

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



Thank God for Your Spouse

Pastor David Reim • Vernon, B.C., Canada

“And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18).

Have you thought of the implications of these words of our God? Adam was living in the Garden of Eden. It was literally a paradise. Everything was perfect. Not just by human standards but by God’s standards. “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was *very good*” (Genesis 1:31). Everything must have been exquisitely beautiful—more beautiful than we can even imagine.

And Adam had it all to himself. He had everything the perfect world had to offer. What a life!

Yet what do we read? God said, “*It is not good...*” Something was missing—something so important that without it Adam’s life was incomplete. So what was not good? “...*that man should be alone.*” He didn’t have anyone with whom to share all the goodness of God.

But God had a solution for this problem. He said, “*I will make a helper comparable to him [Adam].*” That was Eve whom God then created and gave to Adam as his wife. Now his life was complete, more wonderful than before.

So when you think about it, Eve was the GREATEST EARTHLY BLESSING that God gave to Adam. Without her, life was not good.

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With her, His life was complete.**

With her, his life was complete. If anything else was missing, it would not have had the same impact. And the same could be said for Eve. Adam was the greatest earthly blessing that God had given for her life in this world.

Isn't the same true for us today? Has God given you a husband or a wife? Then consider that he or she is the greatest earthly blessing that God has given you.

Remember that, and thank God for your spouse daily. "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her*" (Ephesians 5:25). Cherish her as your most special possession. "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:22). Thank God for him and respect him as the great gift that he is intended to be.

Now, if we still lived in Paradise, it would be easy for husband and wife to love, honor, and cherish each other perfectly at all times. But, of course, we are all sinners. Therefore we who are married do not always live up to the standard of being the greatest earthly blessing for our spouse. It is not that God is giving any less of a blessing, but by our sinfulness we make ourselves less of a blessing to each other. Sad to say, in many marriages sin is such an obstacle that some begin to think their spouse is a curse instead of a blessing.

Because we are all sinners, we also need God's greatest spiritual blessing—Jesus Christ who died to take away our sins to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Jesus came not just to teach us how to love one another again but to solve the problem of our sins and sinfulness. He gave His life in our stead to take away God's curse upon our sins.

With God's forgiveness we have what we need to overcome all problems in marriage. We learn to forgive one another and love one another even as God loves us and has forgiven us.

As husband and wife grow together in faith and love for God by regular worship, family devotions, and praying together, God's Spirit will also fill their hearts more and more with a genuine, enduring love for one another.

So thank God for your spouse even as you strive to be the spouse that God intends.



The Double Patriot

Pastor David Fuerstenau · Ketchikan, Alaska

Today the term *patriot* is used rather loosely. It has been applied to those who give their lives in defense of their country and also to those who protest against and seek to change the very foundation upon which this country was founded.

So what is patriotism? Mr. Webster defined it as “love of one’s country; support of its authority, interests, and values.”

A man who lived in Old Testament times seems to fit that description almost perfectly. His name was Jonathan, the eldest son of King Saul. His name is first mentioned after his father’s accession (1 Samuel 13). At age thirty Jonathan commanded one thousand of the three thousand men that comprised Saul’s standing army. The Philistines had become a thorn in the side of Israel, and Jonathan proved to be an heroic and able thorn-clipper. He took the initiative and led the attack upon the Philistine outpost at Geba, yet this minor victory led only to further shame and festering oppression of the Israelites.

Then, with only his armor-bearer with him, Jonathan climbed the steep, rocky cliffs called Bozez (Thorny) and Seneh (Slippery). After fierce hand-to-hand combat, some twenty Philistine soldiers lay dead. This daring and victorious assault led to panic among the Philistines—a panic sent by God and further heightened by an earthquake.

When his life was threatened because of a foolish oath made by Saul, Jonathan’s men boldly defended him. As Saul became increasingly disobedient, jealous, foolish, and smitten with evil spirits and perhaps dementia, Jonathan remained loyal to his father’s authority and fought bravely for the country and its people. He certainly also believed in the values and interests of the chosen people to whom God had made the gracious promise of a Messiah.

Jonathan repeatedly exposed himself to death for those he loved. He honored his father the king. And though his love for his father was mostly repelled by Saul, yet Jonathan stood by his father in his terrible decline.

In Saul's great defeat at the hands of the Philistines, we yet see Jonathan fighting for his side. *"In their death they were not divided"* (2 Samuel 1:23). Surely Jonathan was a patriot for his country, giving up his life for her.

But even as Jonathan loved king and country, there was another whom he loved with equal or surpassing zeal. That was David, a friend whom Jonathan loved as he loved his own soul (1 Samuel 20:17). If it can be said that King Saul represented an earthly kingdom, then David represented one greater: the spiritual, everlasting Kingdom of God.

Time and time again Jonathan defended David, trying to soothe and turn away his father's wrath and jealousy—even risking his own life to do so. Such was their love, friendship, and respect for each other that twice they bound themselves together by covenant in the Lord. When Saul was intent on killing David, Jonathan warned him and reported on court intrigue.

There surely came a time when Jonathan knew that God had passed the throne of Israel from Saul and his family to David. And while Jonathan still fought for his father, he humbly asked that he be allowed to serve under David only after he would assume the kingship. As Jonathan recognized David as Israel's anointed and future king—and fought for him—so Jonathan loved and served God.

Jonathan walked a fine line, but can it not be said that he was a double patriot, loving this second Kingdom also, supporting its values and serving its interests?

Only faithful Christians can be such double patriots. The wicked of this world can love only the things of this world and its kingdoms, supporting their interests and values. The Christian can be both and do both. He obeys the authorities that God has given for temporal blessing; he votes; he is loyal to the country's constitution, even fighting for its interests against Philistine-type enemies.

But his first allegiance is toward God, loving his King (David's greater Son), and serving gladly and humbly in His kingdom. In this we pledge ourselves in love to the Lord, even as He has made gracious and saving covenant with us. For the nations of this world will rage and take their stand both against the LORD and His Christ (Psalm 2). Then we will walk the line with Jonathan.

Always we will obey God rather than men. Thus we will love and serve David more than (or rather than) Saul. Such is the challenge, duty, and privilege of the double patriot.



LEARNING TENDERNESS FROM THE MASTER

Pastor Paul Naumann • Tacoma, Washington

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted..." (Ephesians 4:32).

Years ago, as a young man stood on the threshold of matrimony, an older Christian friend gave him a piece of advice. "Do you want to know the secret to avoiding marital trouble?" he asked.

The young man couldn't imagine any trouble ever arising between him and his beloved, but he listened respectfully. "If you can be kind, exactly when you want to be unkind, you will solve most of your problems before they begin. Believe me," the older man went on, "there will be times when you are unjustly criticized, accused of things you didn't do and castigated unfairly for words you never said or thoughts that never crossed your mind. You may at times hear bitter and wounding words, and you will be tempted to reply with words equally bitter and wounding. If at that moment you can instead speak kindly, if at the very moment when you are most tempted to say words of bitterness, you can instead find it within yourself to say words of tenderness and love, you will avoid a world of sorrow and win the heart of your beloved."

The wedding day came and went. The passage of time brought the couple lean years and fat, laughter and tears, joy and heartache. They forged a life together and raised a Christian family. The young man turned into an old man, but he never forgot his friend's advice. He wasn't always able to follow it—sinful pride saw to that—but when he did, it worked wonderfully. Disagreements were defused, conflict became concord, and brief bitterness was replaced by tender love as sunshine follows rain.

It may seem like a trick, a tip from a modern counseling manual, but it's not. In fact, as a formula for a successful marriage it's as old as the Proverbs of King Solomon, who said, *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but*

a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). It’s as old as the letter to the Ephesians, in which St. Paul admonishes, *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:31-32).

“...Just as God in Christ forgave you.” Therein, of course, lies the key to the whole endeavor. Our Heavenly Father was merciful and forgiving toward us, but not because we deserved mercy and forgiveness. Rather the opposite! When we were lost in rebellion and sinfulness, He gave His Son to redeem us. When what we truly deserved from Him were bitter words of judgment and condemnation, for Jesus’ sake we heard instead the tender and welcoming words of another famous father: *“Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found”* (Luke 15:22-24).

God has forgiven us in Christ. Christ, *“...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return”* (1 Peter 2:23). And for those of us who have been brought by God into the blessed estate of holy matrimony, it is God, in Christ, who will strengthen us and make us equal to those challenging moments and provide us with *“the soft answer that turns away wrath.”*

To this help us, dear Father in heaven!



With cameras at the ready, Eau Claire Immanuel High School grads send their mortarboards flying (story, p. 19)

"...The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." (John 10:25)

The Blind See and the Mute Speak!

Pastor Theodore Barthels • Austin, Minnesota

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." (Matthew 9:27-34)

It was a busy period in Jesus' Galilean ministry, a time when many came to Him desperate for healing, help, and deliverance. However, they were looking for deliverance from physical distress, not fully comprehending the deliverance Jesus would bring them from the far greater distress which sin brings to the soul.

Jesus had just raised Jairus' daughter from death. Soon after, He was approached by two blind men who addressed Jesus in a significant way: "*Son of David.*" They were not able to see but they had heard all the talk about the wondrous signs Jesus had done. They addressed Him as the Promised One who would descend from David. They had faith that Jesus would be able to restore their sight. In response to this faith, with a simple touch of His fingers Jesus blessed the two men with physical sight.

This was a marvel for all present to behold! However, wonders did not stop with this miracle. Soon other people brought a man to Jesus for help who was greatly distressed by a demon. The Spirit here reveals that it was the devil's work that this man could not speak. Jesus cast the demon out, and the man was able to speak.

It is important for us to take the impact of these miracles to heart. "*And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees*

said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons’” (vv. 33-34). While the general population realized that this was indeed something that should be noted when evaluating who Jesus was, the Pharisees immediately attempted to discredit Jesus, suggesting that He Himself was in league with the devil.

The multitudes didn’t quite grasp the extent of the lesson to be learned. Not long after these wondrous miracles John the Baptist, at the time imprisoned by Herod, would send some of his disciples to ask Jesus the right question, “*Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?*” (Matthew 11:3)

Jesus responded by pointing to these very miracles and by referencing the prophecy of Isaiah: “*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing*” (Isaiah 35:5-6a).

Yes, the signs Jesus performed were exactly the evidence needed for the people to know and believe that Jesus was and is the Christ, the Son of God. The evidence is there also for us in this inspired record that we too might put our faith in Him. By the grace of the Holy Spirit we have been brought to comprehend the greater miracles of salvation which Jesus works for and in us.

While we are invited to bring to Jesus our every problem and distress, the spiritual healing He brings is our greatest joy. He has granted us the gift of sight when by nature we were spiritually blind. That is a far more serious blindness than physical blindness, and one that all the wonders of modern medicine and science cannot touch. When Jesus touches our hearts with His love and grace, He opens our spiritual eyes to see.

By nature the devil has power over human lives—perhaps not by such physical possession as reported in our text, but by powerful coercion nonetheless. Jesus by His death and resurrection destroyed the power of the devil. He has loosed our tongues so that we not only believe with our hearts but also confess freely with our tongues that Jesus is Lord and Savior to the glory of God the Father.

*This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.
(TLH 85:3)*

“...Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (9:27-28).

The Son Exalted Above the Angels

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.” But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” And: “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.” But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (HEBREWS 1:5-14)

In a recent case before the U.S. Supreme Court, the town of Greece, New York, was accused of violating the nation’s Constitution with its practice of opening meetings of its town council with prayer. Most interesting about this court case is what the town council did to try to make those prayers acceptable to the Supreme Court. When some from the community complained that the prayers were Christian in character, the council brought in some representatives of non-Christian groups to say prayers. Among them were a Jewish layman and a Wiccan priestess.

This “solution” highlights the problem which public prayers at civic events present for Christians. To make such prayers acceptable to all segments of the community the name of Jesus Christ has to be left out. This amounts to saying that Jesus Christ is really not very important.

The Christians addressed in the book of Hebrews were being tempted to think that Jesus was not very important. They were suffering persecution as Christians and were considering that they might buy some peace for themselves by turning away from Jesus and returning to the religion of the synagogue.

To turn them back from this disastrous course the writer reminded them that Jesus was not merely an important person. He is absolutely unique. He is completely indispensable and irreplaceable (these points about Jesus are made throughout the epistle).

This first chapter begins by showing that Jesus is superior to the angels. These Christians from a Jewish background knew of the heavenly angels and may have thought that these spirit beings could serve as replacements for Jesus. They may have thought that the angels could even do more for them than Jesus did. Therefore the writer quotes several passages from the Old Testament which teach that Jesus is far above the angels.

Those passages teach that the Christ is God's own Son. God never said to an angel, "*You are My Son.*" But He did say of Christ, "*You are My Son, today I have begotten You*" (Psalm 2:7), and "*I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son*" (2 Samuel 7:14).

Jesus Christ is not just a son of God; He is God the Son, the second person of the Triune God. He is to be worshiped; indeed, the angels are to worship the Son. "*Let all the angels of God worship Him,*" says the Scripture (Hebrews 1:6). Angels are not to be worshiped, nor do they want to be worshiped. They are happy with the place that God has given them, as all of us should be. Angels are God's servants, created to do His bidding.

He even sends them to serve those who are heirs of eternal salvation through Christ.

Jesus Christ has all the attributes of God. He is eternal; He rules forever; and His rule is one of perfect righteousness; His power and glory are far above those of any human ruler—their kingdoms will end, but Christ's will endure forever.

Jesus is the eternal God made flesh, who reconciled us to God by His sacrifice for us.

He showed His victory over sin and death by His resurrection.

He has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.

His is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (see Acts 4:12).

Prayers to God in His name are the only prayers heard and answered.

Let others pray to whom—and in whatever name—they will. We will pray to God only in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.



The Fool Who Fools Himself

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer · Oakdale, Minnesota

Everyone has a god—even those who
claim that there is no God.

We were reminded of this again when we read that American atheists are planning to initiate a TV channel dedicated to god-lessness. According to a spokesman, the purpose and intent of this channel is to fill a void for those who claim to be god-less or for others who, in his words, are “looking for a way out of faith.”

The spokesman said that the atheist channel “will have shows about philosophy, science, history...a critical examination of the facts.” One of the features of this channel will be to promote the theory of evolution to “fill in the gaps in knowledge that pastors have left behind.” (After we read the aforementioned news report on line, TV news also reported that there is a push to have atheist “chaplains” in the military.)

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Scripture describes those who deny the Triune God of Scripture when it says, “*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Psalm 14:1). Nature itself (“natural knowledge”), while it does not witness of God in the person of Christ Jesus who is revealed to us in Scripture (“revealed knowledge”), testifies to God’s existence. For that reason Scripture says that atheists and any others who deny the existence of God will stand on judgment day without excuse before the God whom they deny (Romans 1: 20,32)!

But how can it be claimed that those who say there is no God in fact have a god? The god of the atheist is his corrupt mind and reason. In time of need and in the hour of death God-deniers turn to a god who

is no greater than themselves. A TV channel dedicated to god-lessness is a channel dedicated to unbelief. What of a substantive nature will a chaplain of atheism share?

The Triune God—the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier God—is the God of the capital G in contrast to the god of the small g—“a deity in mythology; a person or thing valued above all, an idol.”

Notice how Peter responded to a question of Jesus. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). How blessed are the believing children of God who in their need in time and for eternity can turn to the risen Lord God who gives substance to life on Earth as well as in heaven!

On the other hand, we are reminded of the atheist on his deathbed who was told by a fellow of like unbelief to “hang on, hang on.” The dying atheist said, “I am trying to; but what is there to hang on to?” The fool who has said there is no God will receive the fool’s reward. When he dies, his god dies with him.

John, the apostle, walked with the Lord. He was taught by the Lord. He testified to the reality of God in the first chapter of his Gospel. In his first epistle the same apostle wrote by inspiration of the Spirit: “*He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:10-13).

These words express the child of God’s confident faith in and assurance of eternal life through the atonement of the Savior-God—something the fool will never know.

Lord God, keep us in this faith and in the good hope of eternal life. Amen.



Kim & David Bernthal with their Immanuel graduates, daughters Naomi (4-yr. BS in Education) and Abigail (HS)

GOD'S OBSCURE SAINTS

(Seventh 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.

“And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days” (ACTS 20:4-6).

Fellow-travelers on the Way of Life:

When I call you “fellow-travelers,” I am not calling you a bad name, although during the Cold War of the 1950’s, if Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin called someone a “fellow-traveler,” that was enough to strike fear, for he meant the person was a communist sympathizer or worse.

The term itself is neutral; it’s a good name if the fellow-travelers are competent, reliable friends, and you decide to travel together to be mutually supportive and helpful. It’s still hazardous to travel abroad, and tourists put their lives at risk especially around the Mediterranean. It’s not only the foreign languages, strange customs, and weird foods—it’s the pickpockets and bogus beggars. You do well to go in the safety of a group of fellow-travelers led by an experienced guide.

The book of Acts records whole bunches of such friends that were fellow-travelers with Paul, the great apostle and missionary. Of course, Paul depended on the Lord Jesus to be with him and keep him from all harm, but there were benefits in taking along stalwart fellow-travelers, men with skills and brains and experience Paul could depend on.

Here’s the setting behind this arrangement: *“And when the Jews plotted against him [the Apostle Paul] as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also*

Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.”

We get the picture: Paul was in danger from Jews who considered him a traitor to his/their religion—so he was regularly on the run, and on this specific occasion he outfoxed the hit-men by changing his travel plans and taking along some stout fellow-travelers as body-guards.

We know little about six of these seven, for they are among God’s obscure saints. They put their secular jobs on hold, left family members behind, put some personal belongings into a backpack, and took to the road. Why? Because they understood that Paul should not be left alone when Satan and the Jews had so much to gain by killing him. Besides, he was carrying sizeable cash donations from Gentiles for the relief of their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem—so they joined Paul on his trip back to Jerusalem via the round-about route of revisiting the saints along the way.

Keep in mind that the Christian life-style was called “The Way” for good reason, for God’s children were traveling through this wilderness on their way home to the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore they behaved as travelers with a life-style that was different; Christian life was notable for purity and virtue and morality; they had learned who Jesus was and what He had done in love; that made them different.

Here we are, centuries later, also fellow-travelers through life, all on the same route with our passports stamped in red with the words, “Approved by Jesus, God’s Son”; the destination on the ticket is heaven; we are headed to our heavenly home; we appreciate having Christian friends and companions on our journey.

Having said all that, let us ask ourselves: are we sharing our best with one another; are we willing at a moment’s notice to step up and help; are we providing blessings to others?

As Christian friends and fellow-travelers, we want to put our heart into our daily contacts—in order to be blessings to everyone. Of course, only that will be a blessing which is spiritually wholesome. No garbage will ever be beneficial to us or to others; no manure will ever be edifying; dirt will not help anyone to contact the Lord Jesus.

You see, Jesus warns us against bad company—the sort that is ever-ready with un-Christian motives and soiled morality, adept at

doing Satan's dirty work. We don't let ourselves be thrilled with the sinfulness that motivates others; we don't let ourselves be enraptured by the warmth of un-Christian companionships. Rotting garbage and decomposing manure produce warmth too.

I picture Sopater and Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius and Tychicus and Trophimus—God's obscure saints on our right and on our left, going ahead and waiting for us at the crossing. They went to school before us and graduated in the first classes out of the Christian Academy of the day; others like them are walking in their footsteps today, and others will tomorrow.

God's obscure saints are with us on every side as our classmates and friends, our fellow-travelers to help one another along the way.

Ten years from now we should be able to look back and say, "I had good friends at school, and as adults we stayed close in the fellowship of our Christian congregation; we helped one another grow up as children of God; God did a lot for us through our God-revering fellow-travelers. God put us together, and we have stayed together through thick and thin. Even when parted by death, we will be together again on the other side of the grave, with Jesus forever.

We thank You, Jesus, for all these blessings! Amen!

Let us join our hearts and voices in hymn 478, stanzas 1, 2, and 5.

"The Saints on Earth and Those Above"

I

*The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make;
Joined to their Lord in bonds of love,
All of His grace partake.*

2

*One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream, of death.*

5

*Lord Jesus, be our constant Guide;
Then, when the word is given,
Bid death's cold flood its waves divide
And land us safe in heaven.*

The Lutheran Hymnal

Text: Heb. 12:22-24

Author: Isaac Watts, 1709;

Charles Wesley, 1759, cento, alt.

Composer: John Day, 1572

Tune: "St. Flavian"

GRADUATION or COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer · Oakdale, Minnesota

Graduation

is the bestowing of diplomas upon students who have completed the prescribed course of study.

Commencement

names the same event with the emphasis on a new beginning. The graduates enter upon a new course or new experience in life.

Schools invite guest speakers for the graduation or commencement exercise. We suspect that those who attend will soon forget most if not all that was told them by the speaker. (For the most part, the graduates won't lose much.)

So what is the difference between graduation from a public institution and one from a church institution? The difference lies in the substance of the message delivered. Among us—and today we must distinguish ourselves from most Lutheran institutions—the message brought to our graduates is a reiteration of what they have been taught in their education. The specifics may differ from year to year, but the source and substance of the message is the Word of God!

The education that young men and women receive at Immanuel in Eau Claire—as well as at the CLC's other Immanuel High School, Mankato, Minnesota—is priceless. The foundation of all that is taught in religion classes is Holy Scripture. How can it be otherwise? Scripture lays the foundation for the certainty of life in heaven through the grace of God manifest in the person and work of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Every math and science class is filtered through the Word of God, to whom belongs the glory and praise for the universe and for the orderliness of science and math, as well as for the mind to assimilate and to teach what is necessary for life on Earth.

And how does one teach history without an acknowledgement that it is the Creator God, the God of justice and love, who guides and directs the events of history to the accomplishment of His end, and the ultimate welfare of His redeemed children?

Indeed the fount and source of what is taught in our schools is the Word whereby students are confirmed in the conviction that *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward”* (Psalm 19:8-11).

Graduates may not remember what they heard at their graduation or who said it. One thing they can remember is that what they were taught was of God, and that the address at their graduation did not contradict what they knew to be God’s Truth.

A prevailing thought of graduation speeches in government schools is that students should go out and take the world by storm; their fate lies in their hands; they should therefore be all that they can be; nothing is beyond their reach; be tolerant of every philosophy and lifestyle; and help bring the world together.

By contrast, the graduates of our schools are reminded to go forth reflecting their Father in heaven. They are encouraged to utilize the gifts God has given them to benefit the world in which they live, always reflecting who they are as His dear children through faith in Christ Jesus and bearing witness to His truth in word and deed. As they reflect the will of God and give glory to Him through His witness to the gospel of salvation in the world, the Lord will bless them and give success to their labors. As their walk is heavenward and is focused on the Lord Jesus, they know that whatever befalls them, He will take them to be with Him where He is (John 14:1-3).

Graduates who have been taught in and through the Word of God learn that they will receive the ultimate diploma of grace upon God’s call. They are further taught that each day is another day of opportunity, a day of new beginning, another day to live to the glory of the Lord until they enjoy the glory of heaven.

To all in whom the Word of God lives and dwells—whether graduating from our church schools or from public institutions—we wish the Lord’s richest blessings as you walk the walk of faith in every pursuit of life. And whomever you forget and whatever you forget, remember the Lord your God and His Word. Keep close to your heart both the instruction and the promises of God spoken through Joshua to Israel of old: *“Only be strong and*

very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7-9).



IAMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE GRADUATION 2014

From the back row

Spokesman Assistant Editor, Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch • Eau Claire, Wis.

The 2014 Spring Concert of Immanuel Lutheran College was presented at Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wis. on the evening of May 23rd at the close of the school year, when exams were past (passed!) and everyone was enjoying the late arrival of beautiful weather.

The concert was beautiful, too, organized like this in five sections:

ON ❖ BY ❖ IN ❖ THROUGH ❖ UNDER



Director John Reim and choir took us on a Biblical tour of Creation, Redemption, Resurrection, Ascension, and Glorification. Word and song melded together splendidly to edify—indeed, to overwhelm us

with numbers that were stately, jaunty, plaintive, melodic, marching, or rollicking—each in turn bringing the Spirit’s blessing into our ears and hearts. Thank you, ILC students and Director Reim!

The Immanuel Lutheran College Commencement service followed on Saturday morning, May 24th, in the campus Field House. This worship service counterbalanced the concert with its own warm, celebratory ambiance. Everyone was happy to see everyone—especially the friends and parents of twenty-seven high school graduates, six college grads, and two men prepared in the seminary department to enter the parish ministry of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

Specifically, Peter T. Evensen will become the pastor of Rock of Ages Lutheran church located at Grand Rapids, Michigan, and David M. Ude will become the pastor of Living Hope Lutheran congregation located at Appleton, Wisconsin.

Naomi Bernthal received her teaching diploma and awaits God’s call into the classroom of a CLC Christian Day School; graduate Ross Kok will begin his teaching career in the classroom of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran church and school, Okabena, Minnesota.

Academic Dean John Ude presented Samuel C. Rodebaugh with his B.A. degree in Theological Studies; Samuel intends to enter our seminary department in preparation for the public ministry. Prof. Ude announced that Stefan Sonnenfeld (not present) also intends to enter the seminary next fall. Associate of Arts degrees were presented to graduates Alyssa Johannes and Caleb Meyer.

Then Principal Joel Gullerud awarded diplomas to twenty-seven high school graduates—many of whose family names are familiar because ILC was the Alma Mater of their parents—and grandparents, even! It’s thrilling that the Lord has blessed our modestly sized church body in such a wonderful way.

The sedate atmosphere of the service concluded with a cascade of balloons descending upon the audience—which we like to think represent the blessings showered by the Lord Jesus on us, His siblings. Praise the Lord!



“We All Live Downstream”

Pastor Emeritus Paul Fleischer • Red Wing, Minn.

A few months back we saw a bumper sticker which read: “WE ALL LIVE DOWNSTREAM.” It got us to thinking about how many and broad are its applications to life.

What does it make YOU think about? Here are some of our thoughts.

Intentionally or not, the sticker teaches the significance of history. Living downstream means we are recipients or heirs—for better or worse, for good or ill—of nigh everything that took place in the days/years/centuries/millennia gone by.

As life’s river flows along, we can be inundated with the flotsam of the past or catch a life-saving ride on a floating log or raft. Those best served are the ones aboard the Ship of God’s Church which carries its occupants safely through the winding tributaries of life into the vast harbor of eternity.

You see, how easy—yes, how urgent—to spiritualize the truth the bumper sticker suggests. So here’s a bit more from a Bible-believing Lutheran Christian’s perspective.

The ultimate upstream source is Genesis, God’s book of beginnings which teaches about divine origins of the world and of humanity.

Upstream was the creation of the world in six days through the Creator’s speaking the Word “*let there be...*” — and there was!

Upstream was man’s creation on the sixth day in a state of perfection—but then also the Fall which ruined the first Paradise.

Upstream was the Flood of floods, underscoring how divine judgment came upon an unbelieving world—yet divine reprieve for eight penitent humans in Noah’s ship.

Upstream was the veritable river of prophecies from godly patriarchs and prophets as they foretold the coming of the Messiah—and then their one-by-one fulfillment by events recorded in the New Testament Gospels!

Upstream was the first Holy Week—the God-provided (therefore the only!) solution to the problem of sin and its wages of death: full and complete forgiveness, new life and salvation through Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Redeemer crucified and risen again.

Riding along, we sail along the crests of the book of the Acts of the Apostles

together with the other divinely inspired—thus life-preserving and life-course piloting—writings of holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

While cruising along on the ship of the Church, with holy awe we give sighs of thanksgiving for the rich doctrinal content of the three universal Christian creeds—the Apostles, Nicene (4th century), and Athanasian (5th century).

Fast forwarding around a few bends, the tides of life arrive at the 16th century. How blessed to live downstream from those whom God raised up to leave a legacy of Truth based on His divinely inspired Word—the Reformer's stance before Pope and Emperor, and the subsequent six* doctrinally sound confessional documents written by Luther and his fellow-confessors and preserved in the Book of Concord of 1580 (as timely today as ever!).

Sailing along into the 20th century, we find others who stood fast and firm on the Rock of Ages. When the Lutheran Synodical Conference was drifting away from the clarity of God's Word, Interim Conference meetings were held (including at Redeemer, Cheyenne, Wyo.) toward establishing a new fellowship. The Church of the Lutheran Confession and its Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary took shape.

Upstream is *Out of Necessity*, a book which pretty much tells the whole CLC story. “Remember the days of old...ask...your elders, and they will tell you” (Deuteronomy 32:7). To God alone the glory!

Countless other biblical and extra-biblical events have and will continue to benefit downstreamers who take the time and make the effort to uncover, discover, and investigate HIS-story.

As our lives flow onward toward eternity's harbor...

...Downstream is the opportunity to live joyfully and confidently for God and His Christ throughout our remaining time of grace.

...Downstream are sure to be more white-water rapids and/or stagnant swamps of doctrinal controversies seeking to divert and impede the smooth flow of God's Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.

*Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1529), The Augsburg Confession (1530), The Apology (1530), The Smalcald Articles (1537), The Formula of Concord (1577)

...Downstream is the Second Coming of Christ, the Judge and the Savior—doom for unbelievers, but unparalleled bliss for believers as they behold the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1).

As God's children outfitted with the Life-preservers of God's Means of Grace, the gospel in Word and Sacrament, let us continue to work and pray together to leave downstream a legacy which will be an upstream blessing to and for our heirs, doing so in the Name of Him who said "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

*See, the streams of living waters • Springing from eternal love
Well supply thy sons and daughters • And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river • Ever flows their thirst t' assuage—
Grace, which, like the Lord, the Giver, • Never fails from age to age?*
(TLH #469:2)



Above: 2-yr. AA grads, Caleb Meyer & Alyssa Johannes, both of Eau Claire

Top: Brandon Wendland with parents Teresa and Brandt

Opposite: Samuel Rodebaugh (BA in pre-theology) with parents Prof. David and Becky

ANNOUNCEMENTS

70TH ANNIVERSARY

Trinity Lutheran Church of Spokane, Wash. will have a special service of thanksgiving for seventy years of grace on August 3, 2014. Previous under-shepherds Professor Paul Schaller and Pastor Terrel Kesterson will be guest preachers. The time of worship service will be 3:30 p.m. with a meal to follow. Please contact Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer for further information: 509-327-4203.

FOR THE HISTORICAL RECORD: Missionary Koenig informs that in his article entitled "Our Practice with Overseas Contacts and Churches" in the June 2014 issue (p. 25) there was an incorrect identification. In his words: "Rather than David Reim, it was Norbert Reim who went to India to meet with Bas...." -- Editor

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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

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