

Lutheran Spokesman



...and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

MATTHEW 2:9^B-12

January 2003 vol. 45 no. 7

"Come and See!"

There are a couple movies I've seen (*Joan of Arc* and *Remember the Titans*) which both begin the same way--they both start at the end! The films' opening scenes show the outcome, with the rest of the scenes serving as "flash-backs."

Let's take the same approach to our Christian lives for a few moments. We know from the Scriptures that an end result that God wants to see in our lives is that we do mission work, that we get out and evangelize, using any and all venues available to us, both next door and overseas. This couldn't be clearer than in the words of Jesus Himself just before His ascension: "Go . . . make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . , teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you" (Mt. 28). God wants the world to hear the wonderful truths of His plan of salvation, and He would have them hear it from you and me.

But how do we get to that point? If

the proclamation of the gospel is our goal, the end result, how are we motivated to get there, to get the Word out?

God has given us three Scripture accounts as example-guides. In John 1:41 we read of Andrew going to find his brother Peter, telling him, "We have found the Messiah!" In John 1:45 we read of Philip finding his friend Nathanael. And in the account of the Samaritan woman at the well, we see the woman finding the men of the city, saying, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (Jn. 4:29)

What was it that motivated these to find others? Wasn't it that they had come to know who Jesus was? Andrew, Philip, the Samaritan woman--they all had found Jesus to be the promised Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And that is what prompted them to go in search of others.

God intends that same direct connection in our lives--that our knowl-

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edge of Jesus as our Lord and Savior would motivate us to share the gospel, and that our faith would show itself in the evangelizing we do.

Does your movie end where it began?

Remember how we started--by saying that Jesus very much wants us to evangelize (to share the gospel)? How well are we doing that? We do claim to be Christians. How are we living what we claim? When is the last time we went to an unchurched friend and said, "Come and see what I have found at church"? Have we ever purposefully looked up our co-workers, neighbors, and fellow students and invited them to come with us to church or to Bible study because of what we have found there?

The devil doesn't want others to have what we have, and he will do his best (or worst) to keep us from sharing it. Is he succeeding?

Just how well do we know Jesus? Do we not fervently believe and confess that Jesus came to earth to reveal God's love and forgiveness in His perfect life, innocent death, and Easter resurrection? Do we not realize that Jesus did this for us--and for the whole



world!? Is there not then a connection in our lives between what we have in Jesus and how much evangelizing we do? Or could it be said of us that for the little evangelizing we do, we really must not know Jesus very well at all?

We have seen that evangelizing or personal witnessing is very important--it is one important way that those around us can learn who Jesus is! And since personal witnessing is so important, the way to motivate ourselves to do it is to have Jesus reveal Himself to us more and more all the time. And the way that happens is getting into His Word as much as possible.

For it is then that we will do the same thing that Andrew and Philip and the Samaritan woman did--we will be inviting others to "come and see!"

—Pastor Paul Krause



Epiphany = Christmas

Please read Matthew 2:1-12.

Have you put up your Epiphany tree yet? When you get home from church are you going to open your Epiphany presents? Or did you open them on Epiphany Eve? I heard the mall is having a big blowout "After Epiphany Sale" this week.

Yeah, right. If you were to go into

the stores and ask the shoppers what the word *epiphany* means, you'd probably get a lot of blank stares and wrong answers (even from many Christians?).

That word *epiphany* is from the Greek word for "manifestation" and means "appearing." In the Epiphany season we celebrate the manifestation of Christ in the flesh to the Gentiles.

The Wise Men were the first Gentiles to recognize that the Child born in Bethlehem was in fact the Savior of the world. This is why Epiphany is often called the Gentiles' Christmas.

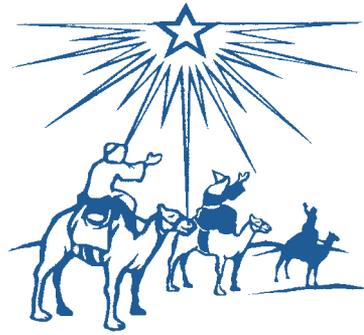
Checking Our Focus

If you'd ask the world about the meaning of Christmas you'd receive answers ranging from "It's about giving" to "It's about getting presents" to "It's about living in peace with your fellow man." All of these responses miss the point of Christmas, which is really peace on earth between God and man through the gift of God's Son.

But we didn't hear that message proclaimed every night on the news during the month of December, did we? Instead we heard about "this season of peace" and about sales figures being up or down this holiday season. We heard about Santa Claus and how many shopping days we had left. The Christmas season moves at a frenetic pace, even in churches. At times it seems even Christians don't have time to fully consider and appreciate the true meaning of Christmas.

All of which should make us appreciate the season of Epiphany--a sort of Christmas after Christmas--even more! Epiphany allows us to focus on the real meaning of Christmas without all of the distractions.

While the world has already moved on to make preparations for Valentine's Day, believers are still pausing in awe and wonder at the events that occurred in Bethlehem. The long Christmas and Epiphany celebration helps to point up the fact that there are really two kinds of Christmas. "Wise men" worship the Christ-child--not those who are wise in the ways of the world, but those who



have by the power of the gospel been made "wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Consider: what do the majority of the people care about Christmas? For many it seems to be just another day off or an excuse to get together with family members. How many care about the Baby in Bethlehem? Instead, when Christmas is over, the holiday is over for most, who haven't benefited at all except to have received some gifts that will probably need to be replaced in a year anyway.

Those who have been made wise unto salvation worship the Christ-child because this gift is the one Gift that can benefit us every single day of the year, every single day of our lives and beyond. The gift of the Christ-child is really the gift of eternal life to poor sinners.

Faith = God's Work

While the Wise Men were briefly distracted by their reason--which led them to look for their heavenly King in the capital city of Jerusalem--God's Word quickly put them back on track. The wicked King Herod (of all people!) showed them that the Ruler would come from Bethlehem. Like the Wise Men, have we too become distracted by the world so that we don't fully appreciate what God was doing in Bethlehem

at the birth of Jesus? Again, like the Wise Men, may we look to the Word of God and get our faith back on track.

That faith doesn't despise the unreasonable account of Jesus' birth. Look at Jesus. He was born in a stable. Though He was born King of the Jews--the Son of God, our Savior--yet He was born of a poor virgin. No matter how things looked from the outside, this little Baby was God working for our salvation!

The same is true of faith and the means of grace. When faith is worked in the heart of the sinner, there are no human works that God requires from the sinner to enter His kingdom. God works through water and the Word to bring faith into the heart. He works through bread and wine to give the body and blood of Christ given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins. It all seems so insignificant, but these means--in connection with the Word--are the power of God working for our salvation. Luther writes, "Faith . . .

pays no regard to what it sees and feels, but clings only to the Word."

Through the Word made flesh the word of Jesus is fulfilled, for He says, ". . . many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11). The Gentile Wise Men from the East and we Gentile Christians in the West have, through the work of the Spirit, sat down in the kingdom of heaven. We are those of whom the apostle says, "you . . . who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:10).

For believers Christmas is a year-long celebration. It is a celebration that never ends but lasts into eternity--all as a result of the birth of Him who was born to offer His life and His death for our eternal salvation. Let the celebration continue!

—Pastor Joel Fleischer



Take Inventory of Your Life

This is a time of year when many stores are busy taking inventory. They need to have a complete list of all assets and liabilities. It can also be a time to evaluate what has been profitable for the company and what has not.

This is also a great time for us to take inventory of our lives. What are the assets and liabilities in our life? What is of real value and what is not? We want to set priorities for the coming years based on what we find.

When he was an old man, King Solomon took inventory of his life. He realized that he had wasted much of his life on seeking what was vanity. His wasted years also had a drastic impact

on the people.

In the book of Ecclesiastes we can learn from Solomon's mistakes so that we do not waste our lives.

Vanity of Worldly Wisdom

Solomon said, "I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven" (1:13). He was seeking worldly wisdom. What did that wisdom gain him?

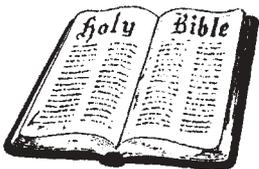
He said, "I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" (1:17-18).

The world holds up wisdom and education as being the highest good. It is claimed that knowledge is the key to success and holds the solution to all our problems. It is not that Solomon says there is no value in worldly wisdom, for he says, "Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness" (2:12-14).

There is some value in wisdom in this world. But, Solomon continues, "I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all. . . . As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, this also is vanity. For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!" (2:14-16)

Gaining all the wisdom of the world really does not change the outcome of one's life. In fact, seeking worldly wisdom has led many thousands to question and forsake God's Word. But the wisdom of God has great value. It gives us eternal life. "The Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

In the coming year let us fill our life



more with the wisdom that is found in God's Word. And then use that wisdom from above to judge all the wisdom of the world, not the other way around!

Vanity of Wealth

Next Solomon looked to wealth to give him some meaning in life and find some sort of happiness. He said, "I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces" (2:8). Wow! Did Solomon ever accumulate wealth! We are told He received twenty-five tons of gold every year!

He also sought all the pleasure that money can buy. Solomon had absolutely anything and everything he wanted. Did all his riches and pleasures bring him happiness and contentment? Not at all! He said, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (2:11).

If we take inventory of our lives, we find that we too have gained a lot of the wealth and pleasures of this world. Have these things made our life really worth living? If anything, the more we possessed the more complicated our life became.

Unless we learn to be content with food and raiment, no matter how much is added, it can't bring happiness or contentment. True happiness comes from filling our life with the riches of heaven--the righteousness of Christ, the gifts of faith and love, joy and peace. These things come from God through Christ Jesus and have real value for our lives now and forever.

When stores take inventory, they are always looking for the bottom line.

How much money have they made? We too want to look at the bottom line. It is not how much we have gained or how great a name we have made for ourselves.

The bottom line is, Where will we spend eternity? With God in glory and happiness, or separated from God in pain and torment?

We have been reminded again with our Christmas celebration that Jesus is our only Savior. He is the only One who can take away our sins and give us

eternal life with God. Continuing with Him in the faith is the one and only thing that is of any real value in life.

May we all repent to God for our mistakes of the past, and learn from them. We can also learn from the mistakes of others like Solomon. Let us fill our lives with the one asset that really counts--having God and His Word as a daily part of our lives.

God bless you all in the years ahead.

—Pastor David Reim



A Christmas message from our CLC President--

Merry Christmas!

As you read this in January, you might conclude that someone missed another Christmas deadline. This is not all that unusual. Some Christmas letters are received with an Easter postscript. However, there is more to this Christmas message than meets the eye.

Although December 25 is the most popular and most commercialized celebration of Jesus' birth, it is not the oldest Christian festival day. We do not know the date of Jesus' birth. It was not until the fourth century that the church widely celebrated December 25 as Christ's Mass. Some say that the church chose December 25 to counteract the pagan celebrations in Rome in connection with the winter solstice and the feast of Saturnalia. The oldest celebration of Christmas really is the festival of Epiphany on January 6.

Epiphany means a "manifestation" or a "revealing." The season of Epiphany in the church year serves as a bridge between Christmas and Lent.

The purpose of our Christmas celebration must always be under the shadow of the cross. Christmas reminds us of the true humanness of Jesus. Jesus was truly tempted just as we are tempted. Jesus ate, got tired, and died as a man. This Jesus emptied Himself of His divine glory and took upon Himself the form of a slave in order to submit to death, even death on the accursed cross as a murderer (Philippians 2).

The first Christmas, Epiphany Day, reminds us that Jesus was the eternal Son of God. The texts and hymns during the Epiphany season stress that Jesus revealed Himself as the eternal Son of God made flesh. In Jesus and His cross is revealed all the fullness of the glory and Godhead bodily. The apostle John tells us, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). We see the glory of the only Son of God revealed

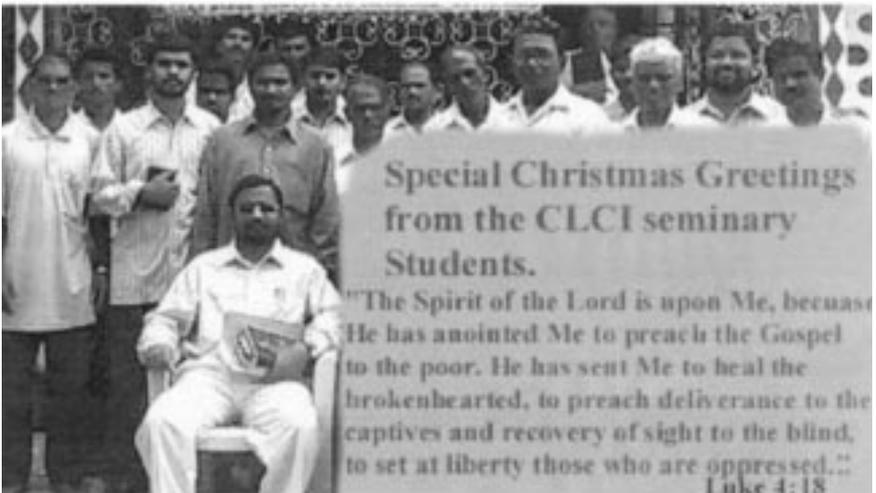
" . . . The early church celebrated Epiphany with the story of the Magi from the East for a special reason. Epiphany was also called the 'Christmas of the Gentiles.' God chose to reveal the Christ Child, not only to His chosen people Israel, but also to the Gentiles."

in Jesus' birth, in His death, and in His resurrection.

The traditional text for Epiphany is the coming of the Magi from the east to worship and give gifts to the new-born King of the Jews. God revealed to these astronomers from the East through a special star that the long-awaited King of the Jews had been born. Through the Scriptures (Micah 5), God revealed to them and all of Jerusalem that the Messiah-King was to be born in the tiny and obscure village of Bethlehem, the city of David.

While all of Jerusalem ignored the good news of this birth, these Magi came to Bethlehem. "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt. 2:11).

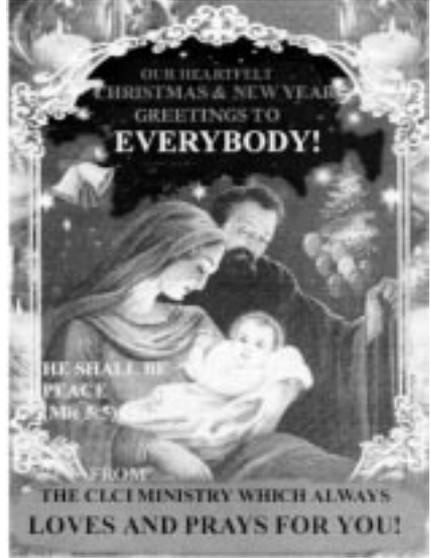
The early church celebrated Epiphany with the story of the Magi from the East for a special reason. Epiphany was also called the "Christmas of the Gentiles." God chose to reveal the Christ Child not only to His chosen people Israel but also to the Gentiles. The early church after Pentecost struggled with the question, "Under what conditions could Gentiles be a part of the promises made to Abraham?" In Acts 15, the church at a convention declared, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:11). This Baby whose birth we celebrate in



In the spirit of the Epiphany season, we copy some computer-generated Christmas greetings received from our CLC India Seminary students. Seated: Pastor Jyothi Benjamin.

January is, as Simeon proclaimed, "a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (Lk. 2:32).

Epiphany is the revelation of the miracle of God made flesh in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Epiphany is also the message that God loved the world so that He gave His only Son that whoever (this includes you) believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. We are privileged in the church year to celebrate Christmas in January. Epiphany prepares us for and highlights the miracle of the cross as revealed in the season of Lent. God reveals that this Jesus who died on the cross is His own Son, the eternal Logos (Word), the creator of heaven and earth. God's Son died for our sins. The miracle is that God has revealed this to us through the Holy



Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

Merry Christmas!

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



Studies In Philippians

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

Chapter 3:1-11

“What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ”

Visualize, if you will, an honor court. A clean-cut young man is receiving enthusiastic applause. He is being accorded the very highest rank his youth organization can bestow. He has flawlessly completed all the required works and projects "for God and

Country." His bandoleer can hardly carry all the merit badges.

This happens. Even in our culture where unselfish service gets little encouragement.

What occurs next in our little vision, however, is not so likely. This celebrant

stands quietly for a moment. Before acknowledging the accolade, he strips off his bandoleer and tosses it casually into a nearby waste can. "I cannot wear this," he says. "It represents a hunger for the recognition that drew me on to pursue things which now have lost their meaning and value.

"For by God's grace I have come to know the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus as my Lord. It is His doing and dying, His righteousness, that is now glory to me. I have nothing in myself of which to boast."

Want to Boast?

The world is full of proud Pharisees like the one Jesus told about in the temple: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess . . ." (Lk. 18:11). How do you deal with such a terrible delusion of false confidence in one's own merit before God?

The apostle boldly uses himself as an example. As Saul, a proud Pharisee, he could claim a straight A report card in works of the Law as the Pharisees prescribed them. He went for the gold and he could carry the medallion. He declares of himself, "concerning the righteousness which is in the law, **BLAMELESS**" (3:6).

How is that for a record! Yet this proud Saul was ready to trash it all on the dung heap when he became Paul (the "little one").

When Jesus graciously revealed Himself to Saul on the Damascus Road, the man came to see the measure of true righteousness, the righteousness of God that becomes ours through faith in Christ (3:9). In light of that, the

apostle asserts, "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (3:7).

Ready to Take a Loss

Sometimes one can truly gain by losing. Paul writes eloquently of his discovery: ". . . the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (3:8-9).

Then comes the glory of such an embrace of Christ: ". . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:8).

Fruits of Righteousness Replace Mere Works of Law

What a difference! In this new union with Jesus, a new potential for service of God and man prevails. All is done for the glory of God rather than for self. Look at Paul's own life in Christ and know that the measure of such service vastly exceeds what any law could demand of us--who sing:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great Day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully through these absolved I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame!
(TLH #371)

Chuck the bandoleer!

—*Pastor Rollin A. Reim*



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

Second Kings Chapters 23-25

The Babylonian Captivity

My dad once told me that he named one of his first cars "Shear-Jashub" because it meant "a remnant shall return." A fitting though optimistic name for a car.

Shear-Jashub was also the name given to one of prophet Isaiah's sons. This name was to signify the "remnant" of the Jews, God's chosen people, who would return to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon. They would rebuild the temple which had been destroyed seventy years earlier.

But why were they taken captive in the first place? And why did God allow this remnant to return? As we study this period of the Babylonian Captivity, may the Holy Spirit teach us valuable lessons for our own lives.

Great Wickedness

One cannot overstate the wickedness of the twelve tribes of Israel during the days of the divided kingdom. Most people had abandoned the true God and had given themselves over to the worship of false gods and wicked behavior. During the 150 year period after the death of Solomon in 931 B.C., not a single king of the northern ten tribes proved to be a faithful servant of God. Repeatedly it is said of these kings that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father."

That's why these northern tribes were judged first, attacked in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians known for their utter cruelty. Those who survived the attack were taken captive and eventually were scattered around the known world.

The situation in the southern kingdom wasn't much better. The majority of their rulers forsook God as well.

There are a few notable exceptions, however. Asa and his son Jehoshaphat, as well as Hezekiah, are described as having done "right in the eyes of the Lord." Another notable exception was King Josiah who ruled from 640-609 B.C., shortly before the captivity began. Josiah was intent on repairing the temple at Jerusalem and restoring the true worship of God. He humbled himself before the Lord and struck down the pagan priests and the shrines erected in the land to false gods.

Even the Passover, which hadn't been observed in many years, was celebrated once again during Josiah's reign. For this reason the Lord took Josiah to be with Him before the invasion of Jerusalem came. Nevertheless, we are told that the Lord would "bring calamity on this place and its inhabitants . . . because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused

against this place and shall not be quenched" (2 Kgs. 22:16f).

This removal took place during the reigns of Josiah's descendents, none of whom followed in the footsteps of their faithful father. Josiah's son Jehoahaz ruled for only three months before being exiled to Egypt. The Pharaoh Necho then placed Jehoiakim, another of Josiah's sons, on the throne. Jehoiakim proved to be a puppet of both Necho and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Judah was attacked from all sides during his reign, and Jehoiakim died of unknown causes after ruling eleven years. He was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin. His reign lasted only three months before Jerusalem was besieged by Babylon, and he and his retinue were taken to Babylon as prisoners. At this time some treasures of the temple were also seized, as well as the leaders and artisans of the land, including Daniel. Zedekiah, another of Josiah's sons, was then placed on the throne of Judah.

In spite of final warnings God had sent His people, they continued to rebel, mocking His prophets, until "there was no remedy" but destruction.

Judgment Would Come

In the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign (586 B.C.), Jerusalem was once again attacked. Zedekiah attempted to escape but was captured and forced to witness the execution of his sons before he was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem were leveled, and the temple of Solomon was pillaged and then destroyed. All those who escaped the sword were carried away to Babylon where they became servants.

So why was Judah taken captive and

"Doesn't our country have much in common with the land of Judah prior to captivity? We have been blessed with the Word; we have messengers who are allowed to proclaim that Word. Yet so many in our land have rejected His Word . . . "

the temple destroyed? When one reads the account of Judah's wickedness and idolatry, one can only wonder why God allowed them to exist as long as He did. They had God's promises; they had God's prophets speaking to them, yet they continued to reject His Word and His prophets. He had warned them that judgment would come, and it came.

Doesn't our country have much in common with the land of Judah prior to captivity? We have been blessed with the Word; we have messengers who are allowed to proclaim that Word. Yet so many in our land have rejected His Word and His modern-day prophets. Isn't it a wonder that God hasn't destroyed our land yet?

May we in the United States heed His final warnings given to us and repent, for we are now in the last days, and a judgment is coming!

Why did God allow a remnant to return seventy years later? Why didn't Judah suffer the same fate as the ten northern tribes? Why was Jehoiachin spared from witnessing all of his sons being killed?

A remnant returned because God had promises to keep. He had promised His people that a Savior would be born from among their descendents. In

Matthew 1:11 we learn that one of Jesus' ancestors was Jehoiachin, the wicked grandson of Josiah, whose life was spared by Nebuchadnezzar.

God keeps His promises! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

Unlike my dad's remnant of a car which eventually failed to return, the remnant of Judah did return to Jerusalem according to promise. And Christ will return to gather His faithful to Himself.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

—Prof. Joseph Lau



Understanding Our Faith

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

The greatest danger to the existence of confessional Lutheranism is not the blatant false doctrine which is readily identifiable, but indifference.

THE WORD OF GOD and BEING LUTHERAN

We are Lutherans. What does that mean? In short, being a Lutheran means being bound by the Word of God, and being built upon the foundation of the Word of God. Luther said, "Our principal doctrinal position is this: Whatever is not established by the Word of God is abominable and diabolical, if we presume to appease God thereby. Therefore nothing is to be taught, done, or believed except that which is commanded by a very definite Word of God." He also said, "Luther himself has no desire to be Lutheran except insofar as he teaches the Holy Scripture in purity."

The observant and concerned Lutheran can see that by the very defi-

inition of Luther himself much of what is called Lutheran today is not! That can be easily documented for any who with an open mind compares what Scripture teaches with what is being taught and practiced widely within Lutheranism today.

But right here lies a reason for concern. The greatest danger to the existence of confessional Lutheranism is not the blatant false doctrine which is readily identifiable, but indifference. On one occasion someone said to this writer, "Lutheran is Lutheran." Nothing is farther from the truth! If that is the extent of one's Lutheranism, serious doubt is raised about whether such a person understands Scripture

and Luther's doctrine pure.

Yet we feed that false idea if we . . .

* declare that we belong to a Lutheran Church that teaches the Bible correctly, but do not read our Bible;

* declare that we are members of a Lutheran Church, but seldom attend service;

* claim to be Lutheran, but do not know--or have little interest in learning--what our Lutheran Church teaches and why;

* profess to be Lutheran, but are willing to compromise the Truth of the Word for the sake of outward peace;

* are indifferent to the winds of false doctrine that are swirling all about us in the world and in the church;

* are willing to tolerate a little false doctrine so long as it does not affect the chief articles of faith;

* are so broadminded to suggest that any good person will go to heaven regardless of what he believes;

* love the church more than we love the Word.

Christianity will prevail without the Lutheran Church established at the Reformation. The gracious heavenly Father will have His children in the world until the end of time. However, the question is forced upon us--Will the Lutheran Church established on

pure doctrine of Scripture continue? Will it continue among us? If Lutheranism as it was declared at the time of the Reformation and as is declared in the Confessions born of that period (the Book of Concord of 1580)--and which we still represent--waned and died, it will not be because it came down by pressures from the outside. It will happen by decay and indifference from within!

The Lord told Israel, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself" (Hos. 13:19). If the true Lutheran Church dies, that divine indictment of Israel will also apply to us. The question is, "Do we care?"

The foundation of the true Lutheran Church is the Word of God. The life of the true Lutheran Church is the everlasting gospel--the message of justification by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. The evidence that the true Lutheran Church is alive is the children of God within it who believe the Word, love the Word, faithfully hear the Word, defend the Word, and proclaim the Savior in the world. If we do not live our faith, who will?

IF IT IS NOT SCRIPTURE, IT IS NOT LUTHERAN!



Speakers at the Mankato Women's Fellowship Seminar, October 5, 2002. (l-r) C. Augustin, H. Stelter, B. Kranz, N. Pfeiffer, J. Busch, S. Buckley

SMORGASBORD



Chairperson Evelyn Carlile addressing the CLC Women's Luncheon at Messiah, Eau Claire (other Luncheon photos below)

• CLC WOMENS' LUNCHEONS

The *Lutheran Spokesman* is happy recipient of stories, notes, and photos of a variety of synod events.

Such information has been received on womens' seminars held in recent months. On October 5, 2002 the Women's Fellowship Seminar was held at Immanuel Lutheran, Mankato, Minnesota. During last June's Synod Convention the CLC Women's Luncheon was held at Messiah Lutheran, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Mrs. Barbara Gullerud reports for the CLC Women's Luncheon, as follows:

Theme: "Don't Worry"--based on Matthew 6:25-34 (Sermon on the Mount)

Luncheon chairperson: Evelyn



Carlile

Program speakers: Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, Wis. ladies were asked to chair the program. Rhoda Eserhut, Linda Mueller, and Dorothy Schmolesky served as speakers on "Seven reasons why we should not worry."

Nigeria Mission Helper program speaker: Mary Thom

Musical Numbers: "With Joy" sung by the young ladies Junior choir; "We are Christian Women" and "A Prayer to my Friend" sung by the Ladies Choir

Director of the choirs: Beth Kranz





Ladies Choir at Mankato Seminar

On display: Photos on mission work in Nigeria; craft ideas for Vacation Bible School

Table decorations: Bird-house tissue box covers hand-crafted by Patsy Schuck

"The menu for the luncheon included an assortment of salad recipes sub-

mitted by ladies from various CLC congregations--prepared and served by the local Messiah, Eau Claire congregation. A total of 80-90 ladies (some traveling from as far as Wyoming, Colorado, Georgia, Florida, & Texas) shared an afternoon of Christian music, edification, and fellowship."



From the Chapel Talks file of Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch—

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” (Psalm 50:15)

“Call upon me in the day of trouble...”

In the time of extremity people will pray, perhaps because they know God and trust in Him to be interested in their problem . . . indeed, concerned about them. Children of God have multiple motivations for calling upon God, and they don't wait until the day of trouble, for they know who God is, they know who Satan is, and they know themselves too. And the truth of it is that God the Father attends to those whom He recognizes as His children.

Where lies the issue?

Does God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Source of the Holy Spirit attend to any and all prayers, whether from the heart of the worldling

or from the Mohammedan--as well as from the heart of the Christian? Jesus has told us quite explicitly, "No one comes to the Father but by Me." "Whatsoever you ask the Father in MY name, He will give it to you."

I think we may grant that God knows when someone is praying, just as surely as He knows when someone is sinning, whether Christian or not. BUT—what are we allowed to deduce about the success, the effectiveness, of the prayer that goes to some spirit or outside force or abstract deity that is not there to answer?

When a non-Christian prays for good weather, or a safe trip, or an A on a test—and he gets good weather, or a safe

trip, or the A, that doesn't mean the prayer caused the good result, any more than the superstition about walking under a ladder causes you to get bad luck; God sends rain on the fields of the heathen, too.

Maybe you heard about the Marine who fell overboard in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Nobody on board had seen the accident, so they had to report to his parents that he was missing, whether ON the aircraft carrier or OFF it, they did not know. He was picked up thirty hours later by a Pakistani fishing boat. He had survived by taking his trousers, tying the cuffs shut, and then getting air into the legs and seat to use as a flotation device. Saved by the seat of his pants, so to speak. But his parents interviewed on TV Thursday morning referred to their prayers as his flotation device; the young Marine said he was thankful for all the prayers to God and that he had prayed and prayed to God, too.

Truth to say, nobody on this side of the grave can know whether his life was spared because of his prayers and his parents' prayers--or in spite of them. In other words, did God save that Marine by the seat of his pants because people knew how to get through to the Lord God in heaven in a way that God the Father recognized and acknowledged and responded to--OR did God provide the life preserver for that young man without regard to the prayers?

Effective, Fervent Prayer

God's child who knows Him in His glory as Redeemer and deliverer from sin, death, and hell through Jesus, His own Son, will depend on God's promise: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you . . . and you shall glori-

fy Me."

Perhaps his life was spared because God has more to teach that young man and His parents (and to countless others for generations to come), for he is certainly going to tell his story to his children, and I hope he will be telling them that he wasn't saved by the seat of his pants, but by a God who had mercy on him and had plans for his future, even to all eternity.

In larger perspective, then, God may indeed get hold of a person otherwise doomed to drown in an ocean of water or an ocean of drug abuse or in the river of life's concerns or who is up the creek of some other sinful preoccupation--and will pull him out by the seat of his pants; perhaps the miracle of grace will be accompanied by prayers that have come from the hearts of Christian parents and friends who know how little a human can do to intervene in someone's descent to the grave. So they deluge the throne of grace, pleading for the Father in heaven to produce some almighty intervention to rescue and set that person straight, so as to face the God who has had mercy on him above and beyond being his life-preserver in the Indian Ocean, who has loved him with an everlasting love and will not let him go to hell.

Among the blessings we enjoy as God's children, let us treasure the genuine value of this communication avenue with our heavenly Father, as through His spokesman God encourages us, "Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And

he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude

of sins" (Jms. 5:16-20).

That's a goal worth praying for, isn't it? Whatever prayers did for that young Marine, it is quite certain that the almighty Life-Preserver rescued him from a watery grave in order to save him from the fiery death of hell.



FROM A LAYMAN'S PEN*--

A SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

When the question of organ donation comes up, those people involved in the process are in the throes of the most extreme human emotions. A loved one is dead! People are vying for your attention. Grief has set in! Are you going to allow someone who was healthy and viable just a few hours ago to be cut up in portions and pieces and sent to various parts of the state--or the country?

How should we think of all this?? Does God address this in any way?

Assume we are in this situation. Pandemonium breaks loose!! People are waiting to see if they can harvest the tissue and organs of this previously healthy individual. Can the life support systems sustain this "dead" individual long enough? Will the recovery team arrive in time? Are there some body parts you would not be willing for them to harvest? Let's even go so far as to say the deceased has an organ donor card in his wallet. Are you as next of kin going to honor those wishes? All of these concerns are forced upon you.

If donation is something either you or your family members are thinking about doing, it needs to be talked about

and thought about before the fact--it would be nice to answer all those questions of morality and propriety before something happens to a loved one. Hopefully we can address the Scriptural perspectives to your satisfaction.

First of all, let's take a moment to look at the needs and availability of transplantation in the United States. Perhaps the two we are most familiar with are heart and kidney transplants. There are approximately 44,000 patients in the U. S. waiting for a kidney transplant right now. In a normal year there are only about 9,000 donor kidneys. For hearts there are only about 4,000 people waiting, but there too it is not enough. Only a little over half of those in need will get one. Tissue is one of the largest transplanted items, with over 500,000 procedures each year and a success rate of 95 percent.

Some of the donated materials will last up to five years or longer in storage; others, like a heart, have only four to six hours before they must be transplanted. Anyone can be a donor. Nebraska's oldest donor to date was 78

years old. However, for those vital organs such as hearts, livers, and kidneys, donors must be relatively young and in good health prior to death. Things such as lenses and other eye tissue, heart valves, bone and other connective tissues can be harvested from older donors.

I'm not sure it is necessary to know what other church bodies have done as far as transplants are concerned, but it is interesting. The Organ and Tissue Agencies of Nebraska have investigated the stands of several church bodies and reported on them. I have taken this information and loosely categorized them.

(Editor's note: Here the writer had an information page comparing the policies of different religions and some Christian denominations with respect to organ donations. For example, the Assembly of God, Memmonite, and Seventh Day Adventist church have "no policy, but support donation." Buddhism, Christian Science, Hinduism, Mormon, Pentecostals, and Unitarians "leave donation a matter of individual conscience." Disciples of Christ, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Judaism, and Presbyterians "encourage donation." The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod leaves donation a matter of "neighborly love and charity." Another information table on the same page shows the percentage "success" of organ transplants "at one year" [a Nebraska Transplant Center study]. The highest percentile is 91 for kidney transplants; the lowest is 67% for liver/intestine transplants.)

Scriptural Guidance

About a year ago in Valentine one of our members lost a son and came very close to losing a second son in a car accident. In this case the parents and children had talked about donation and felt that it was the correct thing to do. The son who died became a donor to many, many others who were in danger of death or losing some function of body.

Hopefully it is evident to all

Christians that God is totally in control of all that happens to us. He tells us that He can wound us: "I have wounded thee with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased" (Jeremiah 30:14). He may also withhold pain and suffering: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God . . . do right in His sight . . . give ear to His commandments . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee, . . . I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). God's reminder in Hosea 6:1 says: "Let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up."

We know that even the Bible mentions doctors. Using them has never been condemned in the Bible. We know that the apostle Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14). Until about twenty-five years ago, we knew that if a major organ quit functioning, we could only petition as in Jeremiah 17:14, and cry: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. . . ." Now, however, the ability to transplant many parts of the body brings some other questions to mind. If I have a bad heart and don't attempt a transplant, am I committing suicide? If I attempt to transplant something that has only a fifty percent success rate, might not that also be considered something less than God's will?

We do know that doctoring and healing are talked about in the Bible. For instance, 1 Corinthians 12:8-9 tells us: "For one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom . . . another knowledge . . . another faith; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit . . ." And in Matthew 9:12: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are

sick." We also know that the knowledge to accomplish these things that are now possible has been given to us from above. "For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).

Keeping all of the above in mind, don't we have to conclude that if we attempt to utilize--or if we refuse to utilize--transplantation, that we are still in the Lord's hand? If we get a new organ, and it is God's desire to take us home, we will be taken home. If we refuse that transplant, and God wishes to heal us, we will be healed.

Regardless of the physician's skill, his knowledge, or the amount of attention he gives his patient, what God wills shall be done. And we further know that if we have given all our important organs away in death, we shall still see God in this body. "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:36).

My conclusions therefore are these: If you decide to become a donor, you should have no concerns about your body in eternity. If you become a donor, you may be extending someone's "time of grace" (Acts 17:25-28). We are also commanded to love our neighbor, and a donation of this nature gives a new definition to being a "good Samaritan."

There is no sin involved in either

giving, receiving, or refusing to accept or donate a transplant. All of our body—its health or its lack thereof—is under the control of our gracious God. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being . . ." (Acts 17:28).

—Mr. Dennis Ahrens
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• This essay was delivered to the West Central Delegate Conference meeting in Lakewood (Denver), Colo. in June 2002.



The new St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Colo. (Denver area), Rev. James Sandeen, pastor.

"Entering In" service was Feb. 18, 2001 with Rev. Victor Tiefel preaching. Dedication service was Feb. 18, 2001 with former pastor Rev. Delwyn Maas speaking.