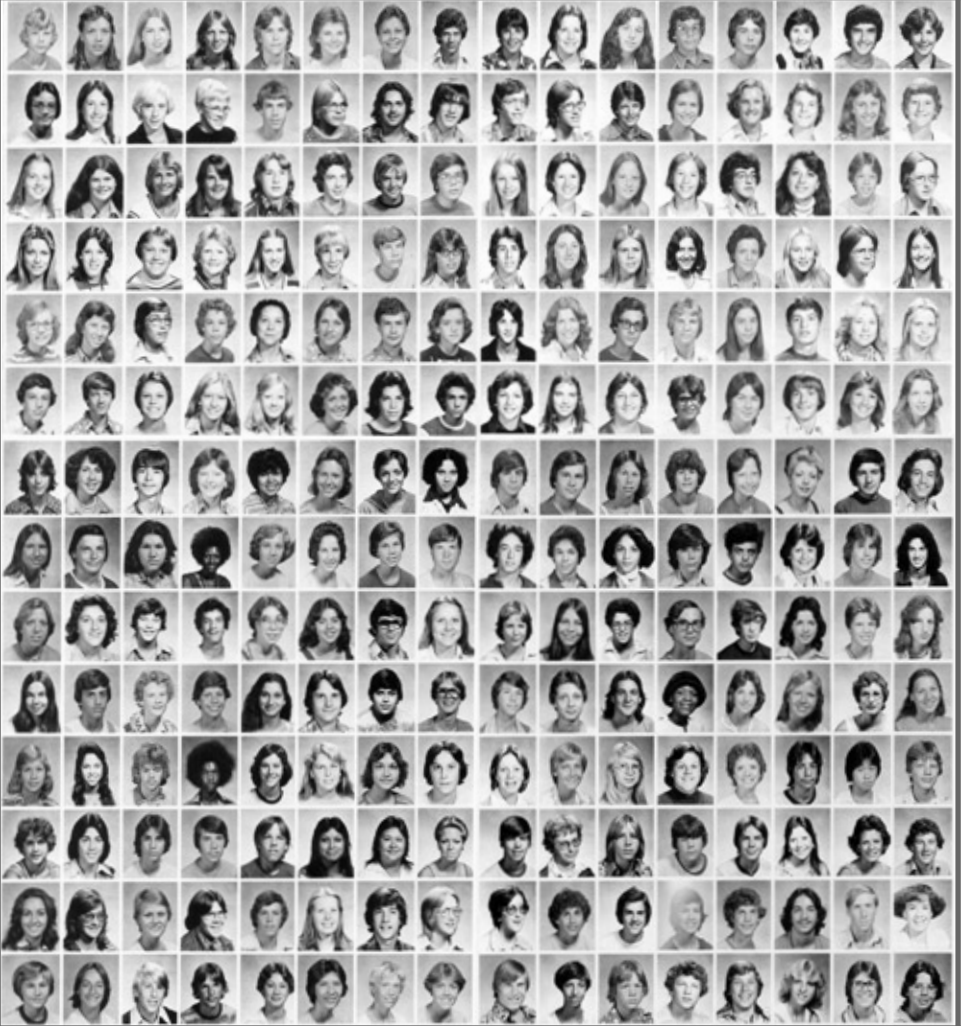


Lutheran Spokesman



"The Fields are White for Harvest" (John 4:35-38)

CLC Convention -- June 19-23, 2006

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35)

Ready to be Picked!

When the above words were first spoken, the Lord Jesus and His disciples were in a place that I suspect many of our farmers and ranchers will be for the next few months—in the field. The Lord Jesus was on a mission trip, traveling from Judea to Galilee. However, unlike some of the Jews of that day, Jesus didn’t hold a bias against the Samaritans. He came to Samaria with a purpose, to seek and to save the lost (see Luke 19:10).

Even as we might comment on the landscape we see while traveling, it seems that the disciples were discussing crop-growth in the fields around them. The green sprouts they saw would in three or four month’s time be ready for harvest (see Matthew 16:3f).

Whatever the case, Jesus took the opportunity to use the earthly harvest to speak of a spiritual harvest.

While the earthly harvest was months away, another harvest was about to be gathered in—a harvest of human beings. For as Jesus spoke these words, the Samaritans were coming from the nearby city, led by the woman who had met Jesus there at Jacob’s well (see beginning of this chapter). Jesus had sown the seed of the Word in her heart, and it was already bearing fruit. She had come to see that Jesus was special—perhaps even coming to believe in Him as her Savior—and so she went to get her friends and neighbors. The Lord had done the work; the disciples were now asked to help gather in the harvest.

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If we will look around, we will also see that the same is true today. In some cases we are given opportunity to sow the seed of the Word—and then watch as God makes it germinate and grow. In other cases we come along later and water that new faith with the Word. In still other cases we proclaim the Word, and God uses it to grow and mature the faith He has begun in the heart.

In each of these cases we are serving the Lord and helping with the harvest. Our purpose is both to gather those who have heard of the saving gospel, as well as to lead to Christ those who have not heard the gospel.

The fruit is ripe, ready to be picked. God has done the work; He will grant

the strength to gather in the harvest. We have opportunity to play a role in the great harvest!

This summer the lay delegates, pastors, and teachers of the Church of the Lutheran Confession will gather together for the 27th Convention. The Convention theme is taken from Jesus' words: "The Fields are White for Harvest!"

Whether or not you, the reader, plan to attend Convention and are thus involved in the Lord's work on a synodical level, let us all remember that we are part of the workforce chosen by God to gather in the harvest.

LOOK—the fields are white for harvest! Look for opportunity to serve the Lord Jesus by leading others to Him. Look and rejoice in what great things our God does through His Word. Look, but also go and work! May God bless all of our efforts.

—Pastor Andrew Schaller



*“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive!”
Ephesians 4:8*

“HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE!”

In Roman times the surest path to political power was through military victory. Victorious generals (whose victories were large enough campaigns in which at least 5,000 enemies soldiers were slain) received a triumph. A triumph was a glorious parade passing through the streets of Rome in celebration of the fruits of victory.

In preparation for such a triumph, a great stone arch would customarily be constructed and covered with carvings of campaign exploits. When all preparations were complete, the entire procession—beginning with trumpeters and followed by towering floats representing the captured cities together with wagon-loads upon wagon-loads of spoils—would proceed under the arch and through the streets lined with cheering crowds. The victorious general, wearing a purple toga and a crown of gold, would follow, riding in a flamboyant chariot and waving an ivory scepter—the insignia of Jupiter, the chief Roman god.

In stark contrast to the victors, part of every triumph were the vanquished enemy kings and nobles plodding along in iron chains, being led to execution before the altars of the pagan Roman gods.

The apostle Paul alludes to this practice as he pictures the victorious return of Jesus to heaven at the time of His ascension. He presents Jesus as the victorious general leading His defeated foes in chains to a certain doom. Who is the foe in Jesus’ case (Jesus is

described by Paul as leading “captivity” captive)? To what is Paul referring? He is referring to Satan.

In 2 Timothy 2:26 Paul suggests to Timothy that unbelievers have been “taken captive” by Satan, and that part of his role as a pastor was to help them escape Satan’s “snares.” The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus came into this world and shared our “flesh and blood” so that “He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

Satan uses sin, shame, and unbelief to enslave mankind, and thus he personifies “captivity.” Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, has defeated Satan and brought his cruel rule to an end! “All authority in heaven and on Earth” has been given to Jesus (cf. Mt. 28:18). Satan’s fate, therefore, has been sealed.

Consequently, as the disciples watched Jesus ascend into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father, He was in effect “leading captivity captive.” Paul assures us that God the Father “has put all things under His (Jesus’) feet” and made Him to be “head

JESUS
has gone away to heaven
and some day He will
R · E · T · U · R · N
A C T S 1:11

over all things” (Eph. 1:22).

To be sure, Satan was not executed as were the vanquished enemies of ancient Rome. He still roams the Earth and we must defend ourselves against him (see 1 Pet. 5:8-9). However, with the help of God we can, in faith, over-

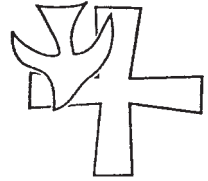
come Satan’s ragings. His power to hold us captive has been broken. His final sentence only awaits our Lord’s promised return (see Acts 1:11; Revelation 20:10).

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting

PENTECOST thoughts...

“I believe in the Holy Ghost”

“I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.”



There are many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, such as the spirit of man, heavenly spirits, and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called holy, for it is He who has sanctified and still sanctifies us.

And how is such sanctifying done? Answer: Just as the Son makes us His own through His birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification by those things noted in the creed—namely, by the communion of saints or the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; that is, He first leads us into His holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the Church, whereby He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel. The work of our salvation has been accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained that treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc. But if His work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That His treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, and through this the Holy Spirit brings this treasure home to us. So, the Spirit’s work of sanctification is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, which we could not gain for ourselves.

So, if you are asked: What do you mean by the words: I believe in the Holy Spirit? You can answer: I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as His name implies. And what method and means does He use to do this? Answer: The Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

—Martin Luther
(Large Catechism, Third Article, paragraphs 36-41)

THE HANDPRINTS OF THE TRIUNE GOD

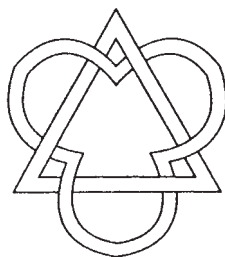
I'm not a hunter of big game; maybe of a coyote or a fox or two. Neither have I done any serious animal tracking—just the odd rabbit and white-tail deer. But I've read that one can tell much from tracks: when made, direction, weight, size and species of the animal, walking or running, distinctive hoof or paw. But not much more—not even for one with the skills of Sherlock Holmes and a native hunter combined.

Scripture states that all things were created by God. Furthermore, the creating God left His handprints on His creation, enabling the serious and honest observer to make some rational deductions concerning Him. So testified St. Paul: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20).

Surely this is true, and even the ancients knew it. The vastness and the complex design of the universe bespeaks God's almighty power. A honeybee and the human brain testify to His wisdom. The gentle rain, the fertile earth, the sprouting seed are evidence of His caring goodness. [Does the singular duck-billed platypus indicate a Godly sense of humor?] So also God's justice, majesty, and immortality are all recognized through man's rational perception of the created world.

But what of the fact that the true God is a unit in three distinct Persons? Is there evidence of that?

Indeed, we know from God's Word



that He is Triune, and that all three Persons of the Godhead had a hand in His creating work. Genesis 1 explains how God spoke the Word (later become flesh in Christ Jesus) and over the face of the waters hovered the Spirit of God. So also the psalmist exclaimed: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (33:6).

Thus we might say that the Father called into existence that which had no prior existence through the Son by the power of the Spirit. Similarly was our salvation accomplished—the Father loved the world and sent the Son to work our redemption, which is delivered to sinners by the Word and received through Holy Spirit-created faith.

"Happy Tracking!"

But has the eternal God left His triune handprints for all to see? Let me suggest He has. A scientist might note the created space-mass-time continuum in which each separate component is nevertheless coexistent and coterminous with the whole. Likewise, the three Persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal. God is not part Father,

part Son, and part Holy Spirit. Neither is His created universe independent parts. Take away one component and you have no universe as it is presently constituted.

This handprint on His tri-universe suggests the truth that God Himself is triune.

Even closer to home, some might see the handprint of the Trinity in the tri-unity of man's mind, body, and soul. St. Augustine of Hippo was an acute tracker of God's handprints. He recognized "a trinity of sight...the form seen, the act of vision, and the mental attention which correlates the two. These three, though separable in theory, are inseparably present whenever we use our sight. Again, every thought is an inseparable trinity of memory, understanding, and will."

Author Dorothy L. Sayers opined (*The Mind of the Maker*) that every creative act of man "is threefold: an earthly trinity to match the heavenly." Speaking of her own profession, she identified 1) the 'Creative Idea,' beholding the whole work complete at

once (the image of the Father). From the 'idea' comes 2) the 'Creative Activity,' working in time to complete the idea (the image of the Word). Also there is 3) the 'Creative Power,' giving meaning to the work and producing a response in readers (the image of the indwelling Spirit). "And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without the other: and this is the image of the Trinity."

Indeed, "the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament is declaring the work of His hands" (Ps. 19:1). Perhaps you are not a big-game hunter either. Why not search after a far more precious prize—the glory of the Triune God? His eternal handprints are about us for all to see. He wants to be found and known, especially in His saving Word ("revealed knowledge"), but also in His awesome creation ("natural knowledge"). The search can be most exciting and the result graciously rewarding. Happy tracking!

—Pastor David Fuerstenau



Fathers' Day Devotion—

A PERFECT FATHER FIGURE

When Jesus offered to come to the house of the centurion in Capernaum, the man humbly declined. He believed Jesus had the authority to heal his servant from where He stood. He knew what that authority was like, because he himself was, as he said, "a man under authority, having soldiers under me" (Mt. 8:9).

Just as that centurion recognized Jesus' authority in connection with his own, so I know what it is for God to be my Father, because I also am a father and have been for twelve years. My wife and I have been blessed with five children, three sons and two daughters. I found out very early just how different children can be from one another—

CELEBRATE

God's gift of Fathers

from their needs to their personalities to their physical characteristics.

And when it comes to raising children, I have learned quite a bit about myself too—things like how easy it is to get angry when the children disobey, or when they spill, or when they do something childish (surprise, surprise!). All too often I have to apologize for disciplining in a way that is out of line with what the child or the infraction calls for. There are the heartaches that come when they break bones, come down with diabetes, or fight allergies. There are so many things that I would gladly bear for them, but I can't.

And when it comes to their physical diet, how often parents settle for “junk” food, because it is easier and quicker. Yes, often days can get so full (too full?) that devotions and “Jesus time” are squeezed down to a few minutes or even to nothing at all. Hard as I may try, I find myself failing and falling short as a human father.

How wonderfully relieving it is to

have another Father to whom I can direct my children! Their heavenly Father is perfect. He knows exactly what to do with His children when they disobey; He encourages repentance and freely forgives for the sake of His own Son; He disciplines His believers with just the right amount of difficulty and hardship, enough to keep us relying upon Him and not ourselves.

Though each of us is different, our heavenly Father is able to give us care that is a personal fit. “God knows full well” when glad times or sad times are “the needful thing” for us (see TLH #518). His protecting wing is always there. Jesus Himself tells us, “No one is able to snatch [His sheep] out of My Father’s hand” (Jn. 10:29). He finds many ways to supply what we need for our bodily welfare. He gives us the living Bread and Water of His Word to keep our souls fit and alive, and to keep our faith growing.

It is right and good that we thank God for fathers on Father’s Day. But as a human father who finds himself failing and forgetting, I thank God that He has always been a perfect Father figure for me and my family!

—*Pastor Paul Krause*



March 19, 2006.
Children from
Holy Trinity
Lutheran Church,
W. Columbia,
S. Car., with some
of the ILC Tour
Choir members.
The children sang
“Hosanna to the
King” with the
choir.

The Discourses of Christ

The Gift of His Peace—John 14:25-31

“Love Conquers All”

Introduction: Jesus was in a tight spot soon to get tighter. With less than twenty-four hours left to serve on His life sentence, He was already on death row, headed for execution and a cold grave with no reprieve likely.

From our vantage point we know better than to close the book on Jesus and turn to other interests, for we grasp the eternal realities behind Jesus’ life (including the dismal turn of events on Friday), and this discourse of our Savior has helped us.

It contains four main thoughts—the first being that His disciples will be left behind when Jesus returns home. His time with them is just about over, so they must pay close attention before the door shuts. Will they be able to live without His daily presence, without His words of comfort? Deserted, with nothing to compensate?

That’s the issue He takes up first. “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

It was already Maundy Thursday; tomorrow at this time He would be gone. Saddening enough in itself, the idea of His death/departure had acquired a particularly bitter flavor

when He predicted that one of them would betray Him (13:21), that they could not accompany Him (13:36) and that Peter would deny Him (13:38). It certainly looked like a gloomy prospect of a depressing future on their own, without Him. We understand their feelings, and so did Jesus. All this sad news could be brightened up by assurance they would not be deserted. “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” No need to worry!

And why not? Because the next chapter in God’s plans for their lives and the gift from heaven (read Pentecost) would compensate for His departure.

That’s the second point of emphasis: Jesus and the Father were collaborating to convert a temporary loss into the more durable blessing brought by Jesus’ replacement, “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name...another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (ch. 14:16,18).

Jesus would send a divine instructor fresh from the heavenly University of Jerusalem to carry them forward. The Holy Spirit would dwell with them as counsel for their defense and their best Friend. To give their hearts a better

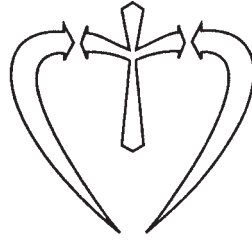
grasp of this beautiful prospect, Jesus spells out the Helper's heavenly commission for them: "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

That's number three: the job-description of the Holy Spirit, who as the Spirit of Truth would continue their instruction course, teaching them the whole counsel of God, reviewing with them the entire training manual and recharging their memory banks with the entire three years' worth of Jesus' curriculum. Thousands of years later, we can be assured of the Truth because that is the job of the Spirit of Truth whom Jesus sent from heaven. That certainly constitutes a fair (or better-than-fair) exchange, especially for all succeeding generations.

Our Training Manual

Nothing could be more important for us than that we are taught the Truth and that we have the Truth and that we are kept in the Truth by the agency of the Comforter, who works via the Bible, the authentic record-book of God's dealings with us and His training manual for His continuing work through us for the blessing of humankind.

Now for the fourth wonderful aspect of this farewell talk: Jesus never has and never will drop us from His personal agenda but is actively busy (as always) working against Satan for our blessing. "I am going to the Father, for My Father is greater than I...I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world [Satan] is coming, and he has nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." His work from Good



Friday through Easter and Pentecost will go on and on forever. Because that is His/our Father's work of love.

Was loving us an easy task? No, because Satan was doing his best/worst to bring love's entire program to a shuddering halt by way of corrupting Jesus' attitude of self-sacrifice. Let us make no mistake about Satan's intense interest in Jesus' last day on Earth, for if Satan was ever to consolidate his evil empire and maintain his dominion over Earth's suffering humanity, he had one last window of opportunity, soon to close. Within the next twenty-four hours Jesus would have to be shaken from His self-sacrificing resolve—be it by deceit or torture, by physical exhaustion or emotional confusion—just get Jesus to taste the pleasure of being more self-centered; get Him to think about and to savor the grand release of being a little bit less self-sacrificing!

Was there any vulnerable point in Jesus at all? Three years earlier in the wilderness, when Jesus had fasted for over a month, He had proved invulnerable. But what if...? What if He were humiliated in public and deserted by His friends and teased with blasphemy and beaten to a bloody pulp all at once? Would He crack? Maybe?

Jesus knew Satan was always probing for any weak spot in His character or motivation; but Satan was bound to discover that "he has nothing in Me,"

no defect in Jesus that he could manipulate to his evil advantage.

And why didn't Jesus crack? Because He kept His sights on the goal; He centered His heart on His Father's plan of salvation for lost souls. Jesus loved us and loves us and will always love us—and that's what kept Him going, through thick and thin.

Love is godly, and Jesus had enough love for sinners like us to keep Satan at bay and to reject all opportunities for the selfish way out. It boiled down to a single, awful, eternal choice: sacrifice us or sacrifice Himself.

His self-sacrificing love for us settled it.

Quick review of this discourse: "I am about to leave you and go home so that I can send you My representative, who will strengthen you in the Word of God and shelter you in My own peace. And as I go about doing this, I will prevail against the adversary, because I am powered by My love for My Father and for you to get the job done."

Dear reader, let's enjoy this for a few moments as we sit at Jesus' feet and contemplate the length and breadth and depth and height of His love for us.

Then relish the peace which His love gives us and which abides with us. Amen!

—Paul R. Koch

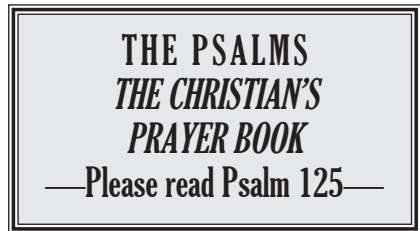


Protection Guaranteed!

When the area of New Orleans was first settled, it was valued greatly because there the Mississippi River met the Gulf of Mexico. With the prospect of great riches from trade, settlers chose to live below sea level, surrounding themselves with levees as protection. We all know how those levees had limits.

It is not the first time nor will it be the last that people will place their confidence in natural or man-made defenses. The Edomites took pride in their fortress at Petra which they deemed to be impregnable (for God's response see the book of Obadiah). Shortly after the time of Christ, the Jews had great confidence in their fortress called Masada.

The Old Testament Israelites also had confidence in their capital city of



Jerusalem. The city was settled on Mt. Zion which was surrounded by a series of hills which made attacking it very difficult.

In our psalm a comparison is made between the hills of Jerusalem and God. Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth forever (vv. 1-2).

We give thanks to God that He is

the One protecting us, for we are being attacked not merely by armies of men, but by spiritual enemies—the very forces of Satan. We are under attack from the wickedness that resides in this world, from outright immorality to subtle false teachings. We will most certainly fall, if we rely on our own abilities to ward off these formidable foes. It is of great comfort to know that we are surrounded by God.

The Israelites had been given an inheritance of the land of Canaan. Enemies were constantly trying to take this land away from them. Even when they returned from the Babylonian captivity and were trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they had a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other (see Neh. 4:17).

The Lord's Goal...

In the same way, the enemies of the godly assault them in an effort to take away the inheritance of heaven. This is the goal of Satan and his minions. He has a very incremental approach to the destruction of our faith, but he never loses sight of the goal.

In Psalm 125 the Lord assures us that He has drawn a line which our enemies cannot cross. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous (v. 3). The Lord's goal is for His children to come into their inheritance. He protects us from evil with His own hand and with angels. He turns evil into good. He gives us the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) to repel our enemies, drawing us closer to Himself with the gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Not only do we thank God for His protection in the past, but we pray with the Psalmist for the future: "Do good,

O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts" (v. 4).

There are times that we may feel that we wouldn't bother to utter such a prayer, because it doesn't seem to apply to us. "...Good"? "...Upright in heart"? How can God be talking about a sinner like me?

However, when a person is washed clean in Christ's blood, the Lord does see him as righteous and holy. As our heavenly Father, God wants us to ask Him for His blessings and protection. This is much more preferred than going to other sources.

In prosperous times a synod, a congregation, or an individual will be tempted to put trust in "hills" rather than God. Perhaps we feel that we are immune from attacks about which Paul warned the Ephesian elders (see Acts 20)? He spoke of savage wolves from outside of their group—and even those from within—who would try to draw them away from the truth.

Nothing has changed. Those attacks still come upon God's people.

But neither has anything changed in God's plan of protection! He surrounds us and comes to our aid just as He did for Moses and Elijah and Paul and Luther and all the believers of times past. The Lord's plan of protection never fails.

Zion stands by hills surrounded,
Zion kept by power divine;
All her foes shall be confounded
Though the world in arms combine.
Happy Zion, what a favored lot is thine!
(TLH #474:1)

—*Pastor Michael Schierenbeck*





CROSS PURPOSES



WHY WOULD WE GO DOWN A FAILED ROAD?

(PART 1 OF 2)

More times than a pastor who has been in the ministry for a length of time can remember, he will hear parents say about their neglectful or wayward children, “But they believe in God.” We understand the sentiment. It is difficult for parents to face the possibility that children have forsaken the paths of the Lord. Loving parents grasp at straws, even as they pray! Or it said of young people in general, “But you know that they have to go down that road.” We wonder why they have to go down that road, whatever that road is.

But then we remember our own youth. Parents, teachers, pastors, Christian people with experience in years tried frequently to alert and warn us about the dangers of the road we may have been traveling or were contemplating traveling. But we rarely paid them heed, because we had to go down that road ourselves before we found out that people who cared about us knew of what they were speaking.

Life seems to be one unending replay. Such is the nature of life in the flesh. Whether it is we remembering our past—or our young people today—the question that is seemingly never answered is, “Why would anyone go down a failed road?” Are we incapable of learning anything from the past?

The same holds true in the church! Are we incapable of learning anything

from those who have gone down the wrong path before us? Why would we repeat it? Today many churches have gone down an ill-advised path, many times with good intentions. But in the process they have lost the substance of the gospel and their mission.

In an effort to attract new people, or to engage the present members, or to keep members from leaving the church, programs and approaches have been resorted to that in the end may have fulfilled the intent, yet were dismal failures because the truth suffered!

If truth is lost, how does that serve the people? “There is a technique in use today in which people poll the neighborhood to see what sorts of activities people enjoy, and then they build a ‘church’ that meets those specifications. They downplay religious parts to avoid offending anyone...” (*The Case Against Contemporary Worship*: www.KenCollins.com).

The Cornerstone of Faith...

Worship services among us are identified, first of all, by what is taught from our pulpits. As a church we stand upon the inerrant Word of God. The substance of our preaching is sin and grace—Law and Gospel. The cornerstone and foundation of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. When people leave our worship services, we want them to

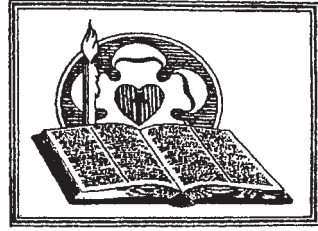
have confronted their old self through the confession of sins, and we want them to be comforted through the absolution or forgiveness of sins. We want them to leave our church—perhaps they are visitors who will not come in again—having heard the way of salvation. We want them to leave not with an emotional high, but with quiet confidence and hope, with the peace that comes through having drunk deeply of the wells of salvation.

To that end, it is important how we conduct our worship services. Our service should be a Christ-centered service. Our liturgy is to reflect Christ and His Word of truth (liturgy too says something about who and what we are)! Our hymns—and there are others besides those in our Lutheran hymnal—are to be reverential, inspirational, substantive, and scriptural. Instead of preaching “how-to” sermons or “how-to-get-ahead-in-life” sermons, our dominant sermon message is justification of sinners through the merits and atonement of Jesus Christ. Justification precedes sanctification, yet every preaching of justification through Christ inspires the sanctified life!

Generally speaking, we should not approach our worship services with speculation about how we can keep the people coming back, how we can attract more people, or how we can impress the youth.

As the latter attitude dictates their approach, many so-called evangelicals have resorted to contemporary worship services. Even Lutheran churches have been ensnared in an effort to keep up.

Basically, “contemporary” worship emphasizes music that appeals in sound (vocal, instrumental) and substance to the masses. Contemporary



worship as it is promoted is usually heavy on new forms and music, but short on content; consequently, the soundness, solemnity, substance, and respect of the liturgical service is sacrificed. Speaking of or about sin is also diminished in such services, because this is perceived as being offensive. Yet when the sinner is not confronted with his basic problem, the gospel becomes “another” gospel, a cheap and delusive gospel. Jocularly, emotion, and “feeling good about self” are poor substitutes for a thoroughly Christ-centered service. If the former is what it takes to attract and keep people, the worshipers only lose!

While contemporary worship services are a widely traveled road today, why would we go down a road that for all its appeal to the masses does not address the most critical needs of the masses, namely, their relationship to God, and their eternal welfare?

Before we go down the wrong road of trying to be all things to all people and before we find out that we are indistinguishable from those who have already walked the failed road, can we not look and learn?

Being all things to all people is the real offense if in pursuing such an approach truth is sacrificed! Such an approach neither serves the eternal welfare of people, nor does it glorify God.

(To be continued)

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer

Genealogies and Baptism for the Dead

(Second of two parts)

We might wonder where the Mormons got this practice of baptism for the dead. Did someone just make it up? Is it found in the Book of Mormon? I have not studied the Book of Mormon to see what is said about this practice, but I do know that the Mormons claim that the Bible teaches baptism for the dead.

In the great resurrection chapter in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, after assuring us of the importance of the doctrine of Jesus' resurrection, Paul asks, "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:29)

What can we say about this passage? This is the only reference in the Bible to baptism for the dead. Are we to conclude that this is something Christians are supposed to be doing? Was this practice intended to be one of the sacraments in the church?

From the Bible we learn that a sacrament is a very special celebration in the church. We learn that there are not seven sacraments, as the Roman Catholic Church teaches, but only two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We learn that, before an activity can be called a sacrament, it must fulfill four requirements:

1. It must be specifically commanded by God. Of baptism Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). And of the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," (Lk. 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24,25).

2. It must be connected with God's Word, which contains the command and the promise of a blessing for the sacred act.

3. It must have earthly elements.

4. It must provide the blessings of forgiveness of sins and salvation.

Five of the sacraments of the Catholic Church do not fulfill these requirements. CONFIRMATION has not been specifically commanded by God, nor does it provide forgiveness of sins. MARRIAGE, although commanded by God to mankind in general, and ideally connected to God's Word, does not provide forgiveness of sins. EXTREME UNCTION, now called the Sacrament of the Sick, in which an earthly element is used, is not specifically commanded nor does it provide the forgiveness of sins. ORDINATION does not provide the forgiveness of sins. As for PENANCE, it is not even in accord with God's Word.

With these things in mind, what can be said about the reference to baptism for the dead in Paul's letter to the Corinthians? We cannot deny the reference. What can be said is that there is no indication in Paul's letter—or anywhere else in the Bible—that this practice was one in which Christians of his day were supposed to be involved.

Nowhere is it specifically commanded. Paul does not even say that

his readers (the Christians in Corinth) were involved in this practice. He uses the third person, not the second person. He says, “THEY...who are baptized for the dead... ...Why then are THEY baptized for the dead?” He does not say, “YOU who are baptized for the dead” (which would seem more reasonable, if this practice were being followed by the early Christians).

Baptism for the dead may have been a practice of some religious group of that day—a practice with which Paul and his readers were familiar. Paul is referring to it simply to demonstrate that among the people of the world there is a general belief in the hereafter.

In his *Popular Commentary*, P. E. Kretzman says that Paul is “referring to a rite which was then in use in some Christian communities, either that people were baptized on behalf of, instead of, dead persons, in the foolish belief that the benefits of the Sacrament would be credited to the dead, or that some Christians chose to be baptized over the graves of the sainted dead...”

(*New Testament, Vol. II*, p. 164).

Another writer discounts the practice of baptism for the dead by saying, “A Christian who has been baptized, we are told, allows himself to be baptized a second time, as a substitute for some person who died without baptism, on the supposition that this baptism would be credited to the dead person” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 691).

The *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* says simply, “Since baptism on behalf of the dead is not explained or even mentioned elsewhere in the NT, one can only conjecture what Paul is referring to here” (p. 157).

So, find out all you can about your ancestors, but don’t think that you can change the eternal fate of someone who is long gone. As much as it might appeal to human nature, we dare not make into a sacrament a practice that receives only casual mention in the Scriptures.

—Gene Rutz

Member of Bethel Lutheran Church (CLC),
Spring (Houston), Texas



SMORGASBORD

From the Editor’s Desk

RE: EFFICACY OF PRAYER

You may have seen the national news article (March 31, 2006) which claimed “the largest study yet on the therapeutic power of prayer...has found that it provided no benefit to the recovery of patients who had undergone cardiac bypass surgery.” The article said that two Catholic monasteries and one Protestant group offered prayers for individual patients. Some of the patients were, and others were not, told that they were being prayed for.



“Overall, 59 percent of patients who knew they were being prayed for had complications, compared to 51 percent of the patients who did not receive prayers.” The comment was added: “The difference was not considered statistically significant.”

What should Bible-believing (prayer-believing) Christians—whose

whole religion is based on “faith” and its efficacy (“effectiveness”)—make of this?

For one thing, we have always been aware of the clash between science (which seldom, if ever, has room for God in the equation) and faith (which is a confident trust in God). When the two clash, we have been taught to come down on the side of faith-based-on-the-Word-of-God.

So—to that Word we go! Regarding prayer, the Word reveals that our Savior-God is One who desires His children to pray and promises to hear them. For example, “the prayer of faith will save the sick...” and “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much...” (Jam. 5:15ff). In the Word, our Savior Jesus has much to teach regarding God-pleasing prayer. For example: “And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Mt. 21:22). Again: “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (Jn. 16:23). See also Matthew 7:7-11.

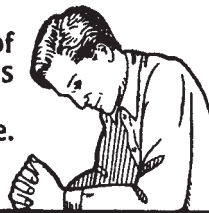
On the basis of such holy words, it is clear that not any and all prayer (!) addressed to just any god (!) by just any “believer” (!) avails before the one true God. It is clear then also that any “scientific” study which fails to take this assertion into consideration is bound to be flawed. In fact, such a study is exposed as being absolutely baseless and therefore useless!

Fact is, if a true (Bible-based!) study of prayer were made, any number of biblical—and non-biblical—examples of answered prayer could be enlisted as “proof” of prayer’s effectiveness.

And as a matter of holy fact, every

The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

-James 5:16 NRSV



godly prayer is answered! Prayers are not always answered with “yes” to the godly petitioner’s plea. Many times God’s loving answer is “no” or “not yet”! Bible-believers are taught, in other words, that prayer “works” according to a Heavenly Father’s good and gracious will for His believing child(ren) who is(are) doing the praying.

Let science do its thing. It has its place in the Creator-God’s scheme of things, including His directing/allowing mankind to explore, to rule and have dominion over His creation (see Gen. 1:28). And we are all beneficiaries (as an answer to prayer?!) of countless scientific discoveries and advancements. Also medical science and technology benefits us in many ways (when it does, may it be an answer to prayer?!).

As a general rule, any aspect of the Christian faith-life need not be bothered/shaken by “scientific” studies seeking to prove (or disprove) its efficacy. On all matters of godly faith, including prayer, the Christian takes his stand on the promises of Him whose Word teaches what prayer is, that it “works,” and how it “works.” (See NOTE below.)

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” is a hymn-prayer worthy of careful study! In a word, our Savior Jesus was, is, and remains our great High Priest and Intercessor before the Father. God’s Word invites: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14f).

Approach, my soul, the mercys seat
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.

O wondrous Love, to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners such as I
Might plead Thy gracious name!
(TLH #456:1&5)

• **NOTE:** Everything here said meshes with the response (on a synod e-mail) of one of our

CLC pastors to the “scientific” study of prayer’s effectiveness. The pastor’s contention was that before such a study can be taken seriously, certain questions call out for answers. For example: Were the monasteries actually praying to God, and not to Mary or one of the saints? Furthermore, even from a “scientific” point of view, the pastor contended, one would have to subtract all non-prayers from the study. The same pastor asked another question, namely, “How many prayers (in this study—ed.) were offered by people to whom Jesus promised the Father’s ear?” And then this was said: “As we are plainly told by our Lord, prayer apart from faith in His atoning blood (“in My name”) does not bear the “seal of access” that admits to the throne of grace. Well said.



Fifth in a Series—

Continued Lutheran Work in the Nineteenth Century

The two most prominent men in the Lutheran/Danish/Halle mission work in India after the beginning are Philipp Fabricius, who served for forty-six years, and Christian Frederick Schwartz, who served for forty-eight years.

Just down the road from the hotel that I stay at in Chennai is a school bearing the name of Fabricius. He labored in the Chennai area until 1788. But Schwartz above all is the one recorded in mission history for the breadth of his labors. Under him the Tranquebar mission was at its zenith. Under Schwartz the work continued throughout Tamil Nadu State: orphanages and charity schools, preaching and catechizing—

patient Indian catechists going from village to village and from house to house. And that is the way God said to do it. He sent out the twelve and the seventy to bring the Word to the people.

The next century, the nineteenth, became a century of rampant rationalism with smarty-pants philosophers and worldly-wise types trying to discard the Bible and replace it with their tripe. Despite this, the nineteenth century was the century of missions.

In 1847 the Danish/Halle Mission was turned over to the Leipzig Mission Society. Formed in 1836, it became the “Aristocrat among Missions” because of its great objectives and great work.

Although Leipzig was mistaken in its attempt to unite all Lutherans in the missionary enterprise (forgetting the differences of doctrine that precluded working together), they otherwise had a sound approach. Some of their rules were: to carry on the work of missions in the spirit of the Lutheran Church; to give the missionaries a thorough course of instruction; to adapt the preaching to the needs of the people; to leave the heathen unmolested in customs which were not in conflict with the Word of God.

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS)

Unfortunately, the Leipzig Society did not improve in its Bible position; instead, it declined. Pastors John Frederick Zucker and Carl Manthey Zorn withdrew from the Leipzig work in India in 1876. They joined the LC-MS. President C.F.W. Walther encouraged Pastor Zorn to return to India to work there under a new arrangement. But it was not to be, until another two

pastors withdrew from Leipzig nearly twenty years later (1893). Pastors Theodor Naether and Franz Mohn withdrew; with them the LC-MS started work on October 14, 1894, in the southern tip of India. This was the first foreign field of the Missouri Synod.

General Synod Earlier

The first American Lutheran foreign missionary, however, was from another liberal Lutheran background. In 1842, John Christian Frederick Heyer ('Father' Heyer, as he was affectionately known in India) came from the General Synod to Guntur. He was age fifty at the time, not exactly a spring chicken to begin such demanding work.

It is exciting to read about the outreach engaged in by this colorful stalwart. He worked back and forth from the USA and India until he went for the last time to Rajahmundry at the age of 77. Remember that this was in those primitive days of 1870. He labored faithfully for over a year. The present



A colorful missions display at last Convention

Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (which harkens back to the work of men like Heyer) is the largest Lutheran church in India, numbering upwards of 800,000.

This church is centered in the areas of Andhra Pradesh where our sister church, the CLCI, is located. One might think then that we might be in conflict in villages. Far from it, for with over sixty million people in Andhra Pradesh, most of whom are unconverted, there is ample elbow room to work without conflicts.

Many other denominations worked in India in the great century of missions. The Anglican, Henry Martyn, arrived in India in 1805 and referred to the passage, "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15). And

sure enough, after ten years of intensive translating, the Lord ended his work.

The Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, Reginald Heber, was a gifted composer; he died after three years of labor in 1826. But he has left us the fine heritage of his hymns, one of which is the missions hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." A line from this hymn is the title for this series, "From India's coral strand."

Our prayer is still as Heber wrote it:

Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign. (TLH #495:4)

—*Missionary David Koenig*



SILVER JUBILEE OF THE CLCI—

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

In Christ, dearly beloved members of the respected CLC-USA,

Cordial Easter Greetings to you all in the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who suffered for us leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps.

Dear brothers and sisters, once again thank you very much for your wonderful prayers regarding the CLCI. We are happy to inform you that on Thursday, February 9th, the CLCI observed the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. It's been twenty-five years since Bro. John Rohrbach, a member of Zion from the CLC Ipswich, S.Dak. congregation, visited India on a 4-H trip and met with Pastor V.S. Benjamin. In 1981 Pastor

Benjamin asked if Bro. John could speak to the respected CLC. Bro. John did and the fellowship began. With your prayers and blessings, in these twenty-five years of His service, the Lord has blessed the CLCI greatly in His work with seventy congregations and over 7000 souls.

We praise God for the blessing of special programs at the CLCI Silver Jubilee service. It was a notable occasion in its history and a time of rejoicing for its members, especially for those who have striven and sacrificed for the support of the Church. No occasion of this kind would be complete without any CLC missionary, and Rev. and Mrs. Koenig were very much pleased to be present. The Silver



**Banner Announcing the
Silver Jubilee Celebration**

Jubilee function was presided over by Pastor V.S. Benjamin.

In an introduction to the order of service, Rev. V.S. Benjamin said the CLCI was on the move and those things that are potentially great can be accomplished if we keep to our commitment of building up the kingdom of light. He spoke of the appeal of the distinctive flavor of Lutheranism and called upon the CLCI churches to live with Lutheranism with conviction and joy. He added, "Our Lutheran heritage will equip us for our every task."

Several hundred members, pastors, Seminary students, youth, evangelists, orphan boys and girls, quite a few Sunday School children, friends, relatives, representatives, delegates and supporters of the CLCI Mission from all over the CLCI congregations came to Nidubrolu for this Silver Jubilee prayer service. A high point in the service was the special singing by the Sunday School children with traditional village dancing, offering a prayer in a liturgical dance format to music, bringing the service to a joyful beginning. The choir rendered music that included traditional dances with songs by many CLCI congregations. It was an impressive sight, which entranced everyone present.

In his message Rev. David Koenig

explained about the Joy of the Jubilee Year in the Old Testament. He also explained how the CLCI was started in India. He gave a historical looking back at 25 years. India, the second largest populated nation, has witnessed the mushrooming of hundreds of indigenous missions in the last three or four decades of the 20th century. Christians of both mainline churches and independent assemblies are showing a renewed interest in reaching the unreached for Christ. But nobody has the proper doctrines of the Word of God. How marvelous is the grace of God that He has been helping His workers of the CLCI with the real Word of gospel of salvation through His pastors and mission helpers of the CLC-USA.

In his sermon Pastor Jyothi Benjamin praised God who honors humble and untiring efforts of the CLC workers. He stressed the need to pray more for the missionaries, who visit the CLCI churches with so much pain and hard work. He also added the necessity of praying for the workers because they are not angels. They are not super-human. They are ordinary men and women called to extraordinary tasks. It's a known fact that indeed it is difficult to go to virgin soils for pioneer missionary evangelism. Missionary work is a frontline battle. As such the workers need special care and support. Most of them live in hostile atmosphere. They are away from their kith and kin, living in a totally different culture. What a strain! A missionary feels like Abraham in Kiriath-arba, "I am a stranger in a foreign land" (Gen. 23:4).

Jyothi encouraged the members to pray for the well-being of the CLC



Some of the worshippers at the Jubilee Celebration

workers. They need our Lord's help because they must be mentally sound, physically healthy, spiritually strong, economically stable, and socially pleasant. Prevention is better than cure. He encouraged many pastors to pray that the missionaries may be kept from defilement, diseases, depressions, divisions, and dangers. He said that there are churches of CLCI still to be established in many tribal areas with the help of these CLC workers, where people are sitting in the darkness without having heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every day hundreds of people are dying and walking towards the eternal hell. The task is ever much greater than the task force. There has never been a time in the history of the Church when there had been enough harvesters for the harvest.

Jyothi concluded his preaching with these following words. The Lord Jesus prayed in much pain for us. He shed much bloody sweat. (Luke 22:44, "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.") As the Bible emphasizes: "Consider the years of many generations." This is the most significant

event of the preceding generations. Shedding His tears and blood, Jesus has purchased the entire world. There is no place in this world where the tears and blood of Jesus have not been shed. Deuteronomy 32:7, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations."

Dear brothers and sisters, we praise God for this CLCI ministry in India, which is growing in spite of various Hindu opposition and problematic odds. Even though we have been facing many problems, your love towards this CLCI ministry is very effective to help us because we are working for God's ministry. When the Lord amazingly manifests His power to save and deliver His people in foreign lands, the voice of the gospel opposition will be silenced. As you know, no man could shut the door, which God had opened. In the midst of these Hindu peoples' involvement, we have always been thinking how best we could work and spread the gospel message of Christ's love. God is heavy-hearted; People are hard-hearted; but we Christians are light-hearted.

Please pray for the fruits to abide and reproduce here. Also we request

continued on p. 24

—The Bread of Life—
Daily Bible readings for home devotions
July, 2006

We have learned the theological significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection through the Spirit's inspired message to the Romans and Galatians. He also strengthened other Christian congregations to live under God's grace in Christ. May the Spirit likewise bless our devotion to His Word!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Thought gleaned from the text</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	Ephesians 1	So much in just eight sentences!	461
2	Eph. Ch.2	Which is your chosen memory verse?	373
3	Eph. Ch.3	The Gentile question is no longer a mystery	394
4	Eph. Ch.4	God's influence must overpower Satan's	464
5	Eph. Ch.5	Therefore be followers of God as His children	25
6	Eph. Ch.6	Are you trained for combat and ready to fight?	444
7	Philippians 1:1-11	We are all partakers of His grace	374
8	Phlp. 1:12-29	Let your conduct be worthy...of Christ	527
9	Phlp. 2:1-11	Let this mind (attitude) be in you also	114
10	Phlp. 2:12-30	It is God who is at work in you	399
11	Phlp. 3:1-11	Paul's profit-and-loss statement records GAIN	380
12	Phlp. 3:12-21	I press toward the goal for God's eternal prize	413
13	Phlp. 4:1-23	I can do all through Christ, who strengthens me	389
14	Colossians 1:1-18	Be filled with the knowledge of His will	24
15	Col. 1:19-29	Him we preach, warning . . . and teaching	17
16	Col. 2:1-10	As you have received Christ, so walk in Him	477
17	Col. 2:11-23	Substance is more important than shadow	192
18	Col. 3:1-17	Set your mind on things above, with Jesus	540
19	Col. 3:18-4:1	Whatever you do...heartily, as to the Lord	429
20	Col. 4:2-18	Continue earnestly in prayer with thanksgiving	27
21	1 Thessalonians ch.1	Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come	612
22	1 Thess.2:1-12	Approved by God to be entrusted with gospel	482
23	1 Thess.2:13-20	Welcome the Word of God, which works	484
24	1 Thess.3:1-13	May the Lord make you increase in love	393
25	1 Thess.4:1-12	This is the will of God, your sanctification	396
26	1 Thess.4:13-18	And we shall always be with the Lord	587
27	1 Thess.5:1-11	The Day of the Lord comes as a thief	449
28	1 Thess.5:12-28	Be at peace among yourselves	234
29	2 Thessalonians 1	Thanks be to God for faithful brethren	478
30	2 Thess. 2	Be on your guard against the great Antichrist	263
31	2 Thess. 3	If any would not work, neither should he eat	494

you all to pray that our CLCI's message of Christ's love may continue to be sounding where people are sitting in darkness. Pray that many may be benefited. Also pray for the outreach activities in and around our congregations and preaching stations. The Seminary program is running very nicely. Now during this current year 2005-2006, 32 students have been taking the training in the CLCI Bible Institute.

The CLCI has a long way still to go and we stand in need of your continued prayers. We love you all in Jesus. Thank you very much. 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

—From Pastor Jyothi Benjamin
(March 25, 2006)

Announcements

Anniversary

Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jamestown, North Dakota will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary on Sunday, August 6th, 2006. All are welcome to join in the celebration. The day's schedule of activities is:

- 10:00 a.m. Worship Service
 Potluck Fellowship Meal to
 Follow Worship Service
- 2:00 p.m. Anniversary Service
 (Pastor Paul Fleischer, speaker)
- 3:30 p.m. Special 75th Anniversary
 Presentation

Guests who are interested in housing/lodging arrangements, please contact our housing coordinator, Phyllis Schuler (701-952-1221). Special rates are available at the Jamestown Quality Inn over the internet, and further group discounts may become available at a later time through a member of Our Savior's who is an employee of Quality Inn. If you plan to make reservations at the Jamestown Quality Inn, specify that you are part of a "CLC Group"; this will ensure that you receive any additional group discounts that may become available.

Send Change of Address to :

Lutheran Spokesman
2750 North Oxford Street
Roseville, MN 55113

Ministry by Mail

Ministry by Mail is a weekly publication of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Annual subscriptions are \$40.00 for a single weekly sermon, and \$10.00 for each additional copy mailed to the same address. Annual large print subscriptions are available for \$50.00 for a single weekly sermon (\$20.00 for each additional copy mailed to the same address). Bulk and foreign address subscriptions are available. The weekly sermons and an archive of sermons may also be accessed online: www.clclutheran.org.

Please direct all subscription requests, renewals, and other Ministry By Mail correspondence to the editor: Pastor Wayne C. Eichstadt, 417 Woodhaven Lane, Mankato, MN 56001. Phone (507) 344-0898. Email: wayne.eichstadt@immanuelmankato.org.

Great Lakes Delegate Conference

The Great Lakes Delegate Conference will meet June 5-6, 2006, at Faith Lutheran Church, Markesan, Wisconsin. Sessions begin at 10:00 a.m. Monday and conclude Tuesday at noon. Arrival time, number of delegates, and housing requirements should be announced to pastor Michael Schierenbeck.

—Pastor Michael Eichstadt, Chairman

Cover: John Fox