jehovah. They allowed these idols made of wood and stone to become their national gods.

In the New Testament God warns the Corinthians not to become "unequally yoked" with idols. In the United States after 9/11, "god" has become identified with the United States. Much of this has happened because of the religious right, which views government as a positive force in advancing the cause of Christ. "God and Country" leaves unanswered the question, "What 'god' are you talking about?"

Luther spoke of the two kingdoms. There is the kingdom of this world, which is governed by reason and is political in nature. There also is the kingdom of Christ, which is governed by the Word of God and is spiritual in nature. The child of God in this world is a member of both of these kingdoms.

However, the believer's true citizenship is in heaven, from which we await our Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20). The believer's primary allegiance is to his Lord Jesus Christ.

You are the people of God redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. As you celebrate the freedoms we enjoy in this country and honor those who serve her, be careful that you separate patriotism and your faith in Jesus.

Let us as citizens of this country live as strangers and pilgrims so that people "may by your good works which they observe glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 3:12). We know and confess that we believe in Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

As Jesus' people, we "fear God" and "honor the king."

LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

Second Kings Chapter 5

Something for Nothing

The events of last September brought a renewed interest in the religions of the world, especially Islam.

Islam, like all other false religions, teaches that salvation comes to those who earn it in some way for themselves. In our Old Testament study for today we will once again see how *true* Christianity is different—how we receive "something for nothing." May the Holy Spirit use this text to reassure us of our full and free salvation.

The Missionary

What does it take to be a great missionary? Perhaps courage, compassion, and great faith are characteristics that come to mind. Perhaps it is simply the ability to witness when given the opportunity.

Imagine for a moment being a child POW living in a foreign land, serving in the home of a military man responsible for your capture. Would his problems be of any concern to you? "Love your enemies, bless them who curse you . . ."

Although Naaman was a powerful military man with many soldiers under his command, he was powerless in preventing leprosy, a devastating disease, from destroying his body. One might think that would be sweet revenge for his servant girl, the captive from Israel.

However, we are told that when the

servant girl heard of his dilemma, she said that there was someone in her homeland who could heal him. In this way the heathen Naaman was directed to a prophet of the true God.

What was this wonderful missionary's name? We aren't told, but we do know Naaman wasn't her only master.

May we all be such missionaries when God gives us the opportunity!

False Beliefs

Naaman was desperate. What did he have to lose by following his servant's advice? He thought, however, that if healing was going to come, it would come at great financial cost. He therefore packed many gifts to offer his healer.

He also felt some diplomacy would help. He took a letter from his king to give to the Israelite king, instructing him that Naaman should be helped.

When the Israelite king (probably Jehoram, Ahab's son) read the letter, he tore his robes, for he knew his gods could not heal Naaman.

How sad that God's chosen people did not have a leader who knew the true God. May God grant us leaders who know Him.

The Miracles

After hearing of his king's reaction, Elisha invited Naaman to come to him

so that "he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (2 Kgs. 5:8).

When Naaman's entourage approached his house, however, Elisha did not come out to greet him, but rather told his messenger to tell him to wash in the Jordan River seven times to be healed. Upon hearing this, in his pride Naaman was intending to ignore Elisha's command and to go back home. After all, didn't he deserve to be greeted by the prophet, and weren't the rivers in his homeland better than the Jordan River?

Naaman's servants, however, pleaded with him to obey Elisha's simple instructions. After all, he had been prepared to do almost anything to be healed.

So he washed and so he was healed. What a great miracle!

But an even greater miracle took place that day in Naaman. For he returned to Elisha and said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel" (2 Kgs. 5:15). He immediately began giving evidence of fruit in keeping with repentance. He offered great gifts to Elisha.

Elisha refused—probably to send the people of Syria the message that God's gifts are free. Naaman also stated that he would no longer offer sacri-

fices to other gods, but only to the LORD. So God not only lengthened Naaman's pilgrimage on this earth by curing him of his disease, but He created faith in his heart for Him, the one true God.

What did Naaman do to deserve this gift? Nothing. The Bible does not tell us, but we can be sure that God used His new servant to carry out His will back in his homeland.

What did you do to deserve God's grace and salvation? Nothing. Isn't it great! Isn't your God great!!

Free Gift?

Our account ends on a sad note. After Elisha had sent Naaman back home in peace, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, in his greed saw an opportunity to benefit from God's free gift. He tracked down Naaman's caravan and lied, saying that Elisha did want some money and clothing for some visiting prophets.

Naaman gladly obliged, giving him more than he asked for. God revealed to Elisha what Gehazi had done, and as a consequence Gehazi received the leprosy that had been Naaman's.

This should serve as a stern warning to those who are not content with the free gifts God has already given them. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we read, "The love



2002 ILC High School Graduates (story p. 16)

of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

May the Holy Spirit lead us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

May our zeal to help the heathen
Be increased from day to day
As we plead in true compassion
And for their conversion pray.
For the many faithful heralds,
For the gospel they proclaim,
Let us all be cheerful givers
To the glory of Thy name. (TLH 498:5)

—Professor Joseph Lau



Continued from last month . . .

[The writer, Missionary Koenig, is tracing the continuous efforts of the old evil foe to undermine Christian freedom set forth in the gospel with a law-oriented legalism. In the first installment this was said: "There are four sure episodes of Jewish Christian legalism, with possibly a fifth. These episodes cover a space of over twenty years and reach from the mother church, Jerusalem, to the fields beyond." The first three examples treated were 1) Galatia; and 2) the Jerusalem Council; 3) Corinth — Editor]

RESILIENT, RESURGENT LEGALISM

4) Jerusalem

In Acts chapter 21 when Paul comes to Jerusalem, the brethren there hit upon a seemingly good preventive measure, "You see, brother, how many myriad of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law, but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews . . . to forsake Moses . . ." (Acts 21:20-21).

So Paul is to go with the four men who have taken a vow, so as not to incite those of the circumcision into a furor. The problem is among those who believe. The "myriad" is like a hyperbole, indicating there were a lot of Christians in Jerusalem, though not necessarily 10,000. That these are Jews who believe is indicated in v. 20 (the same word used of Gentiles in v. 25).

In Acts chapter 15 the problem was the circumcision part who came into the meeting and raised the issue. Here the elders are present with James, and the opposition they anticipate is out there among the people who believed.

A justified concern, as we see the mob take over.

5) Crete

In Titus 1:10 Paul warns Titus, "There are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party." This is the same expression used in Acts 10:45, 11:2, and Galatians 2:12, all referring to Jewish Christians.

So here again they resurface, not necessarily the same ones, but of the same stripe. These are one group among others. They are working among the believers as they have a base there. "They must be silenced, since . . . (they are) upsetting whole families" (Titus 1:11).

The Lord gave the miracle of tongues at Cornelius' house to underline the fact that salvation is for Gentiles also, and not by law! Our Lord's gospel mandate was clear: "all nations" (Mt. 28:19); "all the world . . . whole creation" (Mk. 16:15); "to all nations" (Lk. 24:48); "I send you . . .

forgive the sins of any" (Jn. 20:21-23). The Lord clearly taught He came to fulfill the law and that in Him alone is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6).

Yet among the Jewish Christians came the big "BUT"—"But Moses must be followed." The tack the devil inveigled them to take was not "Come back with us to the synagogue," but "Why, we are Christians too, of Jewish background with MORE to tell you!"

Considering this phenomenon as so long-lived (from Scripture references over a twenty-year period), and so widespread (Jerusalem, Syria, Galatia, Greece, and Crete), we could be inclined to shake the finger at a segment of Jewish Christians who just couldn't give up the law.

This, though, is just the first large, recorded manifestation of legalism in the Christian era that is always creeping up among Christians. Church history is replete with examples of those not rightly handling the Word, who opt for law orientation.

It dare not be the case of pointing the finger at one group and somberly intoning, "Shame on you." We must look to ourselves and say "Shame on

me," for each of us is an incipient legalist. That which we see widespread among Jewish Christians in the apostolic age and extant throughout the history of the Christian church is ever-present today among us, because our flesh delights in the law religion and contends for its supremacy.

It definitely crops up with me, I have to readily admit, for who always rightly handles the Word? We yearn for quicker results. The law can work this. We desire tangible, visible results. The law will accomplish this. Meanwhile the devil pulls no punches in appealing to our flesh, which is egged on to take pride in what has been done "by me."

In answer to the devil's pincers attack at any time is the two-fold solution: 1) Keep Christ as the center of life and teaching: "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification, and redemption; therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord'" (1 Cor. 1:30-31). 2) As seen in these six episodes, use the Word as guide. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou enlargest my understanding" (Ps. 119:32).

—Missionary David Koenig



Pastor Paul Nolting and Administrator Leif Olmanson about to lead the Immanuel, Mankato graduates into the church for graduation (story, p. 19)

Understanding Our Faith

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
(From a series of bulletin articles)

If there is no objective, fixed standard by which one can know what is moral or right and wrong, man is left to do what is right in his own eyes. But there is an objective, fixed standards of morality, of right and wrong. It is found in the Scriptures.

GOD'S ABSOLUTES

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

This indictment of Israel was made during the time of the Judges, following the death of Samson. It is a sorry but accurate description of the nature of man in rebellion against God. It is a graphic description of sin, for what is sin but man doing it his way rather than God's?

It makes no difference if it is out of ignorance or with intent; sin is doing what the sinner chooses to do.

That is the philosophy of the world. The world chooses not to accept the fact that there are absolutes in life, but rather holds that everything is relative. The consequence is chaos, rebellion, and distrust. These are the opposite of order, harmony, and trust. If there is no objective, fixed standard by which one can know what is moral or right and wrong, man is left to do what is right in his own eyes.

But there *is* an objective, fixed standard of morality, of right and wrong. It is found in the Scriptures. It is called the law. On judgment day no man will have an excuse! The law that exposes sin will condemn everyone whose philosophy

of life has been to do what he chooses to do in mocking disdain for God.

The attitude of the world is seeping noticeably into the life of the church. And when faithful Christians or pastors—who by the way have the same intransigent flesh—seek to point it out, they become the bad guys. They who choose to do what is right in their own eyes will defend their action by saying that the Scripture is outdated, written for another time. A favorite line of defense says, "I can do what I want to do. Don't try to impose your morality or your understanding of truth on me."

Fair enough. But if one is a Christian, he will want to do what is right in God's eyes, won't he? Or will one say, "I know what Scripture says, but I don't care what Scripture says." Or maybe, "I don't believe the Bible anyway!" One who thinks he is a Christian may speak that way. One who is a Christian will repent if he does. A Christian cannot exercise safely the option to do what is right in his own eyes, if what is right in his own eyes is sin in God's eyes!

There is another absolute in Scripture. It is the gospel absolute.

The gospel is the expression of what

was right in God's eyes, as well as in His heart of love and grace. Thank God! The penitent sinner thanks the Lord Jesus Christ that what was right in the eyes and heart of the Savior was in perfect harmony with the will of the Father.

Christ Jesus came into the world to bear the sin and guilt of the world. He came to fulfill the law in man's behalf, and to die under that law to pay the debt we owed but could never pay. All this was expressive of what was right in God's eyes and heart, not because man deserved such love, but because our God is a God of love, mercy and compassion.

He spoke to His beloved Son:
'Tis time to have compassion,
Then go, bright Jewel of My crown,
And bring to man salvation;
From sin and sorrow set him free,
Slay bitter death for Him that he
May live with Thee forever.

The foe shall shed My precious blood,
Me of My life bereaving.
All this I suffer for thy good;
Be steadfast and believing.
Life shall from death the victory win,
My innocence shall bear thy sin;
So art thou blest forever. (TLH 387:5&7)

Now then we are saved through faith alone, a gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8,9). As Christians we will glory, not because we do not sin, but because our sin is forgiven. We are saved by the atonement of our Lord Jesus. To Him alone be glory, now and forever.

This gospel absolute is the comfort of the Christian—but such as teach salvation by works, or who, in other words, teach a conditional gospel, abuse even this absolute. They thus undermine (if it were possible) the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16) as well as the grace which creates the life of sanctification.

On the other hand the penitent, who with eyes of faith views the Savior bearing the cross, will thank God that Jesus willingly did what was right in the Father's eyes, so that we might have forgiveness and eternal life. Such will also pray that He daily forgive us our sin, and strengthen us in His grace, so that we will gladly do what is right in His eyes—and not in our own!



ILC Professors leading 2002 Seminary, College, and High School graduates toward the Fieldhouse for graduation exercises

A Chapel Talk from the files of the sainted Professor E. Schaller, provided us by Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch; the occasion was Pentecost Tuesday at ILC; the text was uncertain, though it appears to have been the Second Petition: "Thy Kingdom come . . ."

CHAPEL TALK FOR THE FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST

God's Kingdom is a Pentecost project. We pray daily for its coming; not as a dream which we hope to see come true, but because it is actually coming all the time and is meeting the needs of men as well as it ever will. It is a miracle that is going on. If we pray for it daily, it is because it is our project, and while we are fully satisfied with the blessed work it accomplishes, we pray because we are concerned with our part in it.

All who pay attention to the course of things in this world today are wishing for some kind of miracle, of course. For it is clear that a miracle is needed, of some sort that will turn men back from destruction. Unfortunately, not all seek the right kind of miracle.

On the one hand there are those who pray "Thy Kingdom come" in an effort to save the fashion of this world. They believe that God's Kingdom should be established in the Earth so that by its governance we shall have peace and order. But they will not attain what they seek, as little as the multitude in Jerusalem on Pentecost found what they sought.

Others look with great zeal for a return of certain spiritual gifts which have long been withdrawn from the Church on earth. A recent magazine article tells of a growing movement toward glossolalia, the strange practice of "speaking in tongues." But this weird phenomenon is caused by such who reject the very power of God's Kingdom, which prevails only where

the Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity. The gospel of Jesus is the Kingdom's source and power.

Where once Thou visitest the heart,
There truth begins to shine.
Then earthly vanities depart;
Then kindles love divine.

A daily renewal of this miracle is what we ask for in our praying. Our Pentecost prayer is, first and foremost, a self-seeking. But as it is good for us, so also for all mankind. There may be those who claim that we, the members of our confession, take the attitude, "Let the world go to wrack and ruin, if only we may enter heaven." They say we have no interest in contributing anything toward the Earth's welfare, toward unity and peace.

This is a slander. We are vitally concerned with such matters. But we have no use for some of the means constantly being advocated for the relief of the world's confusion and disunity. The Kingdom of God is the answer; and this will not be established in a huge building in New York. It will not come via United Nations or via a universal Christian church.

It will not visibly appear at all; moreover, it will not change the world, as such, for the fashion of this world is passing away, and we know it. God's Kingdom coming can only preserve the world a bit longer, as salt preserves

meat. But as soon as men meddle with it who do not understand it, the salt will lose its savor.

It is a Pentecost project that should be (and in fact will be) left to those who understand it. By God's grace we know its working. We know very well, for instance, that it faces and deals with the problem of the individual human being, not with nations as such, or empires, not with political sanctions which bury the individual under the wishes of a majority. Such sanctions and forces are, of course, a part of human living, and we have need of them. But the Kingdom of God at work operates with entirely different principles for the good of mankind.

A father, trying to settle down his restless and bored young son, took a newspaper that bore a printing of a world map, cut it into jigsaw pieces, and got the boy busy at assembling the

puzzle. The lad finished the job in a disconcertingly quick hurry. The father was disappointed and amazed; he asked, "How did you do that so fast?"

"Oh, that was easy," said the lad, "See, there was a picture of a man on the back side of it, and when I got the man fixed, the world was fixed, too."

How true! Certainly. Get the man fixed. That is the answer. And there is only one access to man: get at his heart. And what is the instrument? The gospel of his salvation in Christ Jesus. This will be spectacular work enough, and there are a few who understand it.

Let us unite with all Christians in the prayer:

"Lord, may Thy Kingdom come with haste;
Lay Satan's dark domain to waste,
And rule us by Thy precious Word,
"Till everywhere Thy praise be heard.
Let all the Earth Thy Name revere,
For Thou in glory shalt appear."

Amen.



SMORGASBORD

•LETTER TO THE EDITOR

—Not a letter to us, but to the editor of *The Lutheran*, the church magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). The letter was written by a CLC pastor in reaction/response to an article which appeared in the ELCA magazine.

The letter is self-explanatory. We print it as a sample of another manner or form of orthodox Christian/Lutheran witness in our postmodern day and age. Herewith the letter.

To the Editor:

Re: the "Since You Asked" section in the March 2002 issue of "The Lutheran," written by Rev. Wayne

Weissenbuehler—

The response to the question posed by a reader regarding John 14:6 is unbelievable, but not surprising, unfortunately. The Reverend's reference to 1 Corinthians 4:5 is an abuse of that passage. He has taken it out of context. It does not prove the point he is erroneously trying to make.

Indeed, judgment is God's. We are not to judge the heart. But we are to preach the Word of God.

Is 1 John 5:12 wrong? "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Did Jesus have it wrong in John 3:18? "He who believes in Him is not condemned;



Pastoral Conference at Holy Cross, Phoenix in April 2002;(front) D. Reim, P. Krause; (back) J. Hein, R. Gurgel, S. Karp, N. Reim, P. Naumann, B. J. Naumann, A. Gullerud, R. List, W. Fanning, T. Kesterson

but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Shall we do away with John 3:36? "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Scripture is clear. Anyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ is eternally lost. That has always been Scripture teaching. Scripture did not change, even if the majority of Lutherans have.

Scripture makes the judgment that they who do not believe in Jesus Christ are lost. That is indeed a tragedy, since Jesus died for all. But preachers do not serve God, or show love, by denying reality. Rather than trying to be politically correct, preach sin and grace. Preach Christ crucified. Jesus is the only way to the Father. To teach or allow anything else puts one under indictment of Jeremiah 23:30, "'Therefore, behold I am against the prophets,' says the Lord, 'who steal My words everyone from his neighbor.'"

What this world needs is not denial of judgment upon all and any who reject Christ, but a call to repentance

with the promise of the gospel that God has in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself, and that "Whoever believes in Him (Jesus Christ) should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Contrary to the reverend's assertion that "God isn't ready to pronounce the last word on this," the fact remains that He has. Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in the Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

Preach the gospel to all people. Only through the gospel and faith in the Christ of the gospel can they or we be spared the wrath to come.

I am a Lutheran pastor, not of the ELCA. Please do not abuse the name of our church; and more importantly, do not abuse people in need of the Truth of God recorded by the Lord in the Scriptures.

*/s/ Rev. Daniel Fleischer
Resurrection Lutheran Church
201 Princess Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas*

FROM THE BACK ROW



High School grads proceeding happily (?) to graduation exercises

Though the promenade was chilly, the ILC Commencement service itself on May 25 was not rained out. Faculty, students, parents, and friends joined in the processional hymn "Built on the Rock the Church doth stand," as foreword to the main thought of the antiphonal reading with its reference to "the Stone which the builders rejected," which in turn segued into Pres. Pfeiffer's choice of Scripture for the main address: 1 Peter 2:4-10.

In retrospect, I should have seen it coming: "ILC's Building Project," as Pres. Pfeiffer phrased it, "the real one, is reflected in our gathering here today."

For we are God's building project; He has selected the proper component parts—from the Cornerstone (on Whom alone we build), to the "living stones" cemented together next to Christ. The building project goes on wherever the children of God go, for God takes dead rubble and turns it into the Kingdom's building project.



Diplomas were distributed to one seminarian, twelve collegiate, and twenty-seven high school graduates, and then each was released to play a role in the building of God's house.

From the back row to the front of the Field-House, alumni, parents, and friends raised the prayer that God will continue to use ILC as part of His building project.

—Reporter: Paul R. Koch

Fifty Years in Winter Haven



On March 17, 2002 Immanuel Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, Florida observed the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. This anniversary service was a time to remember our sinfulness and weakness as revealed in our history; but more importantly, it was a time to remember God's grace and forgiveness.

Above the altar in the church's sanctuary hangs a painting of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane as He prepared to walk the way of the cross in obedience to His Father's will. This painting was done by Sophia Fischer in the early 1940's. Sophia Fischer was the wife of Pastor Edward Fischer, one of the first Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod missionaries to the Georgia-Florida district. Pastor Fischer traveled a circuit of some eight hundred miles from Brunswick, Georgia to Homestead, Florida. He served at Gotha Church in the Orlando area for twenty-five years.

Sophia Fischer did not start painting until she was in her mid-sixties. She painted this picture of "Christ in Gethsemane" for the Gotha Church, where it hung until a new church was built in 1958. When Sophia Fischer moved to Winter Haven, she became a member of Immanuel and donated this painting to the church.

Immanuel Lutheran Church was begun by a small number of people seeking a Lutheran Church faithful to the Word of God and faithful to Christ. Of the sixteen charter members, two (Mr. Paul Weis and Mrs. Carol Murphy) are still members at Immanuel. In 1952 the first services were conducted by Pastor Albert Schupmann of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference (OLC). The first service was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Weis.

At the Okabena conference of the OLC, members of Immanuel became acquainted with Pastor G. W. Fischer of Mankato, Minnesota. Pastor Fischer came to Florida for health reasons in 1956. During this time Pastor Fischer began to hold regular services in a rented hall in downtown Winter Haven. In 1957 the Lord led Immanuel to extend a call to Richard Kuehne, a graduate of Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota. Mr. Kuehne, who had been serving as 7th and 8th grade teacher at Immanuel Lutheran School of Mankato, is still a member of Immanuel, Winter Haven.

At first Immanuel of Winter Haven was a daughter congregation of Immanuel, Mankato. When the Church



Pastor John (tie) & Mrs. Sharon Schierenbeck (to his right) celebrating with some members.



A thankful congregation notes fifty years at Immanuel, Winter Haven

of the Lutheran Confession was organized, Immanuel of Winter Haven became one of the first mission congregations supported by the newly-formed synod.

A strong emphasis on Christian education has always been a part of this congregation's history. In the summer of 1958, a chapel was built on three lots in the area of Winter Haven known as Inwood. At the same time, a half-day kindergarten was begun. Since there was no public kindergarten in Florida at that time, the kindergarten grew rapidly. Soon more grades were added, and a new classroom building was constructed.

Many children have benefited from their Christian education at Immanuel. The school is still in existence with a kindergarten program as well as grades one through eight.

The Lord has blessed this small confessional congregation throughout its history, and the congregation has

been served by many faithful pastors and teachers. The current membership of eighty-six souls continues to support the work of church and school as it proclaims Christ crucified to the community and the nation.

Seventeen students are presently enrolled in the school. Pastor John Schierenbeck is serving as pastor, and Neil Bernthal and Sharon Schierenbeck are serving as teachers.

Immanuel—that name given by the angel to the baby Jesus in Matthew 1—means "God-With-Us." This history of our salvation is recorded in three stained-glass windows which Professor John Reim designed and installed while he was pastor at Immanuel.

Truly God has been and will continue to be with this congregation in connection with Jesus Christ, our Savior.

—Submitted by

Pastor John Schierenbeck



"MEANT FOR HEAV'N"

The April morning that Pastor Steven Karp left Calgary for Phoenix, his plane was delayed by snow for

deicing. Three hours later he stepped out into a sizzling temperatures some sixty degrees warmer. The Pacific



Coast Pastoral Conference was in session.

At the mid-week communion service, the school children of Holy Cross delighted and inspired the assembly. They sang, "Spread, Oh, Spread, Thou Mighty Word" (TLH #507). But, as you can see, they were shown by teacher Kirsten Gullerud how to sing

and to "sign" the anthem's stirring gospel message.

Miss Gullerud says that she has always had a latent interest in sign language. She began by reading "how to" books on the subject. Now she has enrolled part time in a community college course to hone her skills. The Lord alone knows what grace He has in store for souls who may soon need her unique talents.

In the picture you see the universal sign for that land above to which we all, by God's grace, aspire. The first stanza ends: "Wheresoe'er His breath has giv'n Life to beings meant for heav'n."

—Submitted by
Pastor Em. Bertram Naumann



Graduation at Immanuel, Mankato—

Following Immanuel – God WITH US

This year's graduation messages across the nation have hinted at greater apprehension and more uncertainty in sending graduates out into a world that has changed since they entered high school.

Though children of God too are affected by world events, yet they are able to send their maturing children forth in the world with confidence. They can be confident because the Lord our God promises to be with them . . . WITH US.

So it was that on June 9, 2002 Immanuel Lutheran High School of Mankato presented ten high school seniors their diplomas, sending them forth into their future endeavors confident of the Lord's presence to lead and guide them.



The worship service speaker, Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, spoke to the graduates based on Jesus' words to Peter at the Sea of Galilee, "Follow Me" (John 21:22). Jesus called Peter and the other apostles to follow Him. As they followed Jesus, He instructed them for their work of going out into the world to make disciples.

The graduates have been "following Jesus" in their Christian education. Now with diplomas in hand they are

being sent out as lights for Christ in the world. As these graduates continue their education and pursue their callings, Jesus' words to them are, likewise, "Keep following Me!"

"Following Jesus" is to see our world and life through the lens of God's Word—to carry the gospel of Christ into everything we do. Nor does the child of God need to fear as he follows Jesus, because Jesus has also promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Valedictorian Laura Hulke spoke on behalf of the Senior Class. She offered thanks to the Lord, their parents, teachers, and all who through their support and prayers provided a Christian High School education for them.

Throughout the graduation service songs of praise and supplication filled the sanctuary through hymns and anthems sung by the congregation, the Grade School Choir (Mrs. Karla Olmanson, director) and the High School Choir (Lane Fischer, director).

And thus these ten young men and women go forward, sent forth with the truth of the gospel as a lamp for their feet and a light for their path as they follow their Lord, IMMANUEL.

—Reporter: *Pastor Wayne Eichstadt*



Announcements

Anniversary

In thanksgiving to God for His multitude of mercies for the past fifty years, Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming will be celebrating fifty years of God's grace with two special services on Sunday, August 4.

The theme for the 9:30 a.m. service will be: "Fifty Years of Grace." Guest speakers will be former pastors L. Dale Redlin and Norman Greve. Theme for the 3:00 p.m. service will be: "Singing Redemption's Story." Former pastors Professor Michael Sydow, D. Franklin Gantt, and Michael Eichstadt will serve as guest speakers.

You are cordially invited to celebrate this day of special services and activities with us. Questions may be directed to Robert Ruegge at 307-632-2982 or ruegge@worldnet.att.net.



Director Lane Fischer leads the Immanuel High School Choir as it sings for the graduation service