

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." — John 10:35

Now faith is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen

# How Do We “See” the New Year?

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

Hebrews 11:1

Teacher David Bernthal • Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

When a young child's mother leaves the room, and he cannot see, hear, or smell her – she's gone! Then the crying begins.

We console the child, “Mama will be back!”

But the child wants proof! “Where's my mother? I want to see her now!”

Things don't change much as we grow older, do they? Oh, we may think we are more sophisticated and have matured—and in the things of this world perhaps we have, for time does gain us experience.

But when it comes to spiritual matters—to matters of faith—we don't mature simply because time has passed since we first became Christians.

Either our faith is growing in the Word of God or it is dying without it.

When I am in church on a Sunday morning listening to the sermon, I find it easier to trust in the Lord, doing as the Holy Spirit expects. When I am

in class teaching my students their Bible History lesson or delivering a devotion, I can feel very impassioned about the truths of Scripture. I revel in the work of the Holy Spirit moving my students with His message.

However, when we are away from the Word and “church friends,” do we find that it gets harder to apply the promises of Holy Scripture with their full import? (I often find it so!)

Satan, the world, and our own sinful nature always seek to convince us that ‘seeing is believing.’ We are tempted to think that if God's Word is true, we should always be able to see its mighty results. Right?

I see bills piling up and expect to see an end in sight, yet none comes.

I look for a solution to a problem – or at least for a sign from God that I'm headed in the right direction – but no solution jumps out at me.

I try my best to be a good husband, father, and church member, yet I often discover

short-fall instead of success, corner-cutting instead of dedication.

I see dedicated Christians serving their church with their time, treasure, and talent and expect to see the church grow and flourish before my eyes, and yet....

## Walking By Faith

The Scriptures tell us, “*We walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Corinthians 5:7). If we could see God's name literally carved onto everything around us, would that make this statement any more true: “*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein*” (Psalm 24:1)?

If we believe that statement is true, is there any need to worry about how we will be cared for?

If the Lord's holy angels camped around us daily were visible to us, where is the need for faith, the assurance of “*things hoped for*”?

Dear reader, it is faith, gifted to us by the Holy Spirit, which convinces us that things not seen do exist! Seeing is not believing—believing is seeing!

Our faith will see solutions where reason can't come up with any. The promises of God in His Word are more sure than even the very earth on which we are standing, for “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My [Jesus'] words will by no means pass away*” (Matthew 24:35).

And then in heaven faith will

come to full fruition. We shall see Him face to face—the One in whom we had our hope!

Students don't let us teachers forget our promises. If we tell them that we'll be doing something special on a certain day, they'll remind us, “But, you said...”! That's good, isn't it?! We should be held to our word.

If we sinful humans are expected to keep our word, how much more can we depend on our heavenly Father to keep His? We can hold Him to His Word and promises, and He will gladly keep them.

He has promised that if we put His Kingdom first, then all other things will be added to us.

If we call upon Him in times of trouble, He promises to deliver us (praise His name)!

The Lord also challenges our faith in regard to our offerings, telling us to see “*If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room to receive it*” (Malachi 3:10).

And when our sins and shortcomings threaten to drag us into despair, God's Word assures us, “*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us*” (Psalm 103:12).

As we enter into a New Year, thanks be to the Lord who moves us to see with our hearts what our eyes cannot!



# Great Joy

*"And there was great joy in that city"* Acts 8:8

*"He went on his way rejoicing"* Acts 8:39

Pastor Em. David Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

**W**hat is it that makes Christians joyful? Next to the joy of forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, surely one of our greatest joys is to hear about or witness for ourselves the great joy that comes to others when they hear the good news of Jesus Christ: His life, death, and resurrection for the salvation of mankind.

We know there is great joy in heaven over each individual sinner that comes to know Jesus as his Savior. Our Lord Jesus has told us this (Luke 15:10). Should we not also rejoice when we hear of non-Christians becoming Christians by the working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace?

Acts chapter 8 begins with the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem as instigated by that zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. In order for Christians to preserve their own lives and the lives of their families, they got out of Jerusalem and found refuge wherever they could.

The same thing is happening in our own day as thousands of Christians in Islamic countries of the Middle East and Africa are running for their lives to any place that will give them refuge. Let us hope that the Christians of today are doing what the refugees from Jerusalem did in their time of persecution. *"Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4).

When the gospel Word is preached, wonderful things happen. *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation"* (Isaiah 52:7). The scattered Christians told their new neighbors about Jesus Christ and what He had done in Jerusalem. They did what their Lord told them to do. They talked about repentance and the remission of sins.

Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen to help the apostles distribute food to the poor in Jerusalem, was one of those scattered Christians. He traveled

**...the greatest of all miracles in that hour was that through Philip's preaching of Christ the Holy Spirit changed unbelievers into believers.**

north to Samaria *"and preached Christ to them"* (Acts 8:5). In Jerusalem the majority of the citizens did not want to hear about Christ. They were happy that Saul was finally doing something about those blaspheming followers of Jesus.

But in Samaria *"the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip"* (Acts 8:6). Yes, Philip was given special power to do miracles of healing to confirm the Word, as Jesus had promised. But the greatest of all miracles in that hour was that through Philip's preaching of Christ the Holy Spirit changed unbelievers into believers.

And the next thing we are told is that *"there was great joy in that city"* (Acts 8:8).

Joy in heaven among the angels!

Joy on Earth among the converted Samaritans!

And joy also among all Christians everywhere, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, that the good news of Christ had brought forgiveness and peace and eternal salvation to persons who had been traveling the broad way to death and hell.

The joy is there not only when

multitudes are converted but also when just one individual learns to know Christ as Savior.

Later in chapter 8 Philip was guided to a wilderness road leading to Ethiopia. An Ethiopian official sitting in his chariot was trying to understand the meaning of a scroll from Isaiah 53 that he probably had recently purchased in Jerusalem. He wanted to know more about this mysterious person who *"was led as a sheep to the slaughter"* (Acts 8:32).

Philip knew what to do. *"Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him"* (Acts 8:35). Again the Holy Spirit did His thing, using Philip's preaching of Christ and administration of baptism. And the story ends on a joyful note: *"And he went on his way rejoicing"* (Acts 8:39).

Joy in heaven over this one sinner who repented!

Joy in the heart of the Ethiopian!

And joy also among all Christians everywhere who hear this account!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever you are, whether you are pastors, teachers, helpers, make us all joyful by telling us what the

Holy Spirit is doing through the gospel in your part of the world.

Of course, we will always be joyful because of what our Lord Jesus did for us through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. This is joy that remains constant in times of persecution and days of apostasy.

But surely God wants His children to experience even more joy by hearing about the joy of those who have been brought to faith in Christ. The angels in heaven

certainly do not mind if we rejoice with them over all sinners that repent.

There is enough bad news in the world from day to day, for *"the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one"* (1 John 5:19). But there is GREAT JOY in the community of Jesus Christ—joy in the work of Christ and joy also in the work of the Holy Spirit!



On October 23, 2011, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Spokane, Wash. observed its 60th anniversary. CLC President Schierenbeck addressed the congregation, which is being served by Pastor Robert List.

## A CHRISTIAN SUPPORT SYSTEM

A meditation presented by Chaplain Pastor Mark Gullerud to the West Central District Delegate Conference of the CLC, Grace Lutheran Church, Valentine, Nebraska (May 24, 2011)

*"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:1-4, ESV*

**I**n the name of our Savior, who has united us together in a Christian fellowship that we might be of mutual help and support, dear fellow redeemed.

When I look in the newspaper and see the different support groups meeting in a given week, I am amazed at the number of groups. There are groups for those with addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, or eating disorders. There are support groups for those who have family members suffering from such addictions and for those dealing with divorce or the death of a loved one.

Since there is need for such groups, what better support group can there be than the Christian fellowship?!

While children of this world are working with a flawed understanding of the basic nature of man and the root causes of man's problems—and don't possess

divine counsel which gives answer to those problems—Christians are blessed by the Spirit of God with knowledge and understanding and with the spirit of mutual love.

The apostle Paul draws attention to certain necessary features in showing love and support for one another within the Christian fellowship.

When Paul calls upon us to be of the same mind and in full accord and of one mind, it is to be understood that the ground and basis for this oneness are the teachings of Holy Scripture. In this treasure trove of divine counsel we find solutions to all problems we will ever be faced with in this sin-cursed world.

Whenever a brother or sister in the Lord is dealing with personal, troubling issues, the Lord wants us to support them by supplying the necessary divine counsel. And God would have the troubled soul

receive that counsel with a meek spirit and a ready mind and heart.

The attitude we show toward the troubled soul is so important. If a brother or sister in Christ is struggling with some kind of sinful behavior, and we look down upon them as though they are inferior, they certainly aren't going to open up about their problems or even be willing to accept our help. A loving, humble spirit is called for, so that those who are troubled will see that we are genuinely concerned about their welfare. Paul exhorts, "in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

The Spirit urges us to draw upon the help that we ourselves have received so that we can be of support to one another. "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy...."

How often haven't we experienced difficulties which caused us to be discouraged or depressed, but then through the Word of Christ we received the encouragement which uplifted our hearts, giving us new courage and strength in the Lord? Having received that kind of support ourselves, the Lord would have us share it with Christian brethren.

The same is true in regard to our being comforted by the Lord. Paul

writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

A Christian brother or sister may be grieving over the death of a spouse or loved one. As we received great comfort from God's Word, we can provide the same comfort to them. Whatever the situation in life, God wants us to do this.

All of us have problems. As we all need the help and support of others, what better support group can there be than that of our fellow believers?! When others are in need of help, reach out to them.

May God grant us grace to be a source of support in the Lord to one another.

#### Prayer:

**Dear Lord, we thank You for bringing us into Your family of believers, the Christian fellowship. Knowing that You have gathered us together so that we can be of mutual help and support, enable us to be there for one another, giving a needed word of encouragement and comfort in our troubled times of life.**

**We pray in Jesus' name.**

**Amen.**

# CLC Teachers' Conference

Teacher Craig Owings, Immanuel Lutheran School, Mankato, Minnesota

## Day One

**Shaped to Serve** was the theme of the 2011 CLC Teachers' Conference, hosted by Faith Lutheran Church and School of Markesan, Wisconsin, from October 19-21 of this year.

The conference started with a devotion by Conference Chaplain Paul Tiefel III. The text was Isaiah 44:24, "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: 'I am the LORD, Who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself. . .'" Based on this text, Chaplain Tiefel pointed out that the LORD has been shaping us for His service since before we were born. Although we may sometimes question whether we have the abilities, the patience, and the wisdom to fulfill the responsibilities of our call, the LORD reminds us, as He did the Israelites in the Babylonian captivity, that the source of our strength is not in ourselves, but rather in Him. He formed us in the womb ("shaped us to serve"), and it is He who made and formed all things who also has the power to shape us to do His will.

Following the opening devotion and communion service, Pastor Michael Eichstadt presented a

paper on the use of Christian Schools as mission tools. The rest of the first morning's session saw the presentation of "Title Five" topics on *Supplemental Science Units* (Karla Olmanson and Erin Libby), *Teaching Manners* (Mary Ryan and Susan Hulke), *Teaching Nutrition* (Barb Gurgel and Eileen Tiefel), *Music Theory* (Dan Barthels), and *Educational Board Games* (Candy Ohlmann). The last paper of the morning was a Curriculum Review on reading curricula presented by Marie Muehlenhaupt. Having narrowed the choice for a new reading curriculum for Faith Lutheran School to the *SRA Imagine It!* and the *A Beka* reading curricula, Marie presented her evaluation of those two series.

The first paper of the afternoon was *School Bullying* by Seth Schaller. The question of what parents, schools, and students can do to prevent bullying was addressed. Following that, Mike Schierenbeck presented a paper titled *Under Our Spiritual Care*, which discussed the issue of spiritual care for non-member students in our schools. The paper concluded with six recommendations for policies and practices in this situation.

The final paper of the day was Ross Roehl's presentation of *Classroom Management*, in which he outlined practices that lead to efficient and effective use of classroom time. Especially useful was the distinction between *discipline* and *management* in the classroom environment. The rest of day one consisted of an idea exchange, choir practice, supper, the evening worship service, and a pie and ice cream social.

### Day Two

The opening devotion was based on Philippians 2:5-8. Continuing with the theme of Shaped to Serve, Chaplain Tiefel presented God's plan to take our misshapen lives and reshape them after the example of Christ, whose perfect life of service and vicarious death have

"reshaped" us in God's eyes so that we now can be suitable servants in the ministries into which He has called us.

Sandie Quade then presented *Top 10 Playground Emergencies*, in which she outlined procedures for the diagnosis and treatment of health issues that can occur on the playground. Following that, Pastor Todd Ohlmann explained the rollout of the *Kids 4 Kinship* program, which involves CLC school students in spreading the Gospel throughout the world.

After the morning break, teacher Chad Seybt reviewed the book *The Well-Trained Mind*, by Susan Wise Bauer. The book presents the case for classical education today. According to the book, this approach is systematic, rigorous,

language-focused, and based on the inherent learning patterns of children; it was the type of education received by the majority of the great thinkers of the past. Mr. Seybt suggested that the topic of classical education be given further consideration in future conferences.

After lunch and before our field trip, Jeff Karnitz and Sara Pfeiffer offered a presentation on an example of *Inquiry-Based Science*. The following field trip was to a (not quite) local vineyard and winery. After our return and supper, Amy Sippert presented *Teaching Reading Comprehension Skills*.

### Day Three

In the opening devotion for the final day of conference, Chaplain Tiefel examined how we have been

reshaped for service on this earth and into eternity. He noted that "There will be a time when sin will no longer plague us, and we will be able to perfectly serve the Lord." His text was II Corinthians 5:1.

Neil Bernthal presented *How to Promote Your School in Your Congregation and in Your Community*, and this paper was followed by the final presentation, *Autism in the Classroom; Helping Children with Autism Succeed*, by Dawn Hart.

The conference closed with a business meeting and closing devotion, after which lunch was served, and a group of tired but edified CLC teachers from around the nation returned to their homes and classrooms.



October 19-21, 2011, the CLC Teachers' Conference assembled at Faith Lutheran Church & School, Markesan, Wisconsin.

# Human Life... A Precious Gift of God!

I believe that God  
has created me and all creatures.  
He has given me my body and life...

Pastor Thomas Schuetze • Coloma, Michigan

In these words from *Luther's Small Catechism* we state our belief that God the Father used His almighty power to bring all things into existence. The crowning stage of His creative handiwork happened on day six when He fashioned the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and the first woman, Eve, from a rib of Adam, blessing them with the ability to produce offspring, saying: *"Be fruitful and increase in number..."* (Genesis 1:28).

The unbelieving world rejects the teaching of creation as a myth. It accepts the notion that the universe came into being through chance processes of evolution over eons of time.

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**The doctrine of evolution has spawned many evils in our society. One of these is that the sanctity of human life has, to a large extent, been devalued.**

human life has, to a large extent, been devalued. This, in turn, has brought about the fact that the lives of countless thousands of unborn children have been tragically snuffed out through abortion.

We are not expecting the spiritual condition of our culture to improve anytime soon. Jesus foretold that in the latter days the moral climate of the world would grow steadily worse, not better. The Savior does encourage us to use opportunities He gives for sharing His life-giving Word for the spiritual benefit of individuals whom we meet along life's road.

As we share Christ's Word of life, we can also be confident He will use it to lead many to a saving knowledge of Him and, at the same time, to a proper appreciation of the sanctity of human life (which

He, the Son of God, came down from heaven to redeem).

Here is a sampling of Bible truths related to the abortion issue that can be shared as witnessing opportunities come our way:

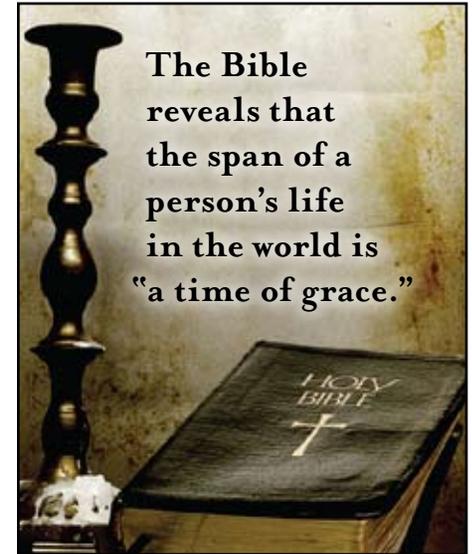
- **The Bible reveals that the span of a person's life in the world is "a time of grace."**

Our lifespan is a time which the Lord gives to individuals so they can learn about Him, come to believe in Him, and finally be saved. We are told in Acts 17:24-25: *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth ... he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else ... He has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him."*

Since each person's life is a time of grace, we will want to regard it as precious. We will want to view also the lives of unborn children as precious and after they are born do all we can to teach them about their Savior.

- **According to Holy Scripture God has intimate knowledge of each person from the time of conception.**

In Psalm 139:13-15 we are told:



*"You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb ... My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place ... Your eyes saw my unformed body."*

How amazing that all through the term of a mother's pregnancy the Creator is at work "behind the scenes," weaving the body of the little one together, cell by cell!

Since the fetus growing in the mother's body is a precious life formed by the hand of God (a person beloved of the Lord!), we want to safeguard its well-being till the day arrives for the baby to be born.

- **"My times are in Your hands" (Psalm 31:15).**

This Bible verse encourages us to keep in mind that God is the loving caretaker of our moments and days, of our entire

## Perhaps you know someone who has made the wrong choice in this matter...

span of years on the Earth. He is the originator of our life and He reserves for Himself the right to end that life at a time when He, in His divine wisdom, chooses.

It has been estimated that over 50 million abortions have been performed in the United States since the Roe vs. Wade decision was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1973.

Perhaps you know someone who has made the wrong choice in this matter and is experiencing the guilt-feelings that come from

transgressing God's will.

If so, what a wonderful opportunity the Savior is providing so that you might apply to such a wounded heart the healing medicine of the gospel.

You and I can share the good news that where sin abounds, God's grace—His undeserved love—abounds more; that there is pardon for every repentant sinner in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of all—who came that we might have life and have it to the full!



Installation of Pastor Richard Kanzenbach at Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church, Onalaska, Wisconsin on Sunday, November 30, 2011. Clergy present include David Baker, David Lau (retired), the new pastor, Norman Greve, John Lau (retired)

## HOPE RESTS ON GRACE

Professor John Pfeiffer

**L**ord God, hear us: help us to hear You. Amen.

Does anyone love you? I suppose there are times that we may feel unloved. However, I am sure that every one of you is loved by someone and probably by many.

Think of one person who loves you [pause]. Okay. Now ask yourself, "Can I always depend on that love?"

Is your hope for a happy, peaceful, productive future based on the love that this person has for you? As much as this person might love you, there will be disappointments. The love of human beings is weak and often fails. There will be circumstances which test that love and cause its breakdown; that can happen among human beings.

What about the love of God? Is this unfailing? Is this dependable? Can we base our hope of future peace and happiness on His love? Or will that fail us too? Listen to the words of Peter. *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace being brought to you in connection with the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:13).

Last Monday we prayed that this school year will be one of hope.

This morning we will see that our hope depends on the grace of God.

First of all, let us remember what our hope is. We do not hope for riches or power or popularity. If such things come to us, perhaps we can use them to promote the real hope. But as for these things, Scripture says, *"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14).

Our earthly lives and everything that pertains to them are weak and failing foundations for hope. If we place our hope on such things, we will find ourselves in despair.

The only real hope is that there is more to life than this little time that vanishes away. That "more" is eternal glory in the presence of God. This life is but a waiting room in which we prepare ourselves and others for what is to come.

In our text the Holy Spirit urges us to rest our hope fully on God's grace. Fully...completely; not even the slightest portion of our hope should rest on anything else. Only the grace of God is both sure and steadfast.

The Hebrew language has a word for it which means "steadfast love," and it is used at least 255 times in the Hebrew Bible. Such is the

importance of this word for God's people. Our Bible versions usually use the translation "mercy," but "steadfast love" is better.

Listen to how this familiar passage now sounds: "O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 107:1)

The love of God...the grace of God is steadfast. It is unshakeable. It does not wax and wane like the phases of the moon, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker. God's love is not affected by the times and events of the world. It is not affected by the good and evil of men. The Bible does not say that God so loves the world sometimes, but other times He doesn't. It doesn't say that He so loved the world back when He gave His only begotten Son, but He doesn't any more. His steadfast love endures forever!

Therefore, we rest our hope upon a foundation that will not be moved—upon grace, the undeserved love of God.

Since we already know that we have done nothing to deserve such love, we know also that it remains undeserved. Nothing can change that: "...neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38f).

As for our sins: "...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20). Grace is steadfast.

Therefore, we can pray the words of the psalmist: "Be mindful of Thy mercy, O LORD, and of Thy steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions; according to Thy steadfast love remember me, for Thy goodness' sake, O LORD!" (Psalm 25:6f)

We were, are, and will be forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Grace is steadfast.

If then our hope rests fully upon His grace, our hope is also certain. We heard it in our previous devotion: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).

The Christian hope is not a vague wish. We call it hope because we are still waiting for it. It's coming. Our text says that it is "in connection with the revelation of Jesus Christ." One day Christ will be revealed in the clouds of heaven. Then we will have the fulfillment of our hope.

Until then we wait, firmly clinging to the grace of God. "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Romans 8:24f).

**Grace is steadfast,  
unshakeable, eternal.**

**Hope rests on grace.**

**Hope is steadfast,  
unshakeable, eternal.**

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope"

 Jeremiah 29:11 

"ALL HISTORY IS GOD'S STORY!"

## "Sing a New Song Daily"

Exodus Chapters 15-17 (with your Bible in hand)

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

The Children of Israel were navigating uncharted paths. Never before had the descendants of Abraham been such a great nation. Never before had God delivered a people from bondage as He had Israel from Egypt. Never before had any of these people been led through a wilderness by the one true God appearing in a column of cloud and fire and speaking through His prophet Moses.

Walking down such a path meant new challenges—and new tests of faith—at nearly every turn. Each of these challenges became an opportunity for the Children of Israel to learn more about the LORD and to grow in their trust of Him.

Various psalmists speak of singing a "new song." These songs are new because they reflect on a new application of God's mercy and give a new insight into His grace. There is a "new song" to be sung with each new reason to glorify and praise God's holy name.

The new song also becomes a testimony to others. King David wrote, "He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see it

and fear, and will trust in the LORD" (Psalm 40:3).

Daily reasons to sing a new song for God's glory and as a witness to others are exactly what we find in the history of Israel's time in the wilderness. Oh, the Israelites didn't always see it that way, but it is true nonetheless.

After the LORD defeated the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Moses literally sang of the newness of this victory and gave glory to God. "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously... Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea... Who is like You, O LORD... Who is like You, glorious in holiness...?" (see Exodus 15).

Moses also sang of the many who would see it and fear: "The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia... All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away" (Exodus 15:14-15).

Three days later a lack of water created a new hardship. The traveling nation came to Marah where the water was bitter and not fit for drinking. The new song at the Red Sea faded and was quickly lost in the people's complaints.

God showed Moses a tree which would miraculously make the water sweet. After this God provided water with natural means by bringing the people to the oasis Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees.

Still later when the people were again without water and again contended with Moses, God's mighty deliverance seemed to be an even more distant memory. The people cried out: "*Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?*" (Exodus 17:3). The LORD again answered the need miraculously, this time by sending water gushing out of a rock after Moses hit it with his staff.

On the fifteenth day of the second month after Israel left Egypt, the food provisions they carried from Egypt had been exhausted. It was another opportunity for the LORD to accomplish great things—and for His people to respond with a new song.

However, "*the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron... (and) said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'*" (Exodus 16:2-3).

This time the LORD began sending bread on the ground each morning and quail to cover the camp each night. This food would sustain the people throughout all their wilderness wanderings.

**"Man-ah?"**

As the Israelites experienced the bread for the first time, they asked each other, "Man-ah? Man-ah? ...'What is it?'"—a question from which the familiar name for the bread manna was taken.

With this miraculous bread God was giving built-in reminders that He was the source of this blessing and built-in tests for the people's trust and obedience. Manna came only six days each week, and the people were only to gather enough for each day. The one exception was the sixth day when they could gather double in order to have food on the Sabbath Day when no manna would come. Gather more than you need, and the next day it was rotten, stinky, and filled with worms. Gather only one day's worth on the sixth day and go hungry.

Each day with morning bread and evening meat was a day to sing of the LORD's daily provision and a new song of His mercy; but sadly, in later years even the manna became "old news" and a source of complaint among Israel (see Numbers 21:5).

## **To a certain degree each day of our own lives is new territory for which we have no detailed road map.**

Bodily needs of food and drink were met in abundance by the LORD—sing to Him a new song!

Yet, that was not all that Israel had to face in its early wilderness wandering. The Amalakites came out to do battle.

Joshua led the Israelite army in battle. While they fought, Moses held up his rod and Israel prevailed; but when Moses let his hands down, Amalek prevailed. So Aaron and Hur "*took a stone and put it under [Moses], and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands...until the going down of the sun*" (Exodus 17:12).

The LORD gave Israel the victory that day, thus demonstrating His deliverance in yet another way to His people. Sing to the Lord a new song!

Isn't it amazing to walk with the Children of Israel and witness the daily opportunities they had to marvel at God's goodness?! If the LORD's compassion and mercy are new each morning, and indeed they are (cf. Lamentations 3:23), then each day brings with it another "new song" that every child of God can sing!

The basis for a daily new song isn't dependent on whether or not

we see it. The Children of Israel were often caught up in what they saw, what they felt, what they concluded, and were so blinded by their sinfulness that they missed reasons to sing a new song. Nevertheless, the reasons were there. Israel's blindness did not change God's character.

A good daily prayer for all of us is, "*LORD, open my eyes to see the reasons for singing a new song each and every day.*"

To a certain degree each day of our own lives is new territory for which we have no detailed road map. Doubt and uncertainty can combine to diminish our desire to sing to the LORD. The Children of Israel came to the point of saying, "*Is the LORD among us or not?*" (Exodus 17:7)

No matter how uncharted our life feels and no matter how dark the path ahead appears, our Savior declares, "*I am with you always*" (Matthew 28:20). He knows the way, and that enables us to keep on singing the new song!

Like Israel we forget the Lord's blessings. The abundance He provides can all too easily become "same old, same old." Our hearts can grow dull, tired, and a little

flabby in the exercise of singing the new song. Yet, let us wake up our hearts with the goodness of our LORD as revealed in Scripture.

Revitalize your heart's singing with the marvel of hearing the almighty God of heaven and earth speak directly to you through His Word!

Each of the challenges which Israel faced were met by God's providence. These solutions to Israel's problems can have no explanation other than the blessing of God.

As God works "His-Story" in our lives, there will be no doubt that He alone is accomplishing what is good for us; there can be no other explanation.

May we be quick and ready to help others see God's Story unfold in our personal life stories so that they too will see it, and with us fear and trust in the LORD.

Sing a new song unto  
the LORD... daily!



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"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

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