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“FOR WITH GOD NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE.”

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

LUKE 1:26-38



Church of the Lutheran Confession Announcements

South-East Pastoral Conference • January 18-21, 2011
Zion Ev. Lutheran Church • Atlanta (Lawrenceville), Georgia
Agenda:

- New Testament Exegesis, Colossians 3:15ff—Pastor Matthew Hanel
 - Old Testament Exegesis, Genesis 2:1ff—Pastor Aaron Ude
 - Isagogical study of Zechariah—Pastor Roland Gurgel
 - Word study on the term "weaker vessel"—Pastor Dennis Rieken
 - Production of revised agendas for worship (baptisms, weddings, installations, etc.)—Glenn Oster
 - Maintaining "Gospel Motivation" in Giving Pastoral Counsel—Pastor Todd Ohlmann
 - Teaching children God-pleasing humility, versus societal God-less pride—Pastor Vance Fossum
 - What is the meaning of "It is finished" in connection with Christ's death and resurrection (especially in light of Romans 4:25 and other such passages)?—Pastor Karl Stewart
- Chaplain: Pastor Nathanael Mayhew • Preacher: Pastor Jay Hartmann • Pastor Nathanael Mayhew, Secretary



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CHRISTMAS

The Festival of the Father

Pastor Pastor David Reim, Vernon BC (Canada)

He (God) did not give His Son for the purpose of coming to straighten us out.

Of all our customs at Christmas time, gift giving is perhaps the most universal. It may also be the most exciting custom, at least in the minds of children who can't wait to see what they will get for Christmas. When a gift is received, it's natural to want to examine it carefully. It is exciting to get something new and to try it out.

However, we don't want to forget the giver. The gift means so much more when it is given by someone who loves us. While a new shirt or piece of jewelry is nice to receive and a new toy can be fun, the real gift is the love of the person who chose that particular present and paid the price to give it to us.

Isn't that really what the festival of Christmas is all about? We have received the most incredible gift of all – the eternal, holy Son of God, wrapped in the flesh of a little baby. We rejoice in that gift. He is beautiful and wonderful. We want to examine Him carefully and use Him and find our joy in Him.

At the same time we don't want to forget the Giver. We can often tell a lot about the heart of the giver by looking at the gift. When we really love and care for someone, we as the givers don't want to get any old piece of junk just to have something to give. Instead, don't we spend time searching for something that will be meaningful and will last?

Also, the more the person means to us, the more we will be willing to sacrifice to get something really special, because love knows no bounds. The

greater the sacrifice, the greater the love of the giver.

His Most Precious Possession!

At Christmas time, let's consider the overwhelming love of our heavenly Father by looking at the Gift we have received from Him. God did not give us mere earthly riches or just anything that He created. No, God the Father gave His most precious possession – His only begotten Son.

And He did not give His Son for the purpose of coming to straighten us out.

The Father gave the Son to a world that would despise and reject Him, that would beat Him and crucify Him. He

gave His Son to suffer for the crimes and sins we have committed, all so that we can become His children forever.

Simply put, this gift fulfills our greatest need and truly lasts forever! We were lost in sin and condemned to eternal death, separated from God and His love forever. Yet God gave His Son to rescue us from that fate, to reconcile us to Himself and to give eternal life to us as His believing children.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1) Oh how wonderful and joyful it is to be loved so much that God would give us such an incredible gift!

At Easter we celebrate the amazing love and devotion of Jesus, the Son of God, as He sacrificed Himself for us on the cross and rose again to secure our

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God's Little Christmas Gift Just What We Needed!

Pastor Thomas Schuetze • Coloma, Michigan



One of the time-honored Christmas traditions we love to observe is the custom of exchanging presents. We pay a visit to a local shopping mall (or perhaps surf online) that we might search out and purchase items for sharing with family members. We gift-wrap our presents and tuck them away in a secret location or position them under the Christmas tree until the day arrives for sharing and opening them.

Unfortunately, sometimes it happens that the gifts we give turn out to be unwise choices. The sweater purchased for sister Sarah ends up being a size too large. The gloves wrapped up for Uncle George turn out to be too tight for his bear-sized hands. The electronic toy picked out for little brother Joey turns out to be broken or defective. As a result, often we end up taking the item back to the store for exchange or refund.

It's not likely our Christmas shopping skills will ever be honed to perfection. Nor is the day likely to come when merchandise return lines at the store aren't needed.

Yet isn't it comforting that the gift our heavenly Father picked out for us at Christmas – Jesus, His holy Son – was a “perfect fit,” exactly what we needed!

...In Small Packages...

We needed this Gift because we all are born with the stain of sin embedded in the fabric of our hearts. On account of those sin-stains we were destined to be cut off from our holy God forever, with no prospect of enjoying a peaceful relationship with Him now or living with Him in the joys of heaven hereafter.

However, in the little Lord Jesus we have been provided with the robe of holiness necessary to cover our sin-stains.

*We Christians may rejoice today.
When Christ was born to comfort and to save us.
Who thus believes No longer grieves,
For none are lost who grasp the hope He gave us.*
TLH, #107:1

How did Jesus accomplish this work of love? He grew from infancy to childhood to adolescence to manhood. All along the pathway of His life He showed perfect love for God and His fellow man. He fulfilled each of the Ten Commandments flawlessly as our Substitute, overcoming every sinister temptation of the devil. Then He suffered the shame and punishment on the accursed cross that we deserved for our failure to keep God's commandments. Finally, Jesus rose from the grave on Easter morning, proving beyond all doubt that He is the world's true Messiah and that His heavenly Father accepted His holy life and innocent death as the perfect ransom for the sins of all.

The “package” which arrived for us at that first Christmas was small – God's Son entering our world as an infant. But just as some of the best presents we receive often come in small packages, so God's gift to us of the little Lord Jesus is of exceedingly precious value.

Praise God this Yuletide Season for His priceless Gift to you nestled in the hay of Bethlehem's manger. It's just the gift each of us needed. ❄️

ADVENT DEVOTION “Guess Who's Coming!”

Warren H. Fanning, Pastor Emeritus • Phoenix, Arizona

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” MATTHEW 11:28

The above passage is a favorite of millions the world over. It is only for sinners. Self-righteous people don't get the point of the invitation. It's from Jesus who also said: “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners...” (Matthew 9:13).

You get the point, of course. But there may be something about this marvelous passage that we have never understood. We'll get to that later, but first we have to ask some questions.

First: Who is talking here?

Well, that's easy. It is Jesus, true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, as the chapters here portray Him.

Second: How do I really know that He means ME?

That's easy too because we are among millions who labor and are heavy laden by sin. We know the Ten Commandments by which we know well our guilt and death. We are all part of a corrupt, selfish, condemned world.

He's talking to you. You know you are a part of this whole mess. So take it personally.

Third: What is this “rest” He talks about? That's pretty easy too because here is Jesus on His way to the cross. He predicts that it will happen and why.

It's for you and all self-centered people. That includes everyone, doesn't it! Such selfishness deserves death, and Jesus is on His way to pay that price. Only sinners really know the peace He provides to heavy hearts by His Word of forgiveness and justification. You've experienced it many times in your life. It's free. And it lasts forever – into eternal rest.

Finally – and this is the big question that not everyone can answer in response to Jesus' “Come to Me” – how do I know when I have arrived, that I actually have come to Jesus? How do I, the hearer of this invitation, ever fulfill the “coming” that is expected of me?

Many Christians do not know for a certainty and are troubled by it. Some have even gone so far as to seek to figure out ways to approach Jesus – maybe by making a decision to come to Him, or somehow making oneself believe in Him, or making some kind of effort or performing some kind of work.

He Comes To You!

Stop that right now! Because you don't have to do anything! The very fact that you hear Jesus' invitation means that He has come to you!

I'll say that again: The very fact that you hear Jesus' invitation means that He has come to you!

Guess who's coming! Whenever and wherever the gospel is taught and proclaimed, there He comes. Whenever and wherever the Sacrament of the Altar is administered, there He comes. Whenever and wherever a person is baptized, there He comes.

There's really no guesswork to it anymore.

Your “coming” to Him is not something that you have to work out. He works in you by His Word and Spirit when He comes. He chooses you – not vice versa! – through the Means of Grace.

This is what distinguishes classic Lutheranism from virtually all other Christian denominations. There are believers in other Christian churches,

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What Should Christian Pastors Preach About On Christmas?

Pastor Mark Bernthal · Middleton, Wisconsin

“Christmas is giving!”

How often haven't we heard that statement? And properly understood, it is correct.

However, the majority of people who hear that statement would think of the giving of gifts, the giving of love, the giving of help and kindness. None of that is wrong except that it misses the real point of Christmas, the real reason for our worship, the real reason for this holiday!

So what should Christian pastors preach about on Christmas? No doubt we'd be surprised by the answers if we asked the question of people on the street. We might even be surprised by the answers some church members might give. In fact, we might even be surprised by the answers some pastors might give.

We would probably hear answers that would range from “pastors should preach about love and sharing” to “pastors should preach about working at bringing about peace on earth among nations and people.” We might hear answers such as “pastors should preach on the grace of giving or how we should feed the hungry and house the homeless.”

But this article was not written to find out what I think pastors should preach about on Christmas nor what you or any other person thinks, but what God thinks.

And that is exactly what Christian pastors should preach about on Christmas — about what God says: His Word (and not only on Christmas but everyday)!

During the Christmas season Christian

pastors should preach THAT GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST SAVES.

God's grace appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. When Christ came—when Jesus was born in Bethlehem—it was like the sun shining. Jesus Himself declared: “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

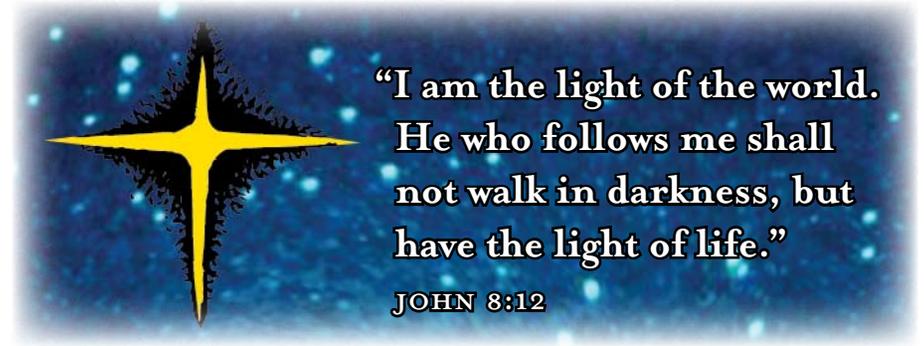
God's grace in Christ was not only that Jesus came into the world in the same flesh and blood we have; rather, God's grace entailed the whole life of Christ. It involved His perfect life of obedient love to God's commandments as our substitute and His suffering, death, and resurrection as payment for all of our sins. There in Christ God's undeserved love for mankind appeared. Jesus earned for us God's favor.

We therefore see that all of the works and merits of humanity are excluded. By its very definition grace excludes merit. It is free and undeserved, not earned by mankind. We cannot by our own reason or strength earn, win, or deserve our salvation.

That is what Christian pastors should preach — that man by nature is totally corrupt, sinful, spiritually dead, lost, and eternally damned, living in darkness. But God has shined His saving love upon us in the person of His Son born of the woman; in Jesus salvation has appeared to all of mankind, not only to believers, but to all people.

What wonder!!

What wonder, what amazement! How often doesn't it just slip right on by us? In fact, what has just been read may



have been missed by some of us: JESUS GAVE HIMSELF FOR ALL OF US! He wanted to leave His throne on high and be born into this sin-filled world. He wanted to become a mortal human being. He wanted to be placed under His Father's law. He wanted to suffer and die. He willingly came to take our place, to be our substitute sacrifice on the cross. He was not forced to do so, but He gave Himself for us because He loved us.

How many truly believe this as they think of Christmas? How many see in the baby Jesus the great love that came to seek and to save lost mankind?

The ransom price was Christ's shed blood, which is why even at Christmas we need to “Lift High the Cross”! For the cradle without the cross loses meaning. Christmas without Good Friday and Easter is emptied of saving value. But through the Spirit we see that God's love in Christ sent Him both to the cradle and to the cross. Through that grace in Christ we are empowered.

That's also what Christian pastors should preach about during the Christmas season!

We have been redeemed, freed, saved, purified in order to serve and live for God. People that have been set free from the weight of sin and its curse of death cannot but respond and express

their joy through thankful living, a living in obedience to God. Jesus says, “You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The Apostle Paul writes: “He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

God's grace empowers us to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12). The Holy Spirit uses the gospel message not only to create a living faith in our hearts but also to bring about spiritual renewal in all areas of our lives. The law of God can only condemn, never empower—it can only demand, never give. The gospel of Christ's forgiving love takes hold of the heart and creates a new life of service and love.

This is what Christian pastors should preach about — not only on Christmas Day but everyday! May the joy, the appreciation, the wonder of God's grace in Christ Jesus, the wonder of His deep, selfless, sacrificial love move us to dedicate ourselves in loving obedience to Him and, empowered by His Spirit, to be living examples of works of love toward each other. Then Christmas will be a real blessing to each of us the whole year through. ✨



The “Salt” of Scripture

Pastor Paul Krause • Markesan, Wisconsin

“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Mark 9:49-50

What an amazing gift it is to be able to learn more and more of the love and care that our God has for us sinful mortals! The way in which He sees to our reaching our heavenly home is nothing short of miraculous! Every single aspect of our salvation is so capably taken care of by Him!

This is certainly true when it comes to His care for us throughout our earthly pilgrimage. Not only does He bring us to faith but He also preserves us in it. As Luther explained the Third Petition: “(God’s) will is also done when He gives us strength and keeps us firm in His Word and in faith for as long as we live.”

This preservation in the faith is what Jesus is addressing in the Bible passages before us. And to aid our understanding, Jesus uses the picture of salt with its special properties. In days before refrigeration, you know, if a person wanted to keep food from spoiling, salt was used as a preservative.

The “salt” that God uses to “preserve” us is none other than His Word in Holy Scripture. In that Word we can read God’s many preserving promises. In the psalm David tells us, “Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me” (Psalm 40:11). And the Apostle Paul agrees, saying, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18).

“Salt is good,” Jesus says. When salt is

used, it does exactly what it is supposed to do. The same is true of the “salt” of God’s Word. It too is good – even perfect, serving the exact purpose for which it was given. As the Lord says through the prophet, “My word... shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

God Is At Work In Our Lives...

Sometimes the Lord’s preserving work in us may seem more like destruction. “For everyone will be seasoned with fire,” says our text. The law of God “burns” as it convicts us of our sin and guilt. But God’s goal is always good, seeking to call us to repentance.

Another purpose may be that we bear more fruit, as Jesus says: “Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). Or God’s intent may be the strengthening of our faith, as Peter wrote: “...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...” (1 Peter 1:7).

And what is the best way, the only way, we as God’s people can remember that God is at work in our lives, preserving us in the way He knows best both for our earthly and eternal well-being? It is for us to continue in His Word! To fail to make His “salt,” the Word, a part of our lives would be to reduce the holy influence or “flavor” *Continued on page 17*

The Old Paths

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

“...God and God alone can teach the truth, for He only is the source and foundation of truth. Hence those who proclaim the Word of God must exercise supreme care that what they preach is the Word of God. This can be accomplished only when the messenger bases his message squarely upon and makes it consonant with the written Word of God, the Bible. When the minister preaches, God must be heard... what unbelievers need above all else is teaching or doctrine. What blinds the understanding of men is ignorance, and ignorance can only be dispelled by truth. Hence, the missionary and evangelistic activity of the church must be doctrinal in character”

(Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. I, p. 105).

The more elderly among us can remember simpler times – times that have over the years been replaced by exploding technology and many other inventions and applications. In some cases these advances have in one sense made life easier, but in another sense more complicated, especially for those among us who cannot figure out how to use them. A case can be made that some of the new inventions have contributed to the degeneration of the social and spiritual culture in which we now move. The latter conclusion is not faulting the inventions themselves but the corrupt minds of those that use them for their own purposes.

We Christ – believers are not anti-progress. But we do yearn for stability in life. In all the changing scenes of life the stability for which we yearn is found in the Lord God and in His Word. But for many, even that source of strength is being stripped away, not because the living, gracious God has changed in His nature or in His saving will for man but because men in the imagination of their own hearts have sought to displace God who reveals Himself in Scripture as the source of truth as well as Truth itself. Those

who will not buy into the suggestion that God’s Word is too dated and dusty for the “enlightened” age in which we live are deemed to be doctrinaire and incorrigible. As Christ-believers who pray “Sanctify them [us] through Thy Word, Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17), we invite that judgment.

As we move into a new year, and as the CLC has celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2010, we dare never forget the content of the paragraph above. God alone teaches truth. As He has called us into His family and made us instruments in the exercise of His prophetic office, we are faithful to Him and serve Him only if we remember who we are – His ambassadors – and what His commission to us is.

Only as we base our message of law and gospel “squarely upon and make it consonant with the written Word of God” are we faithful instruments in laying a stable foundation in a world of instability. Only as we set forth the doctrines of God and not of men will the Heavenly Father bless us and those who hear us. Only as God’s revealed Word is preached do people find rest and stability in Christ for time – and perfect rest for eternity. †



A CHRISTMAS SERMONETTE...

Yes, We Believe in Angels!

Pastor Paul Fleischer • Cheyenne, Wyoming

As the opening narration for the children's service will tell us, our Christmas Eve service is constructed around Dr. Martin Luther's hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come," echoing the Christmas angel delivering the good news of the Savior's birth.

I would summarize my remarks this evening with the statement, "Yes, We Believe in Angels." Maybe you saw it too—this last week a Fox News anchor was interviewing the leader of an atheist movement in America. This movement is among the liberal groups more and more trying to secularize and despiritualize our nation's culture, including getting Christ out of Christmas. One atheist (!) Christmas display titled "Happy Winter Solstice" had a poster which said, "There is no God, there are no angels, there is no heaven, there is no hell..." and so on. How sad that the devil blinds people to the truths of God and His holy Word.

For our part, as Christians we believe in the supernatural. We believe in a "spirit world." We believe in angels—that is, we believe that angels exist. As the Bible makes clear, the purpose of angels was and is chiefly to praise God and also to serve Him. Angels serve God as His messengers. Then also angels are sent to serve Christian believers. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14) "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11-12).

Angels as spirit-beings are generally

invisible, but from the Bible we can say: not always. Think of the role of angels on that first Christmas Eve. As God's messengers they had a message for all the world to hear. The message was to announce the undoing of that first angel who came from heaven above to Earth below. You know to what I am referring? The first angel mentioned in the Bible is a fallen angel, the devil, Satan, the enemy of God and of the foremost of God's creation, man. Satan rebelled against God and came from heaven above to Earth beneath BECAUSE God cast him out of heaven with the rest of the angels who had rebelled.

Then, after sin entered the world by the devil's trickery, God cast Adam and Eve out of their earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden. And do you recall how God kept man from reentering the Garden? From heaven above to Earth below God sent Cherubim angels to guard the entrance to the Garden and the way to the tree of life. In other words, not all angels came from heaven above to Earth below bearing good tidings of great joy.

Christmas then was not the first time an angel came from heaven to Earth. The good news of Christmas, though, is why the angel came. As we heard in our Midweek Advent

services, God used angels to bring special announcements to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and also to bring announcements to Joseph and to Mary herself, telling them of the coming birth of the Christchild. Then on that first Christmas night God used an angel — soon joined by a multitude of them! — to announce the good news that, just as prophesied, Jesus had been born to save sinners from the disastrous damages caused by that fallen angel Satan.

Think of one other thing in this connection: The birth of Jesus into the flesh was not the first time He had come from heaven above to Earth. Jesus was and is the eternal Son of God. In Old Testament history we read many times that God sent His angel, or the Angel of the Lord, to guide and protect His people. That Angel was Jesus, but in spirit-form. The miracle of Christmas which the Christmas angel had to tell was not that Jesus came to Earth for the first

"He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone"

Psalm 91:11-12

time, but how and why He came — as a human being "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

To summarize, at Christmas we celebrate

the holy fact that Jesus came from heaven above to Earth beneath so that we might go from Earth [beneath] to heaven [above]! We sinners are of the Earth since we are born of sinful human parents and — as God told Adam and Eve — they and all their children must return to earth, to the dust from whence they came when God first created them. And yet BECAUSE OF CHRISTMAS we can look forward to going from dust and Earth to heaven — all because of Jesus, His love and forgiveness.

YES, WE BELIEVE IN ANGELS. May the message you children have to tell us again this evening help all of us rejoice anew in the glad tidings of great joy which the Christmas angels brought to all people on Earth. Amen.



the 1960 CLC charter members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, in 2010.

“ALL HISTORY IS GOD’S STORY!”

Jacob in Egypt

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota — No. 23 in series: Genesis chapters 46-50

“...few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” GENESIS 47:9

Jacob was standing before the Pharaoh of Egypt when he summarized his life’s journey with the above words.

So much happened in Jacob’s first 130 years—so much intrigue, so much sorrow and trial, swindling and animosity with his brother, fleeing for his life, maneuvering for wages with his father-in-law, working for one wife, being deceived and then working for another wife, a child-bearing battle between his two wives and their maids, strife among his children, the apparent loss of his most loved son. The list is indeed long and sorrowful.

An older, repentant Jacob stood before Pharaoh with a summary of his life which was as much confession as it was information. Jacob recognized not only the physical toll in his life but also the spiritual.

On the other side of the ledger, Jacob could also view his life with thanksgiving for all that he had received: great wealth, preservation through hardship and danger, children and grand-children, and even a reversal of sorrow when he learned that Joseph was alive.

Jacob’s days were “few and evil,” marked by sin, but they were also a living and daily testimony to the incredible faithfulness of God—a faithfulness that

wouldn’t change and was still promising great things for the future.

When Jacob fled from Esau those many years earlier, God reassured him that he was still the one through whom a great nation would be established and from whom the Savior would be born. On the eve of his departure for Egypt, God again assured Jacob: “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes” (Genesis 46:3-4).

God’s faithfulness and purpose put everything into motion so that Jacob’s family would settle in the land of Goshen and flourish there, virtually independent from Egypt but enjoying its blessings. Generations later, the seventy original settlers would leave as a great and mighty nation.

God granted Jacob seventeen years in Egypt. When his death drew near, Jacob called all his sons to his side. Each son received a particular blessing. Among them, Joseph received a double blessing and two tribes in the future nation. Jacob told Joseph: “...your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt...are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine...they will be called by the name



As we prepare to celebrate our Savior’s birth and once again gaze upon that baby lying in a manger, we know that not one word has failed—He has declared us righteous through Christ’s redeeming work...

of their brothers in their inheritance” (Genesis 48:5-6).

The Greatest Blessing

The greatest blessing that Jacob could confer upon one of his sons is the blessing upon which our own life rests—the promise of the world’s Savior. That promise — which came to Jacob via Abraham and Isaac — was given next to Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (Genesis 49:10).

After Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers were fearful that he would seek revenge for all of their wickedness against him. But no, Joseph understood God’s wisdom and treasured His grace far too much to seek revenge. Joseph said to them: “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:19-20).

Joseph’s words declare a principle truth concerning history as *God’s Story*. It is a story of sin and grace. It is the

story of Jacob’s few and evil days, even as God’s gracious hand never forsook Him. It is the story of man’s wickedness, arrogance, and pride, though above that fray God’s design, purpose, and gracious will always prevailed.

One of Jacob’s descendants, Joshua, would declare before his death: “...not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke...” (Joshua 23:14).

Generations later another descendant, Solomon, would declare: “There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses” (1 Kings 8:56).

Still many more generations later, we can declare the same. As we prepare to celebrate our Savior’s birth and once again gaze upon that baby lying in a manger, we know that not one word has failed—God preserved His people just as He promised so that in the fullness of time the Savior could be born.

As we confess our sins in our own days that are “few and evil,” we know that not one word of God has failed—He has declared us righteous through Christ’s redeeming work and graciously forgives all of our sin.

Jacob died as a sojourner in a foreign land, but he died in the certain hope that His people would one day return home to Canaan where a Savior would be born who would enable sinners to enter an eternal home in Heaven.

How could he be so sure? Because not one word of God’s promises ever fails!

Likewise we who await our Savior’s return and our own entrance into glory can be supremely confident in the certain hope of eternal life, because now and always not one Word of God fails in

 *His Story!* 

“...No One But Jesus Only”

Pastor Paul Fleischer • Cheyenne, Wyoming

In the calendar year now drawing to a close, our church body with its respective congregations has individually and collectively marked a half-century of wonderful blessings. As the synod's official “spokesman,” our little magazine too has been noting the event.

Together we have looked back to the days of our founding in thankful remembrance of our eternal Savior – God's gracious guidance and protection all along the way. At the same time we have encouraged one another to look ahead confidently, trusting in Him who – with all His holy attributes, including His unconditional, sacrificial love for us poor, unworthy sinners – is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In sermons throughout the year, each of our pastors has surely made frequent reference to the synod's anniversary. A number of our congregations have, in fact, observed their own anniversaries – some more or less than fifty years – simultaneously with the synod's.

As we conclude the synod's anniversary year, your editor/pastor wishes to share a portion of what was preached in a Transfiguration Sunday sermon last Spring at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyo. (a site of one of the original Interim Conferences). The text included these words:

“While [Peter] was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their

eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (Matthew 17:5-8).

The sermon on this text concluded as follows.

This concluding frame of the holy video we are witnessing calls attention to the fact that we are to HEAR JESUS ONLY (as God the Father says)! Jesus is not just one of many prophets or religious teachers, but the unique Prophet prophesied by Moses and Elijah centuries earlier. Him, Jesus, we are to hear, none other! We have one Master, Christ, in all things spiritual!

And where is it, fellow Christians, that Jesus can be “heard”? Where else but in His Word in the Scriptures? As Peter would later testify in his epistle: “We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place...” (2 Peter 1:19). Jesus teaches in the Gospel: “If you continue in my Word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 18:15) Yes, even in this truth-denying, supposedly everything-is-relative, nothing-is-absolute, one-religion-is-as-good-as-another day and age, there still is truth! There still is error, false teaching! In His great commission on the Mount of Ascension, the risen and glorified Lord sent out His disciples with the directive: “Teach all things, whatsoever I have commanded you,” promising, “And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” Truly, “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:28).

All of this helps to explain – this, our 50th anniversary year as a synod – the sensitivity we in the CLC have for the

From the 25th Anniversary Booklet (1985) “Reflections – Projections”

“Projection” Number Twelve of twelve (series concluded) • Pastor Norbert Reim (1918-2007)

IMMANUEL – GOD WITH US!

How we humans would love to draw aside the curtain and take a peek into what is to come! What do the next years hold in store for the Church of the Lutheran Confession? Will this old world still be in existence after another quarter of a century? If it is, will the CLC be around to help proclaim the gospel to its inhabitants? If so, will it still be faithful to the confessional position to which we have been led by the Spirit through the Word? Will there have been growth? What of our foreign missions efforts?

Our gracious Lord, of course, continues to veil the future from us. He has given us prophecies which tell us what we need to know to be prepared for the end times and the life of the world to come. He has assured us that while this Earth endures, the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. But He does not tell us how any specific church body or its members will fare. This He lovingly withholds from us because such knowledge would not be good for us.

But this does not mean that the future

purity of Bible doctrine. We would see JESUS ONLY in all things. We would see JESUS ONLY in clear focus, and we have learned from Scripture itself that all false teaching blurs and distorts the picture of Jesus as our only and all-sufficient Savior. Any false teaching can cause the gospel of Jesus to become a blurred, fuzzy, murky, distorted picture causing us to miss the glory of Jesus. Let us not weary then of the struggle to maintain pure doctrine. May God in His grace keep us sensitive to the truth, and preserve unto us a holy loathing for any besmirching of the complete picture

is veiled in fearful uncertainty for us. We know much about what *will* happen because we know what *has* happened. We know that our Heavenly Father loved us enough to keep the promise He made through the prophet Isaiah: “The Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

As we look again into the Bethlehem manger and rejoice in the pardon and salvation God has given us through this Child, and think about what it really means that God is with us, we have all the assurance we need about our future. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31) Has He not promised: “I will not leave you nor forsake you?” (Hebrews 13:5) “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?” (Romans 8:32)

Do we need to know anything more about the future as we plan our gospel proclamation for the years to come? ☀

He paints for us in the Bible. We would see and hear JESUS ONLY, for alone in Him and His saving Word do we have a clear panoramic view of God's plan for our eternal salvation.

“Heavenly Father, keep the eyes of our holy faith focused on JESUS ONLY and our ears and hearts attuned to hear JESUS ONLY. Do this, Father, for Your glory and honor, and for the eternal welfare of our and our children's blood-bought souls.”

As we sing in the hymn:

Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus

Can my heartfelt longing still

Lo, I pledge myself to Jesus –

What He wills alone to will.... Amen.

Chapel Talk on Chapter 18 of the Book:

OUT OF NECESSITY

A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession • Pastor David Lau

Dear Friends in Christ,

The summer of 1963 was a very busy one on this campus. There were volunteers from many CLC congregations on the scene, trying to prepare the former Ingram Estate for the fifth school year of Immanuel Lutheran College. For the first four years Mankato, Minnesota, was the home of our school.

There were two major projects underway in 1963: the remodeling of the big barn and the remodeling of the little barn. Two Albrecht brothers were in charge of the remodeling crews: Pastor Christian Albrecht of Watertown, South Dakota, and Pastor Paul G. Albrecht of Bowdle, South Dakota. If these brothers were here with us today, what would make them the most happy?

I am sure they would be pleased to see the new Academic Center. Already in 1963 they had hoped to build a structure for classrooms, but our church body could not afford it. That is why the two barns had to be remodeled. It is true that the two buildings they worked on are no longer on campus, but they would be happy to know that the big barn, to be known as Northwest Hall, served for many years as boys' dormitory, classroom building, and administration center. They would be happy that the little barn served for many years as the Sem House.



Pastor Christian Albrecht
(1900-1970)

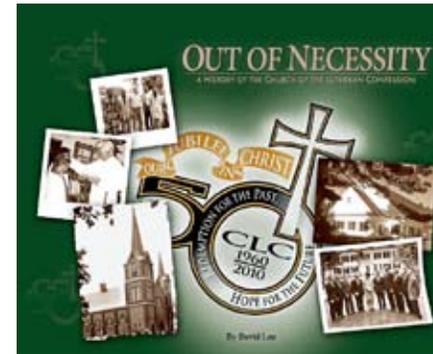


Pastor Paul G. Albrecht
(1898-1976)

But I believe the two Albrecht brothers would be even more happy to know that some of their great grandchildren are students on this campus today, together with the descendants of many of the other volunteers who contributed their talents in 1963.

But I believe that what would make the Albrecht brothers the happiest today is the blessing from God that in the past fifty years the doctrinal basis of Immanuel Lutheran College has not changed. For this certainly was the main reason that the volunteers gathered on this campus in 1963. They wanted to establish and maintain a school where the Word of God would hold sway, where the Word of God would prevail not only in religion classes but in history classes and science classes and sociology classes and psychology classes, where the Word of God would be the guide and norm in all campus life, in the dormitories, and in all extra-curricular activities.

Anyone who has studied American history knows that many of the schools begun by Christians on sound Christian principles in this country are no longer guided by Christian teaching. They have become secular institutions, and in some cases have become anti-Christian in their teaching and practice. Three of the oldest schools in our country are Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, all of



them founded as Christian schools to be guided by the Word of God. But that certainly is not the case in these schools today. So it is a very special blessing of God that throughout the history of Immanuel Lutheran College there has never been a teacher who denied the inspiration of the Bible or the six-day creation of the world or the teaching that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world, or the fellowship principles taught in the Bible. This is not a blessing to be taken for granted, but a blessing to be thankful for every day of our lives, and something that we need to keep on praying for and striving for continually.

There were eight full-time teachers at this school in 1963, and there are twelve full-time teachers today. None of the original eight teachers is still teaching today. But Prof. Ron Roehl was here in 1963, and he still has an office as registrar in the new Academic Center, and he is still living on campus.

In the fall of 1963 the total enrollment was less than 100, but in six years it was up to 137 and, of these, 47 were in the college department. We would like to have that many college students today. By the 1974-1975 school year the total enrollment was 179, which, I believe, was the highest enrollment in ILC history. But the enrollment did not remain at

OUT OF NECESSITY – A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession by Pastor David Lau



Available at the CLC bookstore

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E-mail: Info@CLCbookhouse.org

that level. In fact, by the 1982-1983 school year the high school enrollment was down to 74.

But the teachers kept teaching, and soon the Lord gave us the gift of more students. Even as every child is a gift from God, so also every student is a gift from God, a gift to be guided and molded by the Word of God. The enrollment began to climb again in the 1980s. By 1988 there were 105 in high school, 38 in college, and 7 in seminary. But by 1993 the total enrollment was down to 125, with only 12 beginning ninth-graders. Was the school going to die for lack of students? No, the very next year there were 30 ninth-graders, and by the year 2000 there were 132 high school students, and the total enrollment was 176, close to the all-time high.

We pray that the Lord will give us this many students again, not for the glory of this school, but so that our teachers have the opportunity to teach God's Word and ways to the next generation, so that they in turn can pass this on to their children and grandchildren.

For this is the will of God, as recorded in Psalm 78: "He established a testimony in Jacob, ...which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God." We sing TLH #629.



Harvest Festival Service in Hecla

Submitted by Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalm 103:1-5

In the summer of 1970 then Pastor Walter Schaller proposed to the members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Hecla, South Dakota, that the congregation hold an annual outdoor Harvest Festival service to thank God for the blessings He has showered upon the land.

For the last forty years this wonderful tradition has continued at Prince of Peace. Each August the congregation has assembled at the farm now owned by Marvin and Gweneth Hansen for an outdoor worship service, followed by a potluck dinner.

This last fall Mark Gullerud, now pastor of Redeemer, Bowdle, S.Dak. and Zion, Ipswich, S.Dak., served as guest speaker. Interestingly, back in the

summer of 1970 then seminary student Gullerud attended the very first Harvest Festival while working on the farm of Prince of Peace member Allen Hansen.

The Lord blessed our 2010 Harvest Festival with beautiful weather and wonderful fellowship. More than sixty souls gathered to hear God’s Word and sing His praises. Visitors included fellow believers from sister CLC congregations in North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.



Pastor Pfeiffer (on left)
Pastor Gullerud (on right)



Above is a picture of some of those who were in attendance for Prince of Peace’s first Harvest Festival in 1970. Pictured from left to right – Mable Hansen, Mary Hansen, Martin Hansen, Shelly Schwab, Larry Hansen, Virginia Carstensen, Gweneth Hansen, Marvin Hansen, Allen Hansen, Alvera and Royal Boniek, Pastor Mark Gullerud, Nancy Hansen, and Debra Payne.

The Festival of the Father *Continued from Page 1*

forgiveness and salvation. Then on Pentecost we celebrate the festival of the Holy Spirit who works powerfully in our hearts and builds His Church with His Word.

Christmas is the Festival of the Father, who “so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16). The greatest expression of thanks is to use and treasure the gift we are given.

May we love and use the Gift – our Lord Jesus Christ – and may each of us praise and thank the Giver with all our heart. 🕊

“Guess Who’s Coming!” *Continued from Page 3*

though they aren’t all sure *how* faith is worked in them and/or *what* it works in them.

In the season of Advent we sing and pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!” By the time you learn to say that, He is already here! You see this in the great hymn “Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel...!” For what else does the word “Emmanuel” mean but “God With Us”?! See Psalm 46: “The Lord of hosts is with us.” And Matthew 28: “Lo, I am with you always”!

“I have come...” Jesus says in John chapter ten. He comes and releases us from the grasp of death, transferring us into His abundant life. He chooses us – not vice versa, remember! He takes

and leads us into His Kingdom. And it’s all gift. “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works...” (Ephesians 2).

So it is that we do not dwell on our coming to Him but on His coming to us.

Guess Who’s coming? *He* is! And not just in Advent, but at Christmas and all the year – around. For example, we can sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come” even in July! The message of that hymn would go well with any sermon, any devotion, any time – and it’s a perfect distribution hymn during the Lord’s Supper.

He comes... He’s here! 🕊

The “Salt” of Scripture *Continued from Page 6*

that the “salt” of God’s Word – both the “burning” of the law and the purifying, healing balm of the gospel – is intended to have in our lives.

As God by grace has preserved to us His Holy Word, may we ever use that Word faithfully. For in that way we will “have salt in ourselves” – being “kept by the power of God through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 1:5).

May God ever lead us to do with His Word as Moses encouraged the people of Israel to do when they entered the Promised Land: “You shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on

your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates...” (Deuteronomy 10:18-20).

Then with the “salt” of Holy Scripture in our hearts and on our lips (see Colossians 4:6), God will lead us to “have peace with one another” – a peace founded upon the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” which “will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). 🕊



Berea Chancel Triptych

Berea Lutheran Church, CLC

Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

The main focus of Berea's worship area is the triptych above the altar. The triptych's design is intended to draw our attention to the cross. The design of all other chancel items is intended to support this emphasis on the cross.

Our Lord Jesus described himself as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8). The side panels represent this, with large Alpha and Omega characters. Everything we need for our life and salvation is encompassed between them.

Jesus also referred to Himself as the Way (John 14:6). The central panel depicts a road (way) in the same burgundy color as the sacristy aisle, leading us visually to the foot of the cross. The area on either side of this road is shaded in earth colors. The Way leads us through earthly life to the cross and our salvation.

Above the horizon, blue sky shades from light and bright to very dark, symbolizing our inability to see beyond earthly life. Thin brass "firmament" lines stretch across the three panels, representing this separation. A brass circle set behind the cross symbolizes eternity.

The chancel's triptych solves acoustical and design problems. Due to the shape

of the sanctuary, the best placement of speakers for the public address and organ systems is directly above the altar. The three colored panels are made of dyed silk. This silk material is acoustically transparent and visually opaque. It hides the speakers, while allowing sound to pass through. The triptych's cross and brass symbols were placed to avoid interference with the projection of sound, while maintaining visual balance.

Triptychs have been used since the time of early Christianity. A triptych is a work of art consisting of three painted or carved panels. The center panel is often larger than the side panels. Some were hinged and used as portable altars. Architecturally, the term indicates a design consisting of three panels, or niches, associated with an altar.

(We thank Berea Lutheran Church for this instructive description of its triptych. We invite and welcome similar articles from our CLC churches which happen to have colored windows, mosaics, or other special designs with religious significance. Please send along a photograph as well as a brief description. Thank you! – Editor)