

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



31st CLC CONVENTION

THEME PASSAGE:

(1 Timothy 2:3-7 NKJV)

*For this is good and acceptable
in the sight of God our Savior,
who desires all men to be saved and to
come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*For there is one God and one Mediator
between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,
who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified
in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher
and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ
and not lying—a teacher of the
Gentiles in faith and truth.*

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31st CLC CONVENTION

June 16-19, 2014
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

THEME:

“God Our Savior Desires All Men to be Saved!”
(1 Timothy 2:3-4 NKJV)

Essay 1: Jesus is the one Mediator of that truth!
(1 Timothy 2:5-6)

Essay 2: We are appointed to proclaim that truth!
(1 Timothy 2:7)

“Pay It Forward”

Pastor Paul Krause • Markesan, Wisconsin

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-7)

Back in the year 2000 the movie *Pay It Forward* was released, based on a book by the same title.

In that connection students in a social studies class were given the assignment to put into action a plan that would change the world for the better. As the story goes, one seventh grade boy came up with the idea that a person who had been done a favor should do a favor for three others—paying it forward instead of paying it back.

According to *Wikipedia*, the idea of “paying it forward” isn’t a new one. The phrase may have already been coined in a 1916 book, and the concept is even found in a Greek play which dates back to 317 B.C.

We as Christian believers don't need to go to the pages of some novel or play to find the source of this "pay it forward" idea, for it is part and parcel of our Christian faith!

As the delegates gather at Immanuel Lutheran College to take part in the Thirty-first Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, it might be easy for them to get lost in the busy-ness—of the sometimes sweaty sessions in the fieldhouse, the late-into-the-night committee sessions, or crafting resolutions to be brought to the convention floor.

God willing, the convention theme and the two essays will help keep them all on track. The focus of all our work, whether at convention or in our home congregations, is to proclaim the gospel message which teaches that "*God our Savior desires all men to be saved.*"

We dare never lose sight of this truth, for when it comes to "finding favor" in God's sight, not one of us sinners can find or win that favor on our own! Left to our own devices, all we would find is the Lord's condemnation—"Depart from Me!" (Matthew 25:41). It is alone in "*the Man Christ Jesus*" that we have a sufficient ransom, the price fully paid—Christ Jesus Himself in whom alone we have "*redemption through His blood; the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1:14).

And not only does Jesus as our High Priest offer up the satisfactory sacrifice, He also serves as our advocate before His Father's throne. It is only because Jesus speaks to the Father in our behalf that we can stand before Him as those declared to be "not guilty."

What mercy! What grace! What a "favor" our God has done for us in Christ! With God's help let's make that love of God our own—and then faithfully "pay it forward," pass it on, not just to three people but to as many as we can!

The Apostle Paul knew this was his life's mission too. It was God's grace which served to motivate him: "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain...*" (1 Corinthians 15:10). That same grace of God was the heart of his message: "[Christ is] *to be testified in due time.*"

The week of work—the decisions and discussions at Convention—are vital because in them we are working to forward the message of the gospel.

When the delegates and called workers return home, our prayer is that they do so with a renewed zeal to proclaim the gospel that "*God our Savior desires all men to be saved!*"



The Last Picture

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

The recording of family histories has changed over the years, from grainy sepia tone, to black and white, to full vivid color, to digital. The storage of these family memories has likewise transitioned from shoeboxes to archival paper with adhesive corners to magnetic pages in bound books to the ethereal album on a smartphone or in the electronic cloud.

Regardless of form and storage, a moment of history frozen in a photograph elicits conversation and story-telling of the “when, where, why, and what” of the event. For this reason, paging through a family photo album can easily lead to hours of meaningful history told by those who were there.

The pages of Holy Scripture give a unique and divinely inspired photo album. The pictures in this album are of our heavenly Father, our Brother—Jesus, our Comforter—the Holy Spirit, and of fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God during their respective times of grace.

Like any family photo album, this collection of pictures contains poignant images captured in times of deep sorrow—Peter’s repentant weeping, our Brother crying at the grave of Lazarus, the tears of those grieving Jesus’ death.

There are likewise moments of incredible joy captured in pictures for all to see—the mother and father receiving their daughter raised from the dead, the disciples pulling in more fish than their nets could hold, the awe-struck joy of the women seeing their risen Lord.

The worn pages and bent corners of yesteryear’s photo albums reveal where the favorite memories had been captured and where the favored stories of family history were found. As you page through God’s family album, where are your worn pages? Do you return again and again to pictures taken in Bethlehem at the birth of your Savior? Do you linger on the pages that reveal the power of God’s Son demonstrated in miracles?

Are you drawn to the images recorded as Jesus told His parables—the Forgiving Father, the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep? Do you gaze longingly at the pictures of your Savior lifting the little children to His lap and holding them in His arms, or at your Servant–Brother getting down on hands and knees to wash the disciples’ feet?

Family photo albums don’t hold an archive of every experience. Similarly God’s family album is selective in what it contains. Certain details are not kept, yet every image in the album with its accompanying history appears there so “*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*” (John 20:31).

In every album there is always one picture that stands out as “the last one”—the picture of the last day at work before retirement, the last picture of the house before we sold it, the last picture of mom before she died, or the last Christmas we celebrated together.

As God inspired the recorded pictures and history of our Savior’s earthly life and ministry, there would likewise be a last one. The last picture of our Savior would need to endure for centuries as generations of God’s faithful children await their Savior’s return. The final picture would need to be one with meaning to capture the significance of all that Jesus has done.

This closing picture was taken near Bethany as Jesus “*lifted up His hands and blessed them...was parted from them and carried up into heaven*” (Luke 24:50-51).

This last picture is worthy of being framed and held in our hearts and minds forever. In this one final “snapshot” of our Savior, we see His hands lifted up—hands still bearing the wounds He endured for our transgressions. We see His hands lifted up in blessing and never coming down, for His blessing is ongoing and constant. We see Him ascend up to heaven—an assurance that He is seated at the right hand of God, exercising all power and authority for the benefit of His family.

The beauty of God’s family album is that its pictures and their history never wear out and never fade — “*But the word of the LORD endures forever*” (1 Peter 1:25).

God’s divinely inspired album has no more pages to add, but it includes all that we need. Show the album with all its pictures to your children and grandchildren—tell them about their Father, their Brother, their family. Share it with friends, neighbors, co-workers—let

them know that your Father has paid the adoption price for them too through the work of His Son.

When you return to God's photo album and when you show others all the wonderful pictures it holds, spend time to linger on the last picture. And then offer a prayer of thanks to your Brother, for He has set you free from your sin, and His hands remain outstretched in blessing upon you.



A PENTECOST DEVOTION

HAPPY PENTECOST HARVEST!

(Please read Acts chapter 2)

Teacher David Bernthal • Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Pentecost — This word is derived from the Greek word Pentecoste, fiftieth, because the feast of Pentecost was celebrated the fiftieth day after the sixteenth of Nisan, which was the second day of the feast of the passover. The Hebrews call it the Feast of Weeks, Exodus 34:22, because it was kept seven weeks after the passover. It was the Jewish harvest-home. (From Cruden's Complete Concordance)

God's timing can make an interesting case study. We know from the Holy Scriptures that Christ was sent into the world “when the fullness of the time had come” (Galatians 4:4). Even in our daily lives we can see the wisdom of God's timing in His answers to our prayers. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commanded His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would be sent to them. The disciples didn't have long to wait. A mere ten days later, on the feast of Pentecost, their heavenly Visitor arrived.

As mentioned earlier, Pentecost was a harvest festival. During the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost, farmers progressed through the early barley harvest to the harvesting of wheat. The Pentecost celebration day was also called the day of first-fruits—the time when the people of Israel were to bring their first-fruits to the

Lord. We could compare it to our Thanksgiving Festival or Harvest Day celebrations when we honor and thank our Heavenly Father for being the provider and preserver of all good things.

As the followers and disciples of Jesus were gathered together on this Pentecost Day, the sound of a powerful wind made its way through the city. The house where they were located seemed to be the focal point of this unusual phenomenon. The Holy Spirit made His presence known visibly by appearing as small tongues of fire over the heads of all present. The special gift which the Spirit brought for Jesus' followers was their new ability to speak understandably in languages they had never studied.

For this festival faithful Jews and proselytes—gentile converts to Judaism—would have gathered in Jerusalem from all over the Roman world. In fact, Luke (who wrote the book of the Acts) mentions several diverse language groups that were represented in the crowd gathered near the disciples. This crowd was drawn to the place by the curious sound of a wind and greeted by the even more perplexing scene of uneducated “locals” speaking in tongues native to the foreigners!

The Lord was planning on doing some harvesting Himself. The people heard about the wonderful works of God. Of course, there were the usual detractors, doubters, and mockers, but the Lord had “grain” He wished to gather into His garner waiting in that crowd as well.

We rightly consider Pentecost as the birthday of the New Testament Church—as the time when God poured out His Holy Spirit on His children to embolden them to proclaim and defend His Word. We can also think of it as the beginning of the harvest. The Lord will have His great harvesting on the Last Day when all people will be gathered before Him. But before one can reap a harvest, one must plant the seed.

On Pentecost our heavenly Father was equipping us, His believing saints, with all we need to spread the gospel message of sins forgiven in the shed blood of Christ. We also have been emboldened by the Spirit who gives us the tools to plant, nurture, and cultivate His Holy Word.

Yes, it is true that only the Lord can give the increase to His Church, for He is the one who creates faith in the heart. But oh the joyous task He has given us—to be fellow laborers in His vineyard!



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SIN?

Pastor Chad Seybt • Cheyenne, Wyoming

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 JOHN 1:5-2:2)

When was the last time you heard someone speak of sin outside of a regular church service? It would seem that in today’s politically correct, increasingly amoral society the word *sin* has become taboo.

People are all too willing to admit that “no one is perfect” when they are caught in an immoral act, but they will not call such an act a *sin*. The word *sin* is loaded, expressing an offense against a holy God—and since by nature humans suppress any knowledge of God, they also reject any accountability to Him. And so man thinks up any and every possible way of downplaying the seriousness of what he has done.

Let us turn the mirror of God’s law upon ourselves. Do we acknowledge our own sinfulness and the many sins we commit against God, or do we attempt to dismiss our sins and re-label them as “not that big a deal”? When we have deceived, have we really just “misspoken,” or did we indeed lie? When we fool around with a boyfriend or girlfriend, are we really just “having fun,” or are we giving in to impure thoughts and lusts? When we gossip, are we simply “venting our feelings” or are we ruining our neighbor’s good name

and reputation? When we complain about our financial situation, our government, how our food tastes, even about the weather, are we just “telling it like it is” or are we telling God that what He has given us is not good enough?

Many old sins have been given new names. But sin by any other name is still sin! The Holy Spirit tells us, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1:8). Also, “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10). Make no mistake, we are very good at deceiving ourselves. Because of our sinful nature, even we Christians would often rather hide our sins than acknowledge and confess them.

David spoke of the serious consequences of not confessing our sins when he wrote in Psalm 32, “*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.*” We learn here that a refusal to acknowledge and confess sins can lead to physical, emotional, and spiritual anguish.

But let us also take warning when God speaks of **not having the truth in us** and **not having God’s Word in us**. A refusal to acknowledge one’s sinful nature and sins is impenitence and unbelief. And God tells us elsewhere in His Word that impenitence and unbelief will have eternal consequences—namely, everlasting suffering in hell.

“*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*” Since God is completely holy, He cannot and will not tolerate sin. Scripture is full of examples reminding us that “*the wages of sin is death.*”

Sin separates us from God—and yet, here we are. How are we able to gather in church on Sunday in the holy presence of the Triune God? Why have we not fallen down dead? Whatever happened to our sins?

You want to know what has happened to your sins, to the sins of the whole world? Three nails, one cross, and an open tomb. You want to know what has changed so that we are able to stand before God on the last day and even approach Him now? “*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). In the person of Jesus Christ God lived a perfect life on our behalf and then died for us. He came to us because we could not go to Him. “*He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*”

Since Christ changed our status before God, why then do we need to

still make confession of our sin? The Christian confesses because “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” God encourages us to confess our sins so that we may be assured yet again that they have already been forgiven in Christ.

Or as Luther put it in his *Large Catechism*: “[C]onfession consists of two parts. The first is my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work which God does, when he absolves me of my sins through a word placed in the mouth of a man. This is the surpassingly grand and noble thing that makes confession so wonderful and comforting.”

May God enable us by His Spirit to acknowledge and confess our sins before Him and before one another so that we may be comforted in knowing that “**the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**”



THE DISCOURSES OF CHRIST

MEDITATIONS ON JESUS’ SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
MATTHEW’S GOSPEL, CHAPTERS FIVE THROUGH SEVEN

Doing the Father’s Will

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (MATTHEW 7:21-23)

Who can read these words of our Lord without a shudder? How horrifying to stand before Jesus on Judgment Day and hear Him say, “*I never knew you; depart from Me.*”

Who are those that will hear those terrible words?

These three verses go with the preceding section (Matthew 7:15-20), where Jesus warns about false prophets. He tells us to beware of them because though they come in sheep’s clothing, they are really ravenous wolves. They appear to be representatives of Jesus, for they go by the name Christian and claim to be teachers of the Bible.

But that claim should not be taken at face value; we should examine it thoroughly. *“By their fruits you will know them,”* Jesus says. We need to look carefully at what they teach and compare it with God’s Word. If we do that, we will not be deceived by their sheep-like appearance and can treat them as one would treat a wolf—that is, not get too close.

Not everyone who comes in the name of Jesus is really a disciple of Jesus. Not everyone who claims to be a teacher of God’s Word is a faithful teacher.

Having warned against false teachers, Jesus warns teachers directly. There are many who call Jesus “Lord” in worship and prayer, implying that they truly regard Him as Lord and submit to Him. But words are not enough, Jesus says. Nor is it enough if they have done miracles invoking the name of Jesus, for miracles can be lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9). What matters is that they do the will of His Father in heaven (and this applies not only to teachers; any and all who read these words should understand that merely calling Jesus “Lord” does not guarantee entrance into the kingdom of heaven).

What is the Father’s will? It is first of all His gracious, saving will that we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin. To do the Father’s will is to seek His kingdom and righteousness. This does not mean leading a sinless life but believing the gospel of forgiveness of sins, which also provides the power to do what is pleasing to God.

This is what Jesus taught (John 6:29, 39-40), and the apostle John summarizes it beautifully: *“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment”* (1 John 3:23).

On the Last Day Christ will reveal those who have the inner connection with Him of true and saving faith and those who do not have it. But how can we be sure that we have it? Paul says, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Dr. Martin Luther wrote a good self-examination in the “Christian Questions” in his *Small Catechism*. It is a series of questions intended “for those who are about to partake of the Lord’s Supper.” The questions are not about whether you have lived a good enough life. They are rather about whether you believe that you are a sinner; that you hope to be saved; and that you trust in Christ alone for salvation because He died and shed His blood for you.

Do we believe these things? Surely the answer is yes, for the Holy Spirit has convinced us of them. In that case the Lord knows that we are His, and He will acknowledge us as His own on the Last Day, saying, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

CATECHISM SERIES: STUDIES IN THE APOSTLES’ CREED

PART FOUR OF A SERIES ON THE SECOND ARTICLE

“This is most certainly true!”

THE APOSTLES’ CREED

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and
buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He
ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from
thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

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

(TLH, p. 12)

“Take and Own Us...”

Prof. Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

I remember when I received my first paycheck. When I was thirteen, I detasseled corn in the rural areas around Red Wing, Minnesota. I had been eying a new baseball glove for some time, so it didn't take me long to spend \$29 of that check on a Spalding glove.

Ownership felt sweet. Perhaps you have felt a similar feeling after a car or home

The Five SECOND ARTICLE Installments:

- 1) Jesus is true God
- 2) Jesus is true Man
- 3) Jesus has redeemed me
- 4) Jesus has made me His own**
- 5) Jesus calls me to serve Him

was bought and paid for. Sometimes the more difficult the challenge in acquiring something, the more appreciative one is to own it.

This feeling is compounded, no doubt, when it comes to having children. We usually do not speak of “owning” children, but anyone who has had them knows the feeling of having one or more of your “own.” I’m told it is the same with parents of adopted children. Perhaps unable to conceive their own children, the expectant couple may have to endure years of patiently waiting for their opportunity to have a child all their own.

How does our Heavenly Father feel about having us as His own?

In Martin Luther’s explanation to the Second Article he says: “*He did this that I should be His very own....*” The “this” referred to is Jesus giving His holy, precious blood in suffering and death for us on the cross. Adoptive parents are often willing to spend thousands of dollars to acquire a child. The price tag Jesus was willing to pay for us is beyond comparison—the suffering of hell itself in our place. Whenever we are tempted to feel that our lives are of no value, remember how much our Savior valued our souls.

Jesus “*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*” (Titus 2:14). Luther describes this ownership in this way in his *Large Catechism*: “He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell’s jaws, has won us, has made us free, and has brought us again into the Father’s favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness” (Part II, paragraph 30).

How may we as God’s children feel about being His own? After the American Civil War former slaves in the South had freedom of movement. They were no longer forced to stay and work for their old masters. The majority of former slaves chose to leave in search of greener pastures and new opportunities. Only a small percentage decided to stay and work for their former masters. They did this because they had been treated with a level of respect.

How often don’t we forget just how wonderful our Master is? We are so easily lured away by the false hopes and dreams of this world and its master, the devil. We are tempted to trade the green pastures of heavenly bliss for the fleeting and shallow pleasures of the day. At times

like these we need to heed the words of the Apostle Paul: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

My high school graduating class chose the following for our class hymn. I believe these words serve as a fitting conclusion.

Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure, Flee the world, which would deceive us And to sin our souls allure. Ever in His footsteps treading, Body here, yet soul above, Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding. Faithful Lord, abide with me: Savior, lead, I follow Thee.	Let us gladly live with Jesus; Since He's risen from the dead, Death and grave must soon release us. Jesus, Thou art now our Head. We are truly Thine own members; Where Thou livest, there live we. Take and own us constantly, Faithful Friend, as Thy dear brethren. Jesus, here I live to Thee, Also there eternally.
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(TLH #409:1,4)



THE SECOND ARTICLE

(About Redemption)

[We print Luther's Explanation only.]

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity.

This is most certainly true.

(Martin Luther's *SMALL CATECHISM*, Sydow edition, 2000)

The Manifestly Impenitent

(Eighth of a Series)

Missionary David Koenig

Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, “Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.” And He said, “Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’ that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

(Luke 11:45-52)

It is a mark of this wicked world that not all whom we encounter will be like Sergius, seeking to hear the Word (see Acts 13:7-12). John the baptizer reproved Herod for his sin, and we know what happened to John (see Matthew 14:3-12). Yet it must be done. Our goal is that expressed by Peter to Simon Magus in reproving him, “*Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you*” (Acts 8:22).

We notice first of all in Luke chapter eleven that this man had not the same attitude as the one in Mark chapter twelve. The impenitent may argue over and at least resent your words. The lawyer would defend the integrity of his fellows. Defend hypocrisy? The Lord, of course, could read the man’s heart and knew his was no innocent and merely misguided question.

Since we do not have that ability, we must judge by what the person says and does. There are those manifestly impenitent to whom we, like our Lord here, speak only the law. An early Lutheran circuit rider in the United States by the name of Wyneken once came upon a wicked blasphemer who just would not listen. So Wyneken mounted his horse and left the man with the words, “Then go to hell.” The story goes on that the man was so upset

that a pastor would say this to him that he rode after him—with a good result of repentance.

That is our goal also. Our Lord's words pin the lawyer to the wall. "...*You load men with burdens hard to bear and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.*" We have no way of knowing how long such an encounter for us will last and so want to peg the sin clearly for the person to think about. Here it is hypocrisy, and the Lord points out how they operate with such an unfair double standard.

"*The prophets...Abel...Zechariah...*" Our Lord speaks from His perfect acquaintance with the Word. On the other hand, ours is not so perfect and has to be worked on so that we too might speak words readily applicable.

At the end of the narrative the Lord lays upon him the guilt of hindering others. No man is an island. Each influences others. And especially the respected lawyer would be an influence. "*You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.*" Perhaps this would have some weight with one who prided himself on his influence among the people. We could also take this tack depending on the encounter.

But basically it is only the law of God that we speak to those who exhibit impenitence. The hearts of such need to be prepared for the gospel. Our witness of the gospel to such could result in casting pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6) who could tear and rend in mockery of the Word.



SERIES Backdrop

With examples from Holy Scripture we are trying to learn ways and attitudes which will better enable us to witness to our Lord. These examples, drawn from the four Gospels and from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, are by no means exhaustive.

As with the basketball strategy of one-on-one, we are looking at examples of one Christian witnessing to another individual. We are not considering what was said to individuals already in the faith, though that is also applicable. We are not considering what was said to groups, though that also is applicable as a witnessing technique. We will be considering various situations where it was one-on-one, and the one being witnessed to was living in unbelief...

The ultimate goal in all witnessing is to be like John the baptizer and point to Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. While we want to try earnestly to develop our skills in this area, we don't want to forget John's motto, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30).

No matter what spiritual gifts we have and how we develop them, we are not looking for glory for ourselves. We are looking to have another soul join us in glorifying our Savior-God.

Preaching To the Choir — and Others

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

The pastoral ministry is, of course, broader in responsibility and scope than preaching. But there is no more important responsibility or privilege that a servant of God has than to preach! It is to be regretted when a pastor becomes so busy or otherwise occupied that he cannot put his best effort into sermon preparation.

In the preface to *Preaching to Preachers* Norman Madson wrote, “While there must ever be the seriousness of eternity about our preaching, let it be the seriousness which is ever concerned about bringing sin-burdened souls to see the glories awaiting them in the realm of full gospel liberty, where ‘the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land’” (Song of Solomon 2:11,12).

Where God’s all-exacting law is preached without reservation, there weeping (whether evident to the eye or not) will naturally result. And where the gospel is proclaimed in all its saving grace and accepted in child-like faith, repentant weeping will give way to mouths filled with laughter and tongues with singing. Yes, sermon work—and it is work—and the privilege to share the fruits of one’s labor in preaching the gospel is a joy!

Most preachers enter the pulpit for 45-50 years in the span of their ministry. Except for a vacation or illness, normally fifty-two sermons a year are preached. Add to that the special services—Advent, Lent, and other services such as Thanksgiving Day and Ascension; add to those the weddings and funerals. That is a lot of sermons (even if in the course of a long ministry some are recycled)!

Every opportunity to prepare a sermon and to bring the Word of God to the flock is a privilege for which one thanks the Lord. There is no greater expression that a person can give the pastor than a “thank you” **for the message heard.**

When a pastor brings the Word of God to the flock Sunday after

Sunday, he is, we might say, “preaching to the choir”—to members of the congregation. He should never dismiss the importance of that, for the members are in need of the law by reason of their flesh, and of the gospel for the healing of penitent, broken, and troubled hearts. The “choir” needs the song of forgiveness and the balm of salvation! Furthermore, the pastor’s first responsibility is to the flock under his care (Acts 20:28). He is to feed the Church of God.

When a pastor brings the Word of God to the flock Sunday after Sunday, he is, we might say, “preaching to the choir”—to members of the congregation.

For this retired preacher the joy of preaching was never greater than when presented with the opportunity to bring the Word to a bridal couple at their wedding, or the necessity of preaching a funeral sermon. Why is that? Because at such occasions there are frequently more strangers than flock! Many to whom we speak may be unchurched, not knowing the first principles of the Christian faith. To such we have the opportunity to share the precious Word of God.

We bring the gospel for the comfort of congregation members who have lost a loved one. But what a privilege and responsibility to be able to bring a law-gospel sermon to extended family or to strangers! It has happened more than once that a total stranger approached after a funeral and expressed thanks, saying, “We never heard a sermon like that.” Just recently upon preaching on the text, “*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life*” (Romans 6:23) at a funeral (with the theme, “The Truth Hurts, but it also Heals”) a couple said upon leaving the cemetery, “That was a good sermon.” To this we responded, “It is the truth.” They in turn said, “Yes it is. Thank you.” Who knows how the Spirit of God works in a heart because a pastor brings the truth concerning the cause of death, and the comfort of the gospel which witnesses to eternal life in Christ.

“Preach to the choir” faithfully, but thank the Lord for every opportunity the Lord presents to bring the Word to those not yet in tune with the truth! Thank the Lord for your pastor who faithfully feeds the flock, and pray for the success of the Word in whatever forum he is privileged to share that Word.



GOD'S OBSCURE SAINTS

(Sixth in a Series)

This edifying series of chapel talks comes from the archives of our *Spokesman* Assistant Editor, Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch • Eau Claire, Wis.

Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.

However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. (ACTS 15:22–35)

When our President and Secretary of State carry on important negotiations with foreign powers, they must decide whether to do this by e-mail, by phone, by courier, or in person.

The higher the level of importance, the more they favor face-to-face meetings.

Now, why is this? Probably because the negotiations will be stymied if you can't look the other person in the eye to see how your words are registering—so you can gauge your next sentence accordingly.

God is telling us something about human nature and our ambassador functions, too—namely, there is nothing quite as effective as face-to-face meeting in our gospel ministerings, the one-on-one between you and someone who may yet become God's child. Most of the Bible episodes of real successes came via face-to-face meetings.

Judas Barsabas and Silas are up for consideration. At the first convention of the Church, held at the mother congregation in Jerusalem, these men surfaced when the convention was arriving at a crucial decision. There was a doctrinal issue; the point in controversy was whether Gentiles could become Christian without first being Jewish. Many were laboring under the premise that since Jews were God's first choice, Gentiles should become Jewish to share in being God's first choice.

The Apostle Paul had it straight, of course—that God approves of NOBODY; all are equally unjust and ungodly, whether they be a law-minded Jew or non-law-oriented gentile. There is NO WAY anybody is capable of fixing up his own soul so as to please God. That's why God went as far as He did on Calvary.

The men at Jerusalem listened to Paul (with Barnabas and Peter) explain why they preached free remission of sins, that God does not ask for nor desire a helping hand from the sinner in order to save him. Thus, the Gentile as well as the Jew gets no spiritual benefit out of circumcision or from doing anything else.

**With our synod's
biennial Convention
around the corner—
June 16-19, 2014 at
Immanuel Lutheran
College, Eau Claire,
Wis.—how especially
fitting this “first
convention of the
Church” meditation
with its sound
Bible-based
encouragement for
those who would be/
are the Convention
delegates representing
CLC congregations
nationwide. — Editor**

After prolonged discussion, the Convention passed a doctrinal resolution to not burden the gentile converts with any of the legal/religious problems with which Jews had burdened themselves, but rather let them enjoy the grace of God as God intended.

Well, that was certainly going to be good news to the folks up north in Antioch, who had sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to get the doctrine of it straight. And so a letter was composed by the Convention assembled—to tell them the good news.

NOW, by what mechanism should this good news be best conveyed so as to transmit the quality of rejoicing, to really share the attitude and feelings of the home church? Well, send it by personal ambassador, of course! *“Then it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.”*

In its accompanying letter, the congregation gave a good reason for selecting this methodology, *“We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.”* When a mission is important enough, you send persons to not only deliver the mail but also to explain, answer questions, and verbally underscore the message. So, when Judas and Silas arrived in Antioch, they *“delivered the letter, [and] when they had read it, they [the Antioch believers] rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them.”*

This was follow-up, as these two capable men reassured the worried Gentile converts that they were already inside God’s family by God’s grace in Christ Jesus. They answered questions; they rehearsed important aspects of the discussion on the floor of the convention; they used their voices as fine ambassadors for Christ.

In application, my gentile friends—let us sharpen our competences NOW in all branches of learning so as to equip ourselves as God’s ambassadors. Let us work to acquire competence in Bible studies; let us memorize what God tells us about Himself; let us practice analyzing what we read and hear presented from God’s Word.

Every sermon or Bible class should find us open-minded and devout-hearted, asking “What is God telling me here? What is the main doctrine in this text, and what are the auxiliary thoughts? How and when can I make use of this truth? When would it be important to bring

up this particular Word and apply it to real life? How can I practice this message in my own faith-living?”

You and I should be telling ourselves: “I am going to apply myself to language (grammar, vocabulary, linguistics, rhetoric) in order to develop my communication skills; God is giving me opportunities to equip me in His service—as an ambassador of the throne of grace. Even as I am one of God’s obscure saints, He chooses me to represent Him on this Earth.

“In addition, I can use my people-skills discussions with my peers, I will use my intelligence and talents and abilities so that I can serve Jesus productively. I cannot let myself be dull when He wants me to be sharp; I cannot let myself be disinterested about things that concern my Savior. As Barsabas and Silas were happy to serve their congregation and God’s family on the frontier as God’s obscure saints, I am encouraged to follow their lead and use them as my pattern of Christian service. Hallelujah!”

Let us join in the prayer of hymn 439.

“O God of Mercy, God of Might”

1

*O God of mercy, God of might,
In love and pity infinite,
Teach us, as ever, in Thy sight,
To live our life to Thee.*

2

*And Thou, who cam'st on earth to die
That fallen man might live thereby,
Oh, hear us; for to Thee we cry,
In hope, O Lord, to Thee.*

3

*Teach us the lesson Thou hast taught,
To feel for those Thy blood hath bought
That every word and deed and thought
May work a work for Thee.*

4

*All are redeemed, both far and wide,
Since Thou, O Lord, for all hast died.
Oh, teach us, whatsoever betide,
To love them all in Thee!*

5

*In sickness, sorrow, want, or care,
Whate'er it be, 'tis ours to share;
May we, where help is needed, there
Give help as unto Thee!*

6

*And may Thy Holy Spirit move
All those who live to live in love
Till Thou shalt greet in heaven above
All those who live to Thee.*

The Lutheran Hymnal Hymn #439 Text: Luke 10: 36, 37

Author: Godfrey Thring, 1877, alt. Composer: Samuel Howard, 1782 Tune: "Isleworth"

FROM THE FIELD May 5, 2014

Missionary David Koenig

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Missionary David Koenig, recently retired but still serving as needed, is drawing on his many years of working experience with our overseas brethren to write a series entitled *FROM THE [MISSION] FIELD*. Of particular interest is this article which reveals how careful Christian and biblical circumspection undergirds the gospel work in which, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, we are engaged worldwide.

Our Practice with Overseas Contacts and Churches

More contacts in India and Myanmar. New contacts in Haiti and Mexico—and who knows what other opportunities God will give the CLC.

You may benefit from knowing what we have been doing to handle these great challenges over the years. We have varied our approach according to circumstances, as God guides us to best use our wisdom and common sense according to what we know and see.

PHASE I — CORRESPONDENCE

We correspond with contacts. This was done with Prof. Erpenstein of San Francisco to the Nigerian college students when they returned to their home country and with their pastors. This we did with Pastors Benjamin and Bas in India, and in each case in about one year following we had a formal doctrinal visit/discussion. This level, of course, can be done by others in the CLC, what with our doctrinal understanding of the universal priesthood. Years ago at St. Luke's in Lemmon, S.Dak. our congregation corresponded with many overseas. In this initial phase the CLC *Statement of Faith and Purpose* and other doctrinal treatises are sent, as well as papers on what we would consider to be our likely doctrinal differences.

PHASE II — LITERATURE

We start sending over larger amounts of instructive literature—while still not in doctrinal fellowship but with the indications that such fellowship will likely be. This involves Sunday School materials, Bibles, catechisms, and other doctrinal material that can be disseminated to the people of the group and not just to the leader(s).

Initial correspondence with the Ombasa group in Kenya began with the CLC President and continued with me, and then we sent money for 100 Bibles and catechisms.

Initial correspondence with Pastor Muzakuza in Congo began with the Chairman of the Mission Board and continued with me. We have sent over French catechisms, French language doctrinal materials, Swahili Bibles. And we carried in Swahili catechisms printed in the USA.

PHASE III — INITIAL VISIT

In Nigeria and India we did not do this but went for a full doctrinal meeting. In Kenya we have done this when we visited the Ombasa group. This just seems wise. This is more cost effective also, in that it might be found out that more time is needed before a full doctrinal meeting should take place toward establishing fellowship. This phase could be short circuited if warranted.

PHASE IV — FULL DOCTRINAL MEETING

It is wise that everything be confirmed by the mouths of two or three witnesses. In India it was David Schierenbeck, John Rohrbach, David Koenig, and then later David Reim and Koenig with Benjamin and Bas respectively. In Kenya and most other times I think it should be three. If one of the three is an overseas missionary, then two should come from the USA, for when they report back, you have two of the three in the states. In India with Pastor Hans we utilized three of our BELC pastors for the visitation.

PHASE V — SERVING, TRAINING, DISCIPLING

Since we now have two foreign missionaries, after doctrinal agreement is reached, we should seek to 1) train the key preachers or pastors, and 2) have the missionaries make periodic visits as we are now doing in India, Nigeria, and elsewhere. Through some episodes in the past, we have learned that a sporadic visitation is unwise (to say the least). An annual visitation with teaching and counseling is vital to maintain our orthodox union.

This is just a brief overview of what we have been doing and developing.

Father's Day

Paul Fleischer (pastor emeritus)

It's surely true as various billboards around town are proclaiming these days: "Any man can be a father. It takes someone special to be a dad."

A "Wyoming Marriage and Family News" flyer that recently came across our desk lists the following "7 tips for Dads."

Each tip had a lengthy paragraph on the thought. We'll reprint here just a sentence or two from that elaboration....

1. **Find the time** – Do not underestimate how much your children need you....
2. **Be aware of your kids' lives** – Learn what your kids need emotionally, physically, and financially....
3. **Treat your children as capable** – Childhood is full of many "failed attempts." Treat your children based on their potential....
4. **Hug your child** – Children gain great confidence and security from knowing they are accepted and highly valued for who they are....
5. **Eat together** – Sharing a meal provides structure that kids can count on and also serves as a natural connecting point for conversation....
6. **Respect your child's mother** – Showing respect and kindness toward your children's mother is one of the most powerful statements you can make to your kids....
7. **Say 'I love you.'** – 'I love you' spoken sincerely and backed up by your behavior demonstrates support, encouragement, tenderness, and caring as much as anything else you may do for your children....

May this pastor add a #8? **Lead your children (family) in home devotions** – Thus the husband/father exercises his God-given role as "priest" in the family in keeping with the Lord's word: "*And you fathers... bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). It's never been more important—urgent!—than in our day that children learn of

God, His Word and ways, from the Bible! And would not this #8 include attending church—worshipping—with your children?

And how about a #9: **Do not hesitate to discipline your kids** – Sometimes ‘tough love’ is necessary to help children be trained in the admonition of the Lord. Contrary to the humanistic philosophy which shuns any kind of corporal discipline, the saying “*spare the rod and spoil the child*” has a Bible basis (see Proverbs 22:6, 13:24 etc.)

And we would top off these good points with a #10: **Pray** – Daily invoke God’s guidance both for yourself and for your children.



More Favorite Lutheran Hymns on CD

The “Lutheran Quartet” presents Volume 2 of “Favorite Hymns from the Lutheran Hymnal.” Two brothers, Pastor Paul and Pastor Bruce Naumann, along with their sisters, Ann Radcliffe and Gail Richardsen, have recorded a CD of 20 acapella favorites from the 1941 Lutheran Hymnal. The CD is available for \$10 (plus \$2 for shipping). All proceeds will benefit the Student Aid Fund of Immanuel Lutheran High School and College in Eau Claire, WI – www.ilc.edu. Among the twenty hymns recorded are:

- Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices
- What God Ordains is Always Good
- Crown Him with Many Crowns
- Now Thank We All Our God
- I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus
- A Mighty Fortress is Our God

All texts and tunes are in the public domain. This is a great collection for personal listening and makes an ideal gift, especially for the older Christian who knows these hymns well. Volume 1 is also available, at the same price. Please visit the Lutheran Quartet website, where you can listen to samples, as well as place online orders: www.lutheranquartet.com.

You may also order by mail at this address:
The Lutheran Quartet, c/o Pastor Paul Naumann
3315 46th St. E, Tacoma, WA 98443
Phone: **253-228-8736**. e-mail: pgnaum@aol.com.

CORRECTION:

May 2014 issue: The correct reference for the Bible passage on page 10, four lines from the bottom, is Matthew 15:4. We regret the error.
-- Editor

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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN 55113 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 2750 Oxford Street North, Roseville MN 55113

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org. Editor: Paul Fleischer, 1862 W. 6th St., Red Wing, MN 55066, E-Mail to paulgf@qwestoffice.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Art Director/Designer: Matthew Schaser, Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Warren Fanning, Daniel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Jay Hartmann, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Paul Naumann, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Andrew Schaller, Thomas Schuetze.

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Fleischer six weeks before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Fleischer. Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to BennoSydow@yahoo.com. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$22.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$42.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$62.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00. • Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org Printed in U.S.A.

