

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” — John 10:35



*Let none hear you idly saying,
“There is nothing I can do,”
While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you.*

HARK! THE VOICE OF JESUS CALLING — TLH 496 STANZA 4 —

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Minnesota Area Pastoral Conference

Berea Lutheran Church

Inver Grove Heights

October 8-9, 2013 Agenda:

- + Old Testament Exegesis, Habakkuk 1:7ff
—Pastor John Johannes
 - + New Testament Exegesis, 1 Timothy 3:14ff
—Pastor Mark Tiefel
 - + Islam: Essayist's Choice of Topic
—Pastor Theodore Barthels
 - + A Study of Coptic Christianity
—Pastor James Albrecht
 - + Church History: Reformation Topic of Essayist's Choice—Pastor Eric Libby
 - + Handling Repentance of Public Sin in Our Modern Day—Pastor John Hein
 - + Ministering to Those Who Have Been Sexually Abused—Pastor Paul Nolting
- Chaplain: Pastor Norman Greve
Pastor Eric Libby, Secretary
-

Minnesota Delegate Conference

Faith Lutheran Church, New Ulm

September 22, 3:00 p.m. Agenda:

- + Positive Aspects of Church Fellowship
—Pastor Em. David Lau
- + Witnessing to Muslims—To be announced
- + A Scriptural Study of the Beatitudes
—Pastor Mark Tiefel

Chaplain: Pastor Eric Libby

CDS Teacher Chad Seybt, Secretary

South-East Pastoral Conference

Zion Lutheran Church

Corpus Christi, Texas

October 22-24, 2013 Agenda:

- + New Testament Exegesis, Colossians 4:7ff
—Pastor Vance Fossum
- + Old Testament Exegesis, Genesis 2:8ff
—Pastor Roland Gurgel
- + Isagogical Study of the Gospel of Matthew
—Glenn Oster
- + Avoiding the ditches—A practical study of avoiding both liberalism and legalism in our preaching and practice as pastor
—Pastor Matthew Hanel
- + How is the gospel to be used in discipline cases in view of the fact that it is the power of God to salvation—Pastor Nathanael Mayhew
- + How to encourage pastors to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace on a conference and synodical level
—Pastor Todd Ohlmann
- + A Study: "The Love of Most Growing Cold in These Last Days," with special reference to

personal and congregational evangelism

—Pastor Karl Stewart

- + Faith must be in Christ "alone," not Christ plus anything else—Pastor Dennis Rieken
 - + A Series—Encouragement for Pastors: A scriptural/practical approach to setting priorities in the public ministry in connection with family, congregation, and synod
—Pastor John Schierenbeck
 - + The relationship between love and truth in the New Testament—Mark Weis
- Chaplain: Pastor Jay Hartmann
Communion Service Preacher—Pastor Aaron Ude
Pastor Aaron Ude, Secretary
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West Central Pastoral Conference

Redeemer Lutheran Church

Cheyenne, Wyoming

September 10-12, 2013 Agenda:

- + The miracles of Christ in the Gospel of John: How the seven "signs" fit in to His plan—Pastor George Dummann
 - + Continuation of a Review of Bente's *Historical Introduction to the Formula of Concord* (Essayist's choice)—Pastor Rick Grams
 - + Devotional study of a Psalm—Pastor Michael Roehl
 - + Isagogical study of an Old Testament book
—Pastor Matthew Gurath
 - + Exegesis of Genesis 6:1-4, toward discussion of those who suggest the Sons of God were angels—Pastor James Naumann
 - + Book review of *In Search of the Biblical Order* by Cascione—Pastor John Klatt
 - + What place is/does the church to have in a Christian's faith-life?—Pastor Mark Gullerud
 - + New Testament Exegesis of Romans 11:13ff.
—Pastor Luke Bernthal
 - + Old Testament Exegesis of Ezra 1:1ff.
—Pastor Mark Gurath
 - + Homiletical Study (essayist's choice)
—Pastor Scott Schiermeister
 - + An examination and review of the Reformed view of the Means of Grace
—Pastor James Sandeen
- Chaplain: Pastor Frank Gantt
Communion service Speaker: Pastor Andrew Schaller
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Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Amy Osborne, who was called as lower grade teacher at Holy Trinity Lutheran School, West Columbia, South Carolina, was installed on July 21, 2013.
—Pastor Vance Fossum

“...Him?!”

Pastor Paul Krause • Markesan, Wisconsin

“...Him?!” That may not have been the exact word that the prophet Ananias spoke, but it does convey his incredulity at the Lord’s instruction.

The Lord had commanded the prophet in a vision to go to the place where Saul of Tarsus was waiting for him. But the only type of “waiting for him” Ananias could envision was in line with what Saul was known for doing: “*Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name*” (Acts 9:13-14).

It was as much as to say, “...Him?!”

Ah, yes! Things had changed concerning Saul since the last time Ananias had heard of him—for now Saul was praying! He was no longer the rabid enemy of Christ and His

people that he had been, but he was a “*chosen vessel*” of the Lord “*to bear [His] name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel*” (9:15).

“...Him?!” Ananias saw an enemy of the Savior. But God saw one who would be a great witness to His love, grace, and forgiveness.

And what God saw proved to be true! How many times over the years would Saul—who was soon to be known as the Apostle Paul—call to mind, speak, and write of what God had done for him. For example: “*For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am...*” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

“...Him?!” Yes! There is none better to take the message of forgiveness in Jesus to others than one who has personally experienced that very forgiveness!

And you, dear reader, know what that means: There is none better to do mission work, to share the gospel of the Savior with others, than you and I.

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What's that? You don't think you are capable? You can't speak like angels or preach like Paul? (see *TLH* #496:2) That may be true, yet carrying out our Lord's commission does not involve comparing ourselves with other gospel carriers.

Rather, it means comparing ourselves to God's standard—seeing ourselves clearly in the mirror of those ten commandments, and then confessing our deep personal depravity, our sins and iniquities.

It is then—when we have recognized our sin and sinfulness and our great need for forgiveness AND the great Redeemer we have in Jesus—that we can join Paul in telling others how God has saved us, how He has given us freely what we do not deserve: full forgiveness of all sins and, with that, eternal life through Jesus.

And then we can make Paul's words our own: *"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

"...Him?!" Yes, Paul, but not just Paul!

"...You?!" Yes, you!

"...Me?!" Yes, me!

Yes, we who are chief of sinners are called and privileged to do mission work, to evangelize, to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ who came to save from sin and death each of us—and each and every other person on Earth!

Is there really any question about it?!

*Knowing Thee and Thy salvation,
Grateful love dare never cease
To proclaim Thy tender mercies,
Gracious Lord, Thy heavenly peace.
Sound we forth the Gospel tidings
To the earth's remotest bound
That the sinner has been pardoned
And forgiveness can be found.
(TLH 498:4)*

Gifts of the Spirit

Pastor David Reim • Vernon, BC, Canada

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

What kind of gifts do you like? Do you like practical gifts or gifts intended purely for enjoyment? Do you like gifts you wouldn't get for yourself or gifts that will improve your life? Perhaps you like homemade gifts because of the love that went into making them.

When it comes to spiritual gifts, the gifts of the Spirit are always exactly what we need and they are delivered just when we need them!

The first and greatest gift is that of the Holy Spirit Himself. In the Scripture selection above, the apostle Paul points out that before the Corinthians believers had received the gift of the Spirit, they were led astray to dumb idols. But the Holy Spirit converted them, giving them the gift of faith by which they called Jesus their Lord.

God invites us, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Who could ask for a better birthday gift than the Gift that gives new birth and eternal life?!

True faith is a gift we wouldn't and couldn't get for ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit can give it to us. (Talk about a gift that improves a person's life!) The Spirit removes the burden of having to gain God's favor through our own works or sufferings, while at the same time He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. That "clothing" makes us beautiful in the eyes of God our Father and connects us to Jesus' death so that we receive His life.

See the love of this gift made by hand—by hands that were nailed to Calvary’s cross for the world of sinners! Praise God for this gift above all others.

Since we are now the Father’s adopted children, the Spirit showers us with many other gifts. Some are for our enjoyment and for the enjoyment of those around us. Included among the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace (see Galatians 5:22). There is no greater enjoyment in life than to have and to share these Spirit-created gifts with others.

In the spiritual realm, do we desire specific gifts? The Spirit gives us His own strength to keep us delighting in God’s commandments. In His wisdom He gives a variety of other gifts so that we learn to depend on each other and love and serve one another. These gifts are not for our own personal advantage or greatness, but they are given “*for the profit of all*” (v. 7).

In this Scripture reading the apostle lists several other practical gifts: “*To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit.*” The gifts of wisdom and knowledge are similar. By mentioning them first, Paul shows their superior nature and importance.

The Spirit gives some Christians the ability to know and understand the great mysteries of the Bible and then also to explain them simply. To others He gives the wisdom to apply God’s Word to an individual’s life and its many challenges. Although God grants these gifts to those who become His public servants, let us not think that pastors and teachers are the only ones who have them.

“*To another faith by the same Spirit.*” This is not referring to saving faith, for that is given to every believer. However, some believers are given an extraordinary faith or trust which calmly depends upon God through thick and thin. What a blessed influence such believers can have on their fellow believers.

“*To another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits.*” What vital gifts for the life of the congregation—the ability to proclaim the truth, recognize error, and thus preserve the congregation from false teachers.

Other gifts of the Spirit such as “*gifts of healings,*” “*miracles,*” and “*different kinds of tongues*” serve a special purpose at a specific time, and the Holy Spirit decides when and where they are needed. In the book of Acts we can see that these gifts served as evidence that the apostles were sent by God. The healings also showed God’s love and care for His people—which He often provides today through increased knowledge in the field of medicine. Skills in foreign languages are valuable tools for preaching the Word in the whole world.

May each of us thank God for the specific gifts the Spirit has given us and seek to develop and use them for God’s glory!





The official flower of the U.S. National Grandparents Day is the forget-me-not.

In Honor of Grandparents

Pastor Mark Gullerud • Bowdle, South Dakota

September 8, 2013, is National Grandparents Day.

Since 1978 our country has officially recognized the first Sunday after Labor Day as National Grandparents Day. The statute gives the following purpose for the day: "...to honor grandparents, to give grandparents an opportunity to show love for their children's children, and to help children become aware of strength, information, and guidance older people can offer."

While the greeting-card industry delights in the money-making opportunities, it is certainly praiseworthy to show appreciation for the important roles that individuals in different stations of life play in society. Because of contributions grandparents make in the family, it is good to include them in the list of honorees.

The positive influence of grandparents is generational, having what might be called "the ripple effect." As far as Christians are concerned, through word and example each generation passes on to the next the teachings of God's holy will and His gracious, saving truths in Christ Jesus.

Read the opening words of instruction in Deuteronomy chapter six, where the LORD tells how future generations in Israel would enjoy the continued blessings of God. Or consider the case of young Pastor Timothy in the New Testament. The apostle Paul gratefully praised God for the religious heritage handed down to Timothy by his mother and grandmother. He writes, *"I thank God... when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also"* (2 Timothy 1:3,5).

Although parents are chiefly responsible for bringing up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), grandparents can have a decided influence on their grandchildren. One way this is done is by spending time together, sharing valuable life lessons experienced over the years. They can offer godly wisdom to the grandchildren, tell them Bible history stories, sing religious songs with them, or simply show grandchildren their love and affection.

The very first grandparents in human history had a major hand in spiritually shaping and molding many, many generations. There was no written revelation from God until the days of Moses, but Adam (who lived 930 years!) and his wife Eve could give witness to the one true Creator God; they could provide a firsthand account of mankind's fall into sin and its dreadful consequences upon all people.

In order that each new generation could learn of God's forgiving love and the blessed hope of eternal life, these first grandparents repeated God's promise to send a Savior who blesses sinners with forgiveness and everlasting life in heaven (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12-19). No more important truths can be passed along to the next generation than the message of mankind's sin on the one hand, and of God's grace on the other.

With the increasing breakdown of the nuclear family in our day, grandparents often have a more direct hand in the spiritual rearing of children than do the parents. If and when they are called upon to spend time with the children, grandparents can help teach, shape, and mold both the little ones and the older youth.

There are even foster grandparent programs out there. When children do not have the benefit of spending much time with a parent(s)—or do not have grandparents—seniors might volunteer to serve as foster grandparents. Recently a local South Dakota newspaper had an article about the Foster Grandparent Program. One volunteer said: "I enjoy the daily challenge of encouraging and leading children to grow in their studies, their behavior, and their attitude."

When we Christians consider the spiritual blessings we enjoy because of the religious heritage passed down from previous generations, let us thank and praise God for the gift of Christian grandparents.

Not only do we want to thank God for this blessing, but we also will want to show our Christian grandparents honor, love, and gratitude in different ways.



(Editor's note: CLC Missionary Matthew Ude was chaplain for the June 2013 CLC General Pastoral Conference at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and devotions such as this were shared with the pastors.)

*“Love one another with brotherly affection.
Outdo one another in showing honor.”*

(ROMANS 12:10, ESV)

What this Bible passage says is clearly something we need a little work on, so I would like everyone to stand at this time and hug the persons sitting next to you (pause).

Standing and hugging someone means almost nothing. It's an easy thing. But if we aren't willing to embrace one another superficially with our arms, what makes us believe we are ready to embrace one another with our hearts? What makes us think we are ready to speak, to work, and to act with brotherly love throughout the conference this week?

Twice in our Scripture text St. Paul uses a form of the Greek word *phileo* (which means brotherly love). He says we should “love one another” and do this “with brotherly affection.” *Brotherly* is an adjective used only in this verse; *affection* is a word you are all very familiar with. Both focus on a familial type of love—brother to brother. This is not the type of love you might have for the beautiful girl of your dreams, nor is it the all-enduring type of love which a parent has for his/her child. Rather, it refers to the type of love we feel for our siblings, for those we are stuck with, for those we did not choose, and yes, even for those who often bug us terribly but without whom there would be a big hole in our lives.

This is what Christ has made us—a family bound together by His very own blood—and He has given us life in the family of God.

It is this knowledge upon which this passage is based, “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another*”

Whether hugging is done by command or spontaneously, it isn't the outward show that is going to give us the brotherly love of Christ.

(Romans 12:4-5). According to our sinful natures we are orphans in death, without the love of a father and without the love of a family, but now we have been given a family in life. This is one of the many blessings flowing from the cross of Christ—the forgiveness of sins won for us there. It is not a cheap blessing. Like all the blessings from that Cross, it is a deep and abiding blessing.

As I was preparing a sermon for a wedding, I was looking for Bible texts about marriage. It struck me that a list of passages for marriage is at the same time a great list of passages for Christian fellowship. God the Father has made us a family, and when He calls us into fellowship with His Son and with one another, He calls us into His family.

Yes, the whole concept of biblical marriage and a Christian family Paul models and bases on the body of Christ. As Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, so husbands ought to love their wives. As the Church submits to Christ, so wives ought to submit to their husbands. It is not that marriage is used to explain our fellowship with Christ; rather, our fellowship with Christ is used to explain what marriage and family ought to be.

We do not choose our family, our brothers, our sisters, our parents, nor do we choose our family in Christ! Rather, Christ chooses us and brings us together—and what a wonderful thing that is for both of us. When Christ chose me and died for me and made me His son, your family grew. When Christ forgave my iniquity and sent me forth despite my sins, it was His decision to bless you through me. When Christ chose you and died for you and made you His son, He blessed me with brothers and sisters. When He forgave your sins, gave you spiritual gifts, and sent you forth as His spokesmen, He showered me with blessings through you!

I don't know how it is in your nuclear family, but in mine we don't do big group hugs. Were someone to even suggest such a thing, it would likely get a groan and an eye roll. Nevertheless, family gatherings often start with spontaneous hugs of those who have been long separated (the same thing I saw a lot of out there this morning!).

Whether hugging is done by command or spontaneously, it isn't the outward show that is going to give us the brotherly love of Christ. It is the forgiveness of sins, the blood of Christ—and the communion of the Holy Spirit as He binds us together in faith—that creates among us the bonds of Christian fellowship within the family of Christ!



"...The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me."

(JOHN 10:25)

Jesus Heals the Centurion's Son

Pastor Emeritus Warren Fanning • Sun City, Arizona

"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.' And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I am also a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' And when Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way, and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.' And his servant was healed that same hour." (MATTHEW 8:5-13)

The centurion in the our Bible reading would not have known the German word *Ernsthaftigkeit*, but he undoubtedly would have known the concept. Matthew's Gospel account shows that the centurion seriously believed in the power of words.

And if there ever was a time when Jesus might have said "Wow!"—this was probably it.

The first syllable of *Ernst-haf-tig-keit* simply means "earnest," the middle syllables mean "holding," and the last four letters mean "-ness". Hence we have the word "earnest-ness," which also means steadfastness or seriousness. The word usually applies to words—to something spoken by command or promise, and the centurion understood that.

A ninety-one-year-old lady in a nursing home taught me years ago the meaning of that German word. She was the widow of a pastor whose family name was well known in conservative Lutheran synods.

This Christian lady taught me about a serious problem that presumably affected her and many Lutherans due to something called "Pietism." Pietism wears a modern dress, but it's the same old—even if polite—self-righteousness masquerading behind work-righteousness, struggling behind self-centered decisions to believe Jesus and follow Him.

It was the sort of thing that had developed with a certain perverse fierceness and aggressiveness in the Jewish temple and synagogues—and kept many from believing Jesus. Hence Jesus' sharp words.

Anyway, she had the problem. I was happy to comfort her with the fact that she would soon be going to heaven. I quoted many Bible passages to her, many words of Jesus, and I reminded her what He had done for her through His life, death, and resurrection. I did all this to prepare her for confession and absolution of her sins prior to her reception of the Sacrament.

But she interrupted me and said she didn't think she would be going to heaven! When in my surprise I asked her "Why?", she said (in German): "I think I do not have enough *Ernsthaftigkeit!*"

After gathering my wits, I asked her if she thought that God and His Son and Spirit were serious when they made all their promises, including "*This is My body...This is My blood...given and shed for you... .*" Did God have enough of that "E" word? She said, "Yes, of course!" Then I asked her whether her seriousness had to be greater than God's seriousness in order that His Word might be made effective and valid.

She got the point. I proceeded to review with her the same Bible passages, though with a renewed, gentle earnestness; we had a wonderful devotion [devotional service—ed.].

And now back to our centurion friend. We can be sure he taught his troops how to listen, for he himself knew how to listen. He knew the power of words—and certainly now the power of Christ's words. Perhaps he had listened in on certain occasions when Jesus spoke during His northern ministry, enough to address Him as "Lord"—yet not with pretended piety which would counteract or superimpose itself on Christ's Word-ability.

Christ has that Word-ability still today. The Holy Spirit sees to it wherever Holy Scripture is used. Christ is "the Word made flesh," and He is serious—very earnest!—about our salvation. His words create faith and action.

You don't have to invent or create any kind of serious feelings. Just listen to Him! Just listen. Faith and heaven come freely by hearing His words. Yes, feelings come, but they do not control the situation!

Have you learned that yet?—Good!

STUDIES IN TITUS

“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught...” (TITUS 1:7FF)

Final Words to Titus

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. (TITUS 3:9-15)

St. Paul begins the third chapter with encouragement “to be ready for every good work” and concludes with an appeal to the people to “learn to maintain good works...”

Included in the exercise of good works is avoiding speaking evil of anyone. It is instead a fruit of faith—a good work—to manifest peace, gentleness, and humility to all. Such godly works were not part of their pre-conversion life.

Note that the apostle includes himself in the indictment of their former

attitude when he says to the Christians in Crete that “*we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived...hateful and hating one another*” (vv. 2-3).

That former attitude had been overcome by the power of God in the gospel. Having been justified by grace, they had been made “*heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (v. 7). Because they were surrounded by hateful people, the Christians in Crete “*should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men*” (v. 8).

The temptation is to push back against the enemy in the manner he has pushed us. The antidote to such a retrograde attitude is to remember the goodness and the grace of God by which we ourselves have been rescued from sin and death.

This enlivens Christ-believers to glorify the Lord Jesus in their responses to the world around them. Further, the grace of God fills them with a desire to act and speak in such a manner that may bring others to the Savior.

Christ-believers are a positive influence when they remember from whence they themselves have been rescued, and when they remember who it is that has called them out of “*misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice*” (as Luther puts it in the sixth petition).

But the Lord has also called us to wisdom and to a life of discernment. Not only is the manner of speaking important, but the contents are important as well.

Discussions that do not witness to the love of God, the mercy of Christ, and the power of the gospel are unprofitable and useless. They do not edify and build up the faith of individuals and the body of Christ.

The apostle teaches that false teachers overtly attack the truth or try to undermine it through “*foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law*” (v. 9). Apparently Judaizers were trying to return Christians to the ceremonial aspects of the law from which they had been freed in Christ.

In any disagreement over doctrine little is gained by argument or logic. We will counter with the Word of Truth, knowing that the Spirit is the great Convincer, and His Word has power to turn hearts!

But we are to be alert to the intrusion of error. We will admonish and instruct, but when false doctrine is being held to, we will not listen to the errorists, identify with them, or give them a pulpit for their propaganda. Such false teachers are to be rejected so that the truth of God is preserved among us, as well as for the preservation of our own faith.

A further purpose is to demonstrate to the heretic the seriousness of his departure from the Good Shepherd.

St. Paul concludes the letter to Titus with various expressions which extol the beauty of fellowship in the Lord. Fellowship in the Lord manifests itself in mutual love and care for the welfare of others, even as it offers brotherly admonition so that each—as the Lord gives ability and opportunity—will “*learn to maintain good works.*”

Paul closes as he began, “*Grace be with you all. Amen.*”



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

"As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to those of his household."

(Martin Luther)

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

It's a short and simple commandment—but it's another thing to live accordingly. If anyone supposes that he holds the high ground in other commandments, the Sixth Commandment turns us into slinking jackals. Let's be honest about it—we humans habitually misuse and abuse God's gift of sex.

That's because sex hunger ranks right up there with hunger for food and drink; it's a normal hunger invented by God for procreation and for enhancing the bond between husband and wife, but Satan manages to pervert this sweet blessing into a stinky vice.

What are we to do when sexuality assaults public morals in TV sit-coms and soap operas, when game shows display gorgeous girls in skimpy outfits to titillate the audience, and even in church both matrons and maidens display cleavage that distracts from worship?

Are we losing our sensitivity to God's will about all things sexual?

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we live a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor one another.

We don't expect much from our fellow citizens, who applaud fornication, or from our politicians, who have legitimized same-sex unions—but isn't it ironic that Satan has turned public morality upside-down so thoroughly that whereas heterosexual couples want to avoid marriage, homosexual couples want to get "married"!

Are we losing our sensitivity about God's will about all things sexual?

That happens when people tune out God's will: *You should not commit adultery.*

If anyone wonders why God considers faithful monogamous marriage to be important for the human race (and especially so for His children!), it is simply that sex sins alienate spouses, corrupt home life, and infect children with bad examples. The tragedy is compounded by political pandering to deviations that have "come out of the closet"; our country's public morality stinks—and we're getting used to it. Lord, have mercy!

When our sinful nature suggests that it's too much to expect that we remain faithful to our spouse, let's squelch the suggestion by turning our hearts to God's positives—remembering that He blesses His children via the bond of marriage: "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD*" (Proverbs 18:22). God blesses a man and a woman in a life-long bond that brings emotional, spiritual, and sexual fulfillment to each (Genesis 2:24).

God wants unmarried people to control their sexual thoughts, words, and actions, too. Luther summed it up in this way: "We should fear [revere] and love God that we live a **pure and decent life in words and actions**, and that husband and wife love and honor one another" (*Small Catechism*, Sydow edition, item 64).

That's based on God's Word: "*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3); "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled*"—while to mess with His good and gracious will is to court disaster: "*but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4).

The Old Testament is sprinkled with dire warnings against sexual sins; read Exodus 22:16-19 and Leviticus 18 for yourself. People

who choose to live contrary to the Sixth Commandment are slated to “*receive in themselves [in their bodies] the penalty [of infections and viruses] of their error [in sinful sexual activities] which was due*” (Romans 1:27).

God spells it out for us: “*But fornication and all uncleanness...let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting...For this you know, that no fornicator [nor] unclean person...has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:3-6).

We don’t want that to happen to anyone—either in this life or in the life to come. Neither does God. “*Therefore do not be partakers with them*” (Ephesians 5:7).

After all, God claims us for Himself: “*You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine*” (Leviticus 20:26).

We gain strength from His reminder, “*Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments*” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

We turn to Jesus, who obligates us (Mark 10:1-12) to honor the sanctity of marriage (avoiding divorce) and to heed God’s formula, “*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*” In practical terms, we limit our sex drive to our spouse, and we stay faithful to one another. God sets a higher standard for us than the world sets because He loves us and wants to spare us the pay-back of promiscuous sex, one of Satan’s tools for ensnaring souls.

Living a clean and decent life in word and deed will never be easy—for Satan, the world, and our sinful nature combine forces to destroy souls via sexual immorality.

We remain convinced that Christian love trumps lust, Christian chastity trumps fornication, and Christian marriage between one man and one woman trumps all other unions.

We have God’s Word on it.

Thank You, Lord Jesus! Amen!



GOD'S OBSCURE SAINTS

(Second in a Series)

Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch · Eau Claire, Wisconsin

“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

(ACTS 1:21-26)

Dear fellow saints in Christ Jesus, our Savior:

Before us today are two relatively obscure saints: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. Perhaps you remember Matthias as the one who filled Judas Iscariot's place in the chosen circle of the twelve, while Joseph Barsabbas, nominated for that position but not chosen, disappears into obscurity.

Behind that lies the lesson. *“To whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:48). To both of these men God had given three years of in-the-field experience whereby they saw the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus; they received a wonderful soul-saving and life-enriching discipleship; they also witnessed the resurrection, the turning point in the history of the world.

So while both Joseph and Matthias were equally qualified for the holy Christian ministry, only one of them could fill the empty apostleship and be elevated to the full-time, life membership of the Twelve; the other would probably remain one of the many obscure saints among other thousands in the early Church.

Did Joseph have no holy calling, therefore, and does not the ordinary Christian in the pew serve Jesus with witness and testimony? Do not our congregations have and need ordinary saints in the pews?

Picture to yourself Joseph Justus, graduated from the seminary,

presented to the Church as a 100% qualified candidate, ready and willing to serve—but not being called to rank among the Twelve. Do you think he left the meeting in a sulk, nursing a wounded pride and becoming sour about the whole thing of discipleship?

NO, for Joseph was still one to whom much had been committed by Jesus, and Jesus still required of Joseph that he be found faithful. After Jesus had bypassed him for Matthias, Joseph turned his attention back to the work he could do in the congregation as a dedicated Christian; he was faithful in humble duties. He lived by the principle, *“Let this mind be in you [every obscure saint among us] which was also in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself and became obedient...”* (Philippians 2:5-8). Christian congregations grow and thrive if they have such people among them! Your name belongs there!

If we return for a moment to Matthias—what was his new assignment? He got the privileged responsibility of being one of the twelve apostles—to do what? To have a full load of work for Jesus; to have heady responsibilities and heavy labors, to be charged with duties of the highest order of Christian discipleship. His pastoral ministry would be not only difficult but dangerous as he shared the lifestyle Jesus led, receiving tribulation, cross, and even death—as Stephen also was soon to experience.

One might be tempted to say, “Who needs it?”

Let’s face it: our pastors live under heavy burdens; every day they see sinners self-destructing. It eats away at a conscientious pastor to see teenagers turn away from the Center of their soul-life and to see young couples raising children without piety and godliness.

Further, the pastor in a large congregation has little time to relax, and he craves more time for soul-enriching study of the Word. The phone gets him out in the dead of night for crisis intervention and family counseling; he agonizes to find ways to help parents with their wayward daughter or rebellious son; he endures the heartache of seeing the younger generation growing up to reject the wisdom of their elders and head down paths that will bring them much sorrow.

Why serve in such a ministry? Because it is sharing in God’s efforts to save souls from hell and for heaven.

Only Jesus’ power from His throne of grace makes Christian pastors

sufficient for these things! Jesus enables pastors to endure all, knowing the goal is worth the struggle, for every soul is priceless! God puts us on this Earth in a family of saints so that we may be nurtured in the love of God and edified in study of the Scripture IN ORDER to serve others in the greatest work this side of the grave!

In our larger family there are many obscure saints like Joseph Barsabbas and like you, prepared to be witnesses even if not called into the public ministry, for Jesus has important work for His obscure saints; don't give up your place in His receiving line.

God's obscure saints are partners with and co-workers with their pastors; they support the seminary graduate called to serve a little congregation in the Midwest or to begin a mission in Megapolis or to assist a senior pastor in a large congregation. All are high callings in His Kingdom! God bless them all!

It is not likely that any Joseph or Matthias among us today will achieve much renown or public acclaim, and a hundred years from now perhaps nobody will know that we have passed this way—BUT in the halls of heaven precious souls will be at home with Jesus because of Matthias and because of Joseph and because of you!

Great and eternally important deeds are done by obscure saints! Let us be our brother's brother! Let us support our fellow Christians in the good fight of faith! Let us serve our fellowman!

From such a saint (also once obscure) we hear God's voice encouraging us, "*He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins*" (James 5:20).

That's not an obscure message.

Lord Jesus, help us cherish Your Word in our hearts and serve under Your guidance. Amen!



These meditations were delivered as chapel talks by Prof. Paul R. Koch while he served on the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran High School/College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Now retired, Prof. Koch continues to serve his Lord as Assistant Editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. God bless us all as we ponder the rich contents of these Bible-based messages!

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS DIVISIVE?

(Second of two)

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

The claim that the existence of private religious schools—Catholic and/or Protestant—“encourages division and discourages cooperation” bears watching, as it may well bespeak an attitude that will impact our schools. It is significant in that it reveals an attitude toward Christianity that, while not new, is increasingly more strident.

We suspect that the President and his spokesman will deny that the intent was to attack religious schools or Christianity. We also expect that people will say that we are crying wolf.

When we warn against the insidiousness of evil and of the open attack upon Christianity and our faith in practice, we are not doubting the Lord’s faithfulness or His care for us. We know from Holy Scripture—and we are confident—that ultimately the Lord will prevail.

Nevertheless, we point out that our heavenly Father warns us to resist evil and to flee sin. After warning that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, and that evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, St. Paul says by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, “*But you continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of...*” (2 Timothy 3:12-14). We are further instructed to hold fast to what we have so that no one takes our crown (Revelation 3:11). Clearly, those words are exhortations to be alert to the dangers around us!

Precisely because Christianity is being attacked on many fronts (from government edicts to church apostasy), our ears must not become deaf to hints of danger. When our public ministry and parochial schools are characterized as “divisive,” more is called for than a shrug of the shoulders.

When our religious educational program—from our Christian homes to our Sunday Schools to our Day Schools to Immanuel Lutheran High School and College—is maligned, it is a serious matter, particularly when done by those who have the power to do us harm.

Our parochial schools are an integral part of our ministry as we seek to feed and nourish lambs of the Good Shepherd in the way of salvation. We hope all our parents know and appreciate the benefit of our Christian schools to their children.

Even as we encourage Christian parents to utilize our schools to help them build up their children on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, for the same reason we must be alert to—and resist with the Word of God and prayer and renewed commitment—every attempt by the world to undermine them.

In the past it was accepted that good homes were the backbone of society. If anyone doubts that fact, look what has happened to society as marriage and home life have deteriorated. Similarly, a sound educational system at home, school, and church is the backbone of the Church's gospel ministry from generation to generation.

Surely that is one reason why Luther advised that children not be sent to schools where the Word of God is not taught. He said, "But where the Holy Scripture does not rule I certainly advise no one to send his child... I greatly fear that schools of higher learning are wide gates to hell if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the young folk" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. I, p. 449).

Luther's foremost concern was the eternal welfare of the children, but he also recognized the value of education in the Word for the here-and-now. "It is a serious and important matter, in which Christ and all the world are mightily concerned, that we help and assist our youth. By helping the youth we shall be helping ourselves and all men" (*ibid.*, p. 442).

Christian parents will want to give serious consideration to using the parochial school of their congregation to assist them in the education of the children whom God has placed in their care. Individual congregations and the CLC in general should wholeheartedly support the establishment and support of our nurseries of Christ's "little ones." Again, Luther states, "Human reason teaches only the hand and the foot of a man; God alone teaches the heart" (*ibid.*, p. 449).



GOD'S CO-WORKERS

Missionary David Koenig

"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

(PHILIPPIANS 3:8)

Whisking across the ocean at 45,000 feet in a controlled and comfortable atmosphere with plenty of food and drink in a matter of hours to the final destination is not too hard to take. Luggage unloaded by others to the conveyor belt as you go through short lines of immigration in an air-conditioned arrival hall is not too hard on the body. And then off to a hotel with its hot and cold running water, dependable electricity—and the next morning an all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet. It's all a great way to begin a mission trip at the destination of Yangon, Myanmar.

This is all a far cry from how it was two hundred years ago when the first Protestant missionary came to what was then called Burma. Adoniram Judson—who changed from Congregationalist to Baptist on his trip—set sail in 1812 from Massachusetts. And I do mean 'set sail,' for that



was how they traveled for months and months on end to their destination of Burma. Storms at sea, seasickness, and diseases taking lives on shipboard were their lot. Of Judson's co-workers, a Mrs. Newell and her child died at sea.

You might remember that we were in our second war with Britain in 1812, which added to the dangers—and these from civilized nations.

Judson's first wife Nancy died in 1826, his second wife Sarah in 1845, and his third wife Emily died of tuberculosis four years after Judson himself passed away. Stillborn children, children dying in infancy, diseases, wars, and imprisonment plagued the life of a missionary family in those days.

And yet the gospel must go forth! Christ won for us what the world cannot give.

Two hundred years ago to the visible eye and the eagerly attendant ear, earthly results of the gospel work were not too great. It was six years into the work before the first convert, Maung Nau, praised the name above all names. For all of Judson's thirty-eight years of work, at least a dozen and perhaps up to twenty-five became enduring Burmese converts. The deaths of missionaries and their family members in Burma during that time period likely exceeded

the number of converts. Ah, but he did translate the Bible into Burmese, and that is truly enduring work that yields results. In a country of nearly 50 million perhaps two million are considered Christian.

The Lord has given us the opportunity to work in a far easier day than Judson's. We work with the CLC of Myanmar in Chin State along the India border since initial contact with them in April of '08. More recently, it is possible that we will have the opportunity to work with a Lutheran pastor in Yangon itself, if it is discovered that we are in agreement on God's Word.

Pray for this. Our task today is so much less burdensome than it was for missionaries two hundred years ago. We thank God for making us His co-workers today.



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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“ . . . THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN .” — JOHN 10 : 35

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