

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

For
unto
us a
child is
born, unto
us a son is
given: and the

government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting
Father, The Prince of Peace. • Of the increase of his
government and peace *there shall be* no end,
upon the throne of David, and
upon his kingdom, to order
it, and to establish it with
judgment and with justice
from henceforth even for ever.

The zeal of the LORD of
hosts will perform
this. ISAIAH
9:6 & 7

The Light Of Life

How can Christmas be such a happy time for most but not for all people?

Perhaps it is because—at least in our nation—customs surrounding the Christmas season bring to mind scenes of happiness. One might picture a scene filled with mirth as friends and family gather together. Another picture might portray a warm fire on a cold winter's night.

Surely many of us can recall how even the simplest tasks multiply in ratio to the number of plans and purchases, all of which combine to overwhelm the month of December. But what might bring a temporary joy to some may also bring sadness to others. We are reminded regularly of those who cannot find any joy at Christmas because of war, disease, injury, or famine.

Christmas can also be a time filled with dread, creating gloomy thoughts over what one does not possess or what might be missing in this life—all com-

plicated by the fact that there is just not enough time! Like a wet blanket on a cold day, true joy can be lost and happiness can be rejected with the scowl of a Mr. Scrooge, saying, “Bah! Humbug!”

How often do we fall victim to such complaints? Do we sometimes share with others the burdens we feel Christmas has brought into our lives? God forbid!

It was to people with just such thoughts that the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Is. 9:2).

The Lord had sent Isaiah on a mission to His Old Testament people. Because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord and willful disobedience of His will, they were going to be brought

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down by the Lord's just wrath against their sins. Their way appeared to them as an endless night of hopelessness without any relief in sight.

Israel had become like a beast of burden. It carried the weight of its sin and its guilt, including the guilt of abandoning God. Their forefathers had experienced this physically and spiritually, while under forced slavery in Egypt. The Assyrians were going to do the same to them.

Israel's great burden was to see only "trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish" (Is. 8:22). All mankind was condemned to sit in darkness forever because of sin.

Light Through Faith

But there was also light at the end of the tunnel! God had remained true to His word. Though they walked through the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord had not left them for dead, but had revealed the Light of life.

The Lord God promised the Light of life to all who believed in His Son, the Savior of sinners. The prophet could write: "You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Is. 9:3).

The same God of eternal salvation

has not left us to despair, but to rejoice. The darkness of sin has been dispelled by the Light of life in Jesus Christ. He reached down to do battle against the darkness of sin.

God sent His Son to win the victory that continually eludes fallen man. It was a spiritual battle for eternal joy in the kingdom of God. It was a victory won by the birth of God's Son in the flesh—the Christ Child! The victory was won once for all on the cross, and it is celebrated by those who have received the precious gift of His light through faith.

The God of all mercy reveals the Light of life in Jesus Christ alone in order to lead us out of darkness into His eternal light. The apostle John wrote of Jesus: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness" (Jn. 1:4-5).

Yes, it is true again this Christmas, regardless of our individual circumstances: "The people. . . have seen a great light" because "upon them a light has shined."

There is every reason to rejoice in the great light of the Lord Jesus who still says to you: "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

—Pastor Rick Grams



"And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth" — Micah 5:4

Getting Beneath The Tinsel

Though He may appear lowly in His Bethlehem birthplace, Jesus is true God, Creator of all things, whose

goings forth have been from everlasting. It is He of whom the apostle John writes: "In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Of Himself Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” And to the Father He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

What a thrill for us it is to know that the Lord, who possessed all power and glory in heaven, came down from heaven and in humility became a true Man in order to be our Savior!

A small number of believers welcomed the arrival of the Christ. Along with Mary and Joseph, we can count Elizabeth and Zacharias, the shepherds, and Simeon and Anna. Some time later, after Joseph moved his family into a house, the Wise Men came.

What was it that drew these people to Jesus? The nativity scene is depicted in picture and song in lovely ways, but there was nothing about the sight which merited more than a passing glance, let alone worship and praise. “He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Is. 53:2).

Making The *Word* Connection

What moved those believers to place their entire hope in this Child is that which moves us to do the very same thing: it was the *Word* that God connected with this Child! Here was the Christ through whom the power of Satan would be crushed. The wounds and stripes afflicted upon Him would result in our spiritual healing. And we have heard from the very lips of the Messiah Himself that those who believe in Him shall never die, and that He shall return one day to receive us into His Father’s house.



Amid all of the decorating, baking, and singing of carols, how many people are making the connection between the birth of Christ and the redemption of their souls from eternal ruin?

There are all kinds of reasons people offer for celebrating at this time of year, but it seems that few truly know or care about the real reason for celebration. Again, it is the *Word* connection with this season that gives us cause to celebrate, and that *Word* takes us from the manger to a place called Calvary where the Just One suffered for the unjust ones. His words “it is finished” assure us that nothing was left undone.

Christmas is about how Christ came to offer His life to save us *from* damnation in hell to a place reserved in heaven for eternity. Everything else is just tinsel.

Though those who greet Him and worship Him in truth may be few in number, merely a remnant, Micah gives them good reason not to fear. It is because the Lord shall stand, and He shall rule in strength and majesty so that His flock may abide.

This Child gives us comfort and joy, life and peace. These Christmas gifts are always a perfect fit!

—Pastor Delwyn Maas

‘The Fullness Of Time’

As happens frequently the editor must remind yours truly of the upcoming deadline for submission of an article. So in the beginning of November came the reminder that the Christmas article was due. Already? Christmas?

But the reminder also serves another good purpose. It reminds one of how quickly the years pass, and how the “deadline” for each of us is drawing closer. Each day brings us closer to that day when the Lord will call us.

That day can be a day of dread or a day of anticipation. For many the “fullness of time” is a day of dread because they are not ready to face the consequence of a wasted life. What a tragedy! It is surely the greatest of all tragedies that people for whom Jesus died should experience the endlessness of eternity in hell because they rejected the Lord of Glory.

On the other hand, for the Christian the “fullness of time” is a day of anticipation. The Christian whose heart is rooted in Christ Jesus anticipates the day of salvation when the Lord Jesus will come to take His sisters and brothers home. For this cause the Savior was born according to promise.

The “fullness of time” for each believer is assured because of the faithfulness of the Heavenly Father Who “When the fullness of the time was come . . . sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4).

After many centuries—in which the patience of the Father was tried by the people of Israel as we read in the

prophets—the “fullness of time” had come, and

He spoke to his beloved Son:
‘Tis time to have compassion.
Then go, bright Jewel of My crown,
And bring to man salvation;
From sin and sorrow set him free,
Slay bitter death for him that he
May live with Thee forever. (TLH 387:5)

After many years of waiting, the watchful remnant of believers rejoiced to see the “fullness of time.” Anna and Simeon were not disappointed but could depart in peace when time turned into eternity for them. The blessed message of Christ’s birth, which so filled their heart with joy, is the timeless message that still gives peace and hope in an increasingly disquieting world. In spite of the world’s best efforts to dull the brightness, the Jewel still shines in splendor for all who believe.

The passing of time also reminds us that in the year 2000 the Church of the Lutheran Confession will be 40 years old. As with our physical eyes, so our eyesight as a Church may grow dim through the years of struggle, toil, and not least of all, the weaknesses of those who make it up. For surely we are flesh, and we are a church made up of those who must confess, “Woe is me,” as the prophet Isaiah said.

In the changing scenes of personal and church life, there remains one constant—the bright shining Jewel that is Christ, Whose glory even the cross could not diminish. To hold the Jewel before the world so that through its brightness still others may be drawn to its light remains the one and only purpose of our church. The glow of youth may no longer be evident in our life as

individuals or as a church, but the glow of Christ still shines and will continue to shine among us and from us, so long as each of us recognizes that the “fullness of time” is fast approaching when the Lord will come again in glory to take us home.

If by the coming of Christmas we are alerted again to the passing of time and to the urgency of the moment, then this Christmas will be a blessing to us,

and through us to others. May God through His Spirit see to it.

May this Christmas be a joyous time for you and your family, and may Jesus our Savior bless you with His peace as you contemplate God’s faithfulness in the “fullness of time” so that your “fullness of time” might be awaited in faith and confidence until time is translated into glory with your Lord.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



Christmas Prayer

R. E. Schaller

P. W. Schaller, 1997

All the night is calm and still, All the world for-
 'Tis a flow'r so sweet and fair, Help-less in a
 An-gels flash-ing in the sky. Speak of joy and

got His will; Yet in vill-age 'bove the plain Blooms a rose in Beth-le-hem.
 man-ger there, He the Father's Son a-bove Comes to save us in His love.
 peace on high. Bright-ness of the Fa-ther, all rest-ing in a hum-ble stall.

When my heart within me lies
 Heavy, and I fear it dies;
 Take me where Your Sacred Head,
 Rests in lowly manger bed.

You, dear Child, God's Word made flesh,
 Brought us love, and life, and bliss;
 Make our happiness increase,
 Fill us all with hope and peace.

Note: Prof. Paul Schaller composed the musical score for this "Christmas Prayer" written by his father, Pastor Ralph Schaller.

A CHRISTMAS TREE FOR BABY JESUS

It's become a tradition in our family to go out hunting in the woods for our Christmas tree. In specified areas of the Black Hills the Forest Service will let you cut down an evergreen for a modest fee. Of course, the trees out in the wild don't grow like they do on the farms where they breed and prune perfectly cone-shaped specimens. But we think the fun of finding our own tree overshadows the fact that we don't end up with the nicest looking tree.

When baby Jesus was born, God had a special Christmas tree waiting just for Him. It too was far from the nicest looking tree. In fact, it was horribly, painfully ugly.

We tend to romanticize the nativity scene. Christmas, for many, is a story right out of a Precious Moment's book. How quaint! But let's not forget the tree.

If we had been there with the shepherds, we wouldn't have seen with our eyes a Christmas tree in the corner of the stable. But it was there, nevertheless. In that joyous event of the Savior's birth there loomed, dark and threatening, a cursed tree for baby Jesus.

This Christmas tree had no needles, but it did have three sharp nails. It was not decked out with colored lights, but with a beaten and bruised body. It was not streaked with silver tinsel, but it was smeared with the lifeblood of an innocent man.

By now you've guessed what tree this was. It was the cross—a tree of execution. This is the tree God had waiting for His Son.

Only eight days after Christ's birth, Simeon tied the manger directly to the

cross when he spoke to Mary of the pain her Son's death would cause her: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Lk. 2:35).

Born To Die

Now some might say: "Oh, but it's Christmas. Must we talk about such unpleasant things now? Won't we spoil the joy of the season if we make that—that tree—a part of the Christmas message?"

Dear friends, unless the cursed tree of the cross is present in our meditation of Christmas, we will have missed the purpose of the season. The plain truth of Christmas is that Jesus was born to die.

Those who don't want to mention Jesus' death when they celebrate His birth simply don't want to face the truth about themselves. The tree of the cross is "decorated" with our sins. Our mixed-up priorities, our loveless deeds, our gossiping, our greed, our lust, our pride—it was all there!

But look again! What else do we find? Underneath the tree on Christmas morning, our children find many wonderful presents. The cursed tree for baby Jesus holds out to us God's forgiveness and eternal life! "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

Perhaps you are one who puts up an artificial Christmas tree. It looks nice. No needles to clean up. You don't have to give it water. And you don't have to worry about it catching fire. But just because an artificial tree can be a good idea doesn't mean we want an artificial

“O Sing Unto The Lord”

Daily Bible Readings

1999

The *Spokesman* extends hearty thanks to Pastor Roland H. Gurgel for these devotional readings for the coming year.

The overall theme chosen for these readings is: “O sing unto the Lord.” The Apostle Paul encourages: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

Pastor Gurgel explains: “The Scripture readings for the days of the week are an attempt to match with the hymn verses of each hymn chosen. One hymn verse per day can either be read or sung either before or after the reading.”

It will be noted that readings are not included for Sundays. Pastor Gurgel notes: “I felt (Sunday readings) might ‘intrude’ upon the thoughts your pastor presents on Sunday. If you wish, you could sing the entire hymn on Sundays as your devotion. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all.”

(Please see offer on back page—Ed.)

January

Hymn # 77

- 1 Isaiah 42:10-13
- 2 Habakkuk 3:1-7
- 3
- 4 Isaiah 44:1-8
- 5 Hosea 1:6-2:1
- 6 Ezekiel 33:10-11
- 7 Hebrews 9:11-15
- 8 Isaiah 65:24-66:2
- 9 Isaiah 40:1-5
- 10
- 11 Isaiah 4:2-6
- 12 Isaiah 55:1-6
- 13 Isaiah 59:9-21
- 14 Isaiah 62:1-5
- 15 Isaiah 63:7-14
- 16 Isaiah 62:10-12
- 17
- 18 Isaiah 61:10-11

Hymn # 127

- 19 Numbers 24:15-19
- 20 Isaiah 60:1-7
- 21 Matthew 1:18-25
- 22 Matthew 2:1-6
- 23 Matthew 2:7-12
- 24

Hymn # 98

- 25 John 1:1-5
- 26 John 1:6-13
- 27 John 1:14-18
- 28 John 1:19-28
- 29 John 1:29-34

Hymn # 129

- 30 Mark 7:24-30
- 31

February

- 1 Mark 8:1-10
- 2 Mark 10:13-16

Hymn # 134

- 3 Luke 4:16-21
- 4 John 2:1-11
- 5 Mark 2:1-13
- 6 Mark 4:35-41
- 7
- 8 Mark 5:36-41

Hymn # 135

- 9 Mark 9:2-8
- 10 Mark 9:9-13
- 11 Matthew 3:13-17
- 12 Acts 7:54-60
- 13 Matthew 28:16-20
- 14

Hymn # 305

- 15 Matthew 26:26-30
- 16 Matthew 25:1-13
- 17 Acts 4:8-22
- 18 Romans 7:18-24
- 19 Romans 5:12-21
- 20 Romans 6:1-9
- 21
- 22 Hebrews 9:23-28
- 23 Romans 5:6-11
- 24 Romans 12:1-8

Hymn # 315

- 25 John 6:65-69
- 26 Hebrews 4:11-13
- 27 Hebrews 4:14-16
- 28

March

- 1 Hebrews 3:7-15
- 2 Genesis 3:9-15
- 3 Genesis 3:16-19
- 4 Daniel 9:3-9
- 5 Galatians 3:11-12
- 6 Hebrews 11:1-7
- 7
- 8 John 6:32-40

- 9 John 6:48-58
- 10 John 15:1-11
- 11 Romans 5:1-5
- 12 Romans 8:31-39
- 13 Revelation 21:1-8
- 14

Hymn # 171

- 15 Psalm 22:1-2
- 16 Psalm 22:3-5
- 17 Psalm 22:6-8
- 18 Psalm 22:9-11
- 19 Psalm 22:12-15
- 20 Psalm 22:16-18
- 21
- 22 Psalm 22:19-21
- 23 Psalm 22:22-24
- 24 Psalm 22:25-26
- 25 Psalm 22:27-28
- 26 Psalm 22:29
- 27 Psalm 22:30

Hymn # 151

- 28 Luke 19:28-40
- 29 Luke 22:47-53, 63-65
- 30 Luke 23:13-25
- 31 Luke 23:26-37

April

- 1 Luke 22:39-46
- 2 Luke 23:38-43
- 3 Luke 23:26-37
- 4

Hymn # 206

- 5 I Corinthians 15:1-11
- 6 I Corinthians 15:12-19
- 7 I Corinthians 15:20-22
- 8 I Corinthians 15:23-28
- 9 I Corinthians 15:35-45
- 10 Job 19:23-27
- 11
- 12 I Corinthians 15:50-53

- 13 I Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 14 I Corinthians 15:54-58
- 15 I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Hymn # 200

- 16 John 8:50-58
- 17 Philippians 2:9-11
- 18
- 19 John 10:11-18
- 20 John 14:12-18
- 21 Matthew 5:25-32
- 22 Matthew 5:1-12
- 23 John 12:23-26
- 24 John 11:17-27
- 25

Hymn # 196

- 26 Hebrews 1:3-14
- 27 Hebrews 2:1-9
- 28 Hebrews 2:10-15
- 29 Hebrews 3:1-6
- 30 Hebrews 3:14-16

May

Hymn # 192

- 1 Mark 16:1-6
- 2
- 3 John 20:3-9
- 4 John 20:19-23
- 5 John 20:24-29
- 6 Luke 24:13-17
- 7 Jeremiah 17:7-8
- 8 Revelation 3:7-13
- 9

Hymn # 212

- 10 Isaiah 63:1-6
- 11 Acts 1:4-8
- 12 Acts 1:9-11
- 13 Matthew 25:31-34
- 14 Proverbs 4:4-9
- 15 Joshua 1:1-9
- 16

17 Isaiah 44:2-6,21-23

Hymn # 222

18 Revelation 1:10-18

19 Revelation 4:1-11

20 Revelation 19:1-10

21 Revelation 5:8-14

Hymn # 234

22 Joel 2:28-32

23

24 I Corinthians 2:7-14

25 I Thessalonians 5:19-24

26 Romans 8:12-17

27 I Corinthians 6:15-20

28 Galatians 5:22-26

Hymn # 253

29 Hebrews 11:1-3

30

31 Psalm 2:7-9

June

1 Colossians 2:11-15

2 Hebrews 2:5-10

3 Colossians 3:1-4

4 Luke 24:44-53

5 Revelation 22:12-27

6

7 I Corinthians 12:3-11

8 II Timothy 3:13-17

9 Philippians 3:20-21

Hymn # 243

10 Psalm 148

11 Psalm 147:1-9

12 Psalm 146

13

14 Psalm 147:10-20

15 Psalm 150

Hymn # 26

16 Psalm 103:1-5

17 Psalm 103:6-10

18 Psalm 103:11-14

19 Psalm 103:15-19

20

21 Psalm 105:1-10

22 Psalm 103:20-22

Hymn # 341

23 Psalm 95:1-7

24 Genesis 3:15

25 Psalm 92:1-4

26 Psalm 90:13-17

27

28 Revelation 19:11-16

Hymn # 324

29 John 4:6-26

30 John 3:14-21

July

1 John 21:15-17

2 Matthew 11:25-30

3 Matthew 8:1-4

4

5 Luke 18:9-14

6 Matthew 9:1-8

7 Matthew 8:5-13

Hymn # 366

8 Luke 10:38-42

9 Matthew 13:44-46

10 Matthew 13:3-9

11

12 Matthew 13:18-23

13 I Corinthians 1:26-31

14 Luke 7:40-50

15 Matthew 13:47-52

Hymn # 233

16 Isaiah 44:1-5

17 Isaiah 51:12-16

18

19 Isaiah 11:2

20 Ezekiel 36:22-24

21 Ezekiel 36:25-30

22 John 1:1-17

23 Psalm 148

Hymn # 281

24 Revelation 3:20-22

25

26 John 4:6-15

27 John 7:37-39

28 Luke 6:17-19

29 Luke 4:16-22

Hymn # 287

30 Exodus 20:1-2

31 Exodus 20:3-5a

August

1

2 Exodus 20:7

3 Exodus 20:8-11

4 Exodus 20:12

5 Exodus 20:13

6 Exodus 20:14

7 Exodus 20:15

8

9 Exodus 20:16

10 Exodus 20:17

11 Exodus 20:18-21

12 Exodus 20:5-6

Hymn # 387

13 Philippians 4:1-7

14 Romans 7:7-11

15

16 Philippians 3:3-8

17 Philippians 3:9-11

18 Philippians 2:5-6

19 Philippians 2:7

20 Philippians 3:12-14

21 Philippians 2:8

22

23 Philippians 2:9-11

24 Philippians 3:17-21

Hymn # 421

25 Matthew 5:1-8

26 Matthew 5:5-9

27 Matthew 5:10-12

28 Matthew 5:13-16

29

30 Matthew 5:17-20

Hymn # 393

31 Exodus 15:1-5

September

1 Exodus 15:6-10

2 Exodus 15:11-13

3 Exodus 15:14-17

4 Exodus 15:19-21

5

6 Exodus 15:22-27

Hymn # 441

7 Matthew 25:14-18

8 Matthew 25:19-30

9 Matthew 18:10-14

10 Hebrews 13:1-6

11 Matthew 25:34-40

12

13 Romans 14:7-9

Hymn # 463

14 Hebrews 11:1-7

15 Hebrews 11:8-16

16 Hebrews 11:17-29

17 Hebrews 11:30-40

18 Hebrews 12:3-11

19

20 Hebrews 12:1-2

21 Hebrews 12:12-14

22 Hebrews 12:18-24

Hymn # 625

23 Joshua 24:14-18

24 Ephesians 5:22-31

25 Ephesians 6:1-4

26

27 Colossians 3:18-21
28 Philippians 4:8-9
 Hymn # 507
29 Isaiah 6:1-8
30 Jeremiah 1:4-10
 October
1 Isaiah 52:7-10
2 II Kings 5:1-15
3
4 Luke 10:1-9
5 Romans 10:14-18
 Hymn # 446
6 John 22:31-34
7 I Peter 5:8-11
8 Ephesians 5:1-14
9 Romans 11:13-25
10
11 Romans 13:11-14
12 Galatians 6:10-18
 Hymn # 373
13 Romans 1:16-17
14 Romans 3:9-20
15 Romans 3:21-26
16 Romans 3:27-31
17
18 Romans 4:1-4
19 Romans 4:5-8
20 Romans 4:9-12
 Hymn # 23
21 Genesis 1
22 John 17
23 Ephesians 4:1-16
24
25 Revelation 7:9-12
 Hymn # 660
26 Genesis 50:22-26
27 II Corinthians 4:7-18
28 Revelation 7:13-17
29 II Corinthians 5:1-8

Hymn # 264
30 Revelation 1:4-8
31
 November
1 Revelation 10:1-11
2 Revelation 11:1-6
3 Revelation 11:7-10
4 Revelation 11:11-14
5 Revelation 11:15-19
 Hymn 659
6 Matthew 18:1-5
7
 Hymn # 609
8 Isaiah 52:1-2
9 Revelation 21:9-21
10 Revelation 21:22-26
 Hymn # 606
11 Mark 14:62
12 Philippians 1:19-23
13 Matthew 24:36-41
14
15 Matthew 24:42-44
 Hymn # 615
16 Isaiah 54:1-8
17 Isaiah 54:9-10
18 Isaiah 54:11-15
19 Isaiah 54:16-17
 Hymn # 54
20 Joshua 1:1-9
21
22 Numbers 10:34-36
23 Joshua 1:10-11
 Hymn # 568
24 Psalm 98:1-3
25 Psalm 98:4-6
26 Psalm 98:7-9
 Hymn # 64
27 Lamentations 1:1-7
28

29 Habakkuk 1:1-4

30 Malachi 3:1-6

December

1 Joel 3:18-21

2 Habakkuk 2:1-4

Hymn # 58

3 Psalm 100

4 Psalm 97

5

6 Psalm 86

7 Romans 5:6-11

8 Isaiah 61:1-7

9 Isaiah 65:17-23

10 Isaiah 40:1-11

11 Isaiah 9:1-7

12

13 Numbers 24:1-9

Hymn # 645

14 Isaiah 11:1-5

15 Isaiah 7:10-14

16 Luke 2:8-20

17 Haggai 2:1-9

18 Romans 6:1-11

19

Hymn # 99

20 Galatians 4:1-7

21 Luke 1:46-55

22 Luke 1:39:45

Hymn # 90

23 Luke 1:68-79

24 Luke 2:1-7

25 Luke 2:25-35

26

27 Matthew 4:1-4

28 Matthew 4:507

29 Matthew 4:8-11

30 Matthew 3:13-17

31 John 10:11-18



The Bible has been the object of many vicious attacks. Infidel philosophers, atheistic scientists, skeptic astronomers, doubting archeologists, and agnostic explorers, inspired by satanic ingenuity and skill, have marshalled their forces against the written Word of God. Despotism has thundered forth its edicts against it. The enemies of truth and righteousness have cursed it. But despite all persecution, suppression, and destruction, “the Word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25).

—Selected

A GRACIOUS OFFER . . .

The compiler of these 1999 daily Bible readings writes:

“Should anyone so desire, I would be willing to send copies of devotional booklets based upon the hymns. This would not be any extra work for me, since I will be doing so for the congregations I serve. The cost is nothing. Should you wish to make a donation, please make checks payable to Faith Lutheran Church.”

Send requests to:

Pastor Roland H. Gurgel

22 North State Street

New Ulm, Minnesota 56073

Phone: (507) 354-4534

(In order that he might know how many copies to print, Pastor Gurgel requests that you let him know by Christmas how many copies you would like. The copies will then be sent to you by January 1st. — Ed.)



SMORGASBORD

• **OLD NEWS—BUT STILL GOOD NEWS** (*Paul R. Koch, taken from the Messiah, Eau Claire newsletter, the Messenger, Christmas issue, 1997*)

We suffer no shortage of access to news in our society—by papers, magazines, television, and now the Internet. There are plenty of titillating headlines this time of year, what with dirty politics, rumors of genocide, miracles of genetic engineering, scandals in high and low places. We are even interested in how our government treats foreign dignitaries.

The reader/surfer can find anything he is looking for—even human interest stories with an uplifting message. Perhaps we find an account of parental love or heroic self-sacrifice that warms the heart. History buffs have always known that people of yesteryear can be fascinating—as a recent lightweight journal with the title “Old News” presents fascinating articles about personalities from America’s past. Even one’s own family tree may uncover some real gems; which would be old news that’s still good news for succeeding generations.

OK—so you figured it out—we have been alluding to Christmas, the Old News that really IS Good News.

The dirty politics angle is represented by Herod, jealous of any potential rival royalty, who actually ordered the genocide well-authenticated around Bethlehem.

There’s plenty of human interest in Mary’s virgin pregnancy (the miracle of God’s genetic engineering) and in this lower-class family fleeing homeland as political refugees until the evil

monarch died.

Oh, yes, the visiting dignitaries who were going to be used as political pawns: well, a higher power averted that device, and they accomplished their mission despite Herod.

And the best good news of all, first broadcast into the Bethlehem airways (in a special evening edition) delivered by God’s heavenly press corps under the by-line: “Glory to God in the highest . . .” the birth of a royal King-child, whose destiny was to establish a kingdom over all the earth, with loyal subjects whose hearts have been won by His heroic self-sacrifice—a kingdom that would see no overthrow, even by the old evil foe.

In His name and in His birth we rejoice, recognizing Him as our Savior-Lord-King, Jesus the Christ. *Hallelujah!*

—Further good news to follow from lectern and pulpit releases every week—

• WRITINGS OF PROF. EGBERT SCHALLER

With the permission of the CLC and the *Lutheran Spokesman* (where applicable), a reprinting of the published writings of Prof. Egbert Schaller—other than the *Northwestern Lutheran* columns of the 1950s and the many articles written for the CLC’s *Journal of Theology* in the 1960s—has been undertaken by R. E. Wehrwein.

The following ten booklets of Schaller’s writings are now available:

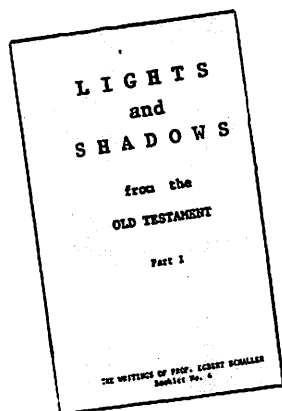
- 1) “The Ancient Church Fathers” (28 pages)
- 2) “The Weapons of Our Warfare” (44 pp)

- 3) "The 'Status Controversiae' Within the Synodical Conference" (44 pp)
- 4-5) "Lights and Shadows from the Old Testament" (totaling 60 pp)
- 6) "The Beatitudes" and "Profiles in Church History" (totaling 32 pp)
- 7) "The Voice of the Old Testament" (28 pp)
- 8) "The Virtue of Christian Sobriety" (28 pp)
- 9) "Our Father's Business" (44 pp of ILC Chapel addresses)
- 10) "Concerning Christian Brotherhood and Christian Fellowship" (12 pp)

We heartily recommend these writings—perhaps as a Christmas gift? Cost of the entire set of 10 booklets (postpaid) is \$17.00 for 1-4 sets, or \$15 for 5+ sets. (Individual booklets are available for a nominal price). Orders should be placed with R. E. Wehrwein, 1121 S. Jefferson St., New Ulm, MN 56073.

Yes, we heartily recommend these writings. We are among those old enough both to have sat at the feet of Prof. Schaller (1904-1971) and to have been his colleague in ministry for a few short years.

Here was a man at home in the Word of his Savior-God and thus richly gifted by the Spirit. Most impressive to this collegian/seminarian at the time was the professor's ability—especially do we recall his chapel talks—to draw insightful and timely truths out of God's dealings with His people in Old Testament times. A few years later, now as a young pastor, we can still picture in our mind's eye the professor before the 1968 CLC Convention delivering the assigned



essay "The Virtue of Christian Sobriety." Delegates of a church body still struggling in its formative years heard an esteemed brother set forth sobering truths from Scripture that had—and still have—profound bearing on the church's mission and ministry to the world.

In our opinion Prof. Schaller's *Spokesman* series "Lights and Shadows from the Old Testament" (sample quote below) is worth the price of the entire set. In the series are 20 articles that appeared on these pages from June 1960 to June 1964. All readers will be edified; pastors will find the articles to be rich resource material for personal study and sermonizing.

Here, then, just one spiritual morsel (comment on Gen. 22:1-5): *"But say not: 'Abraham could trust so firmly; I cannot.' Certainly you can, and do. For faith ever clings, as ivy to a wall. God tests His people for that reason, that their faith may be encouraged to reach out quickly and take hold of His promises. When we follow every clear command of our Lord, follow where He points in His Word, we may come to many a Moriah and seem to be taken farther and farther away from what we had hoped to attain. Yet only they who*

follow the will of the Lord shall in the end reach the fulfillment of their Christian hope. Abraham found on Moriah what his faith sought. He had his son given him; and this time he really had him, for he had been willing and ready to give him up.” ●



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

Judges Chapters Two Through Seven

Victorious Against Impossible Odds

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites failed to get rid of all the heathen people in the Promised Land as God had commanded them to do. Instead they intermarried with them and worshiped their idols.

These acts of rebellious disobedience brought down God’s wrath on the people. Instead of driving out their enemies before them as He had for Joshua, the Lord now left some of the nations in among His people “that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD” (3:4).

As time went on, a recurring cycle developed. The people would fall away; God would allow their enemies to overtake them; they would repent and cry to the Lord; and the Lord in His mercy would send a judge to save them.

In chapter six we find the Israelites experiencing terrible oppression. For seven years the Lord had been allowing the “people of the East” (6:2), the Midianites and the Amalekites, to run roughshod over His people because they had done “evil in the sight of the

LORD” (6:1). As a result, “Israel was greatly impoverished . . . and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD” (6:6).

It was then that the Angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon as he secretly threshed grain, telling him that the Lord was sending him to defeat the Midianites. Soon afterward the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he called on four northern tribes to send men to fight.

Gideon was not without his doubts, however. As Gideon waited for the troops to assemble, God granted him two special requests to underscore that God was with him. On the first night, as Gideon requested, God caused a fleece to be wringing wet with dew, but the ground was completely dry. The next night the exact opposite occurred: the fleece was dry while the ground was wet.

We might be quick to judge Gideon for his lack of trust in God, but we need to remember that Gideon was facing an army that the inspired author describes as “numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the

sand by the seashore in multitude” (7:12). According to human standards, such an army was invincible! Such an enemy would strike fear into the heart of even the most experienced general.

God Gives The Victory

We can take great comfort and reassurance as we witness God’s dealing with Gideon. When we see God mercifully and patiently strengthen and build up his faith, we better understand the way God is merciful and patient with us as He strengthens us through His Word in our doubts. God told Gideon: “The LORD is with you!” (6:12) He tells us the same: “Lo, I am with you always . . . !” (Mt. 28:20)

When all the men had gathered, they totaled 32,000. The LORD said to Gideon: “The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’” (7:2).

So first the Lord commanded Gideon to send home all those who were afraid; that left him with 10,000—still too many. Next the Lord thinned the ranks by choosing only the 300 men who drank water by raising their hands to their mouth instead of getting down on hands and knees to

drink. It was with these 300 men that the Lord would give the victory to the Israelites.

Under cover of darkness, Gideon and the men surrounded the camp of the Midianites, each of them armed with a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch. At the signal, they all blew their trumpets and shattered the pitchers—uncovering the torches—and shouted: “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” (7:18) At that, a mass slaughter ensued in the enemy camp, as “the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled. . . .” (7:22)

We cannot help but notice to whom all credit and glory belongs for this phenomenal victory over the Midianites! It was God who granted His people the victory against the impossible odds of an army much larger than theirs.

It is that same God who today does battle for us when we are facing situations which seem insurmountable. And most importantly, through His Son God has fought against those enemies which are impossible for us to conquer on our own—sin, death, and the devil. It is God who gives us the victory over them through our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be glory and thanksgiving forever!

—Pastor Paul Krause



In attendance at the installation of Mark Gurath in Brice Prairie, Wis. (p. 14) were: (front) J. Lau, C. Kuehne, R. Mackensen, A. Schulz, J. Schaller; (back) P. Tiefel, M. Gurath, M. Gullerud, P. Koch.

Parables Of The Master

Matthew 18:21-35

On Extravagance—And Its Lack

You will never be sinned against by anyone the way in which you have sinned against God. No one will ever commit the number of sins against you that you have committed against God.

And on the other hand, you will never have to forgive as much to anyone as God has forgiven to you. But you will forgive, with the forgiveness of God.

Here is a parable which illustrates perfectly the way in which God deals with penitent sinners who realize that they have sinned against Him. He absolves them. He has absolved you, has He not?

This parable illustrates perfectly the way in which we deal with penitent sinners who have sinned against us. We also absolve them. You have done that, have you not?

This is what the Kingdom of God is all about.

In one sense we are not members of what anyone would call a "liberal" church body. And yet in another sense our people should learn to be the most liberal and generous people around—extravagant to the utmost, with the mercy and kindness of our gracious God and Savior.

Most of us probably pray the Lord's Prayer daily in our devotions. There we plead for forgiveness, with a "rider" of sorts attached, which slips off the tongue so easily — "as we forgive those who trespass against us."

God does forgive us. We know this through Christ, who bore all sins on the cross for us and the whole world. We do not deserve it. We do not deserve any of God's gifts. "For we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment."

But God forgives, in Christ, through Word and Sacrament, over and over again. And because of that we will "also heartily forgive . . . those who sin against us."

Staggering Details

To refuse to forgive is hell. The unforgiving spirit is the spirit of hell. The one who receives the forgiveness of God yet refuses to comfort the penitent offender, that one is heading for hell, for torment, where an eternity will not extract the payment due, the forgiveness refused.

God's work has been to procure forgiveness for and dispense it to us sinners. He established this at the Cross and continues it through the Means of Grace. Our work, our mission, is to apply it to the sorry sinners around us.

The details of this parable are staggering. The one man was forgiven millions and millions of dollars that he owed to his master. (The King at that time, Herod, never earned a thousand talents in any year of his reign.) This one man owed ten thousand of them! And his master wiped the slate clean!

Then he turns around and grabs by the throat a man who owed him but a few thousand dollars and refused to release him from that debt even though the man also begged for more time.

Which raises the question: When would God ever stop forgiving us? Simply answer: When we stop taking His forgiveness to others. When we shut up our hearts and ears and mouths—so that the Word cannot get

in or out of our lives.

This can happen to people in the church who don't listen anymore. It's all so familiar, so irrelevant, so useless.

Look out! God loves to forgive. Do you know anyone who needs it? You know one person who does. Yourself. And you also know someone very close to you who is yearning for a word of absolution, from Christ, through you.

Go on, be liberal. Be extravagant!

—Pastor Warren Fanning



The Brice Prairie Group

—New Preaching Station

Back “on line”

For over a year, a half-dozen Christian households in the Onalaska/Brice Prairie area (suburban LaCrosse, Wis.) had been deprived of their CLC home-page. That is, when St. Mark's of Onalaska left the CLC with Pastor E. Albrecht, and this handful of souls could not follow, they found themselves without a pastor or congregational affiliation. What to do? Although their CLC home page had been lost, their CLC network was still functioning. So Pres. Fleischer helped them arrange for the services of John Hein (then of Red Wing) as coordinator for networking them back into having a home page.

So over the past year, these two-score souls have congregated faithfully, Sunday by Sunday, in the front room of the Elsie Pabst home, with a variety of preachers behind the lectern: J. Hein, J. Schaller, A. Schulz, R. Mackensen, S. Kurtzahn, Seminary graduate Mark Gurath, and some Seminary students. When Pastor Hein left for Sioux Falls, Mark Gurath was asked to become the coordinator of pastoral services, which he did cheerfully.

As the months of winter turned into the heat of summer, 1998, and it became clear that the group could not be added to the CLC home page enti-

tled "CLC Mission status," they brought their plight to the attention of Messiah congregation of Eau Claire, 90 minutes to the north.

Messiah responded favorably to their request to be adopted into Messiah's membership, which enrolled them on Messiah's home page, including the pledge of financial assistance. The Conference Visitor (Pastor P. Tiefel) assisted in the collaborative effort to call a pastor to serve them on a regular basis. This call was issued to Seminary graduate Mark Gurath, with whom they had become familiar; Mark, who at graduation had refrained from accepting a call-assignment, happily accepted this call as the Lord's will for him and for them.

So since Sept. 27 Mark's home page reads: "Pastor of the Brice Prairie/Onalaska CLC congregation" (a

more churchly name will be forthcoming). So it has turned into a homecoming for both the congregation (a renewal of CLC membership) and for Mark Gurath, now pastoring his own home church. By the way, Sept. 27 was also Messiah's Fall Mission Festival!

At the Onalaska Community Center some sixty-five persons from Brice Prairie, LaCrosse, Onalaska, Eau Claire, Millston, Red Wing, Fond du Lac, etc., gathered for this special family reunion. Christian friends from the CLC network rejoice together at this opening of a new home page in the greater LaCrosse area for access to the programs of God's grace now available in our fledgling sister congregation. May God bless them and their new pastor and all who receive their ministry as ambassadors for Christ!

—Paul R. Koch



Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Mark Gurath, who was called by Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wis. to serve as pastor at its preaching station in the greater LaCrosse area, was ordained and installed on September 27, 1998. Pastor Paul Tiefel preached the sermon. Assisting were Prof. Em. Paul Koch, Prof. Clifford Kuehne, Prof. Em. John Lau, Rev. Em. Robert Mackensen, Pastor Arthur Schulz, and Jonathan Schaller.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud

In accord with our usage and order, James Albrecht, who was called by St. John's Ev. Lutheran congregation of Okabena, Minn. to be its pastor, was installed on November 15, 1998.

—Prof. Em. Roland Gurgel

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers for the new CLC Sunday School Series are still needed for the following:

Intermediate Wording Editor (between Oct. 15, 1999 and Feb. 1, 2000).

Artwork Designers (between Oct. 15, 1999 and Feb. 1, 2000).

Format Editors—one each in WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, and Macintosh Claris Works (between Mar. 1 and Apr. 30, 2000).

Please express your willingness to help with this project by December 31 to Dr. Gayle Stelter, 306 Floral Avenue, Mankato, MN 56001.

A New Recording of Sacred Choral Music

A recording of the 1997 and 1998 Tour Choirs of Immanuel Lutheran College is now available. "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" features sixteen hymns and anthems, including: *Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light; What Child is This? Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain; Oh, Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken; That Easter Day; Create in Me; How Firm a Foundation; The Lord is My Light and My Salvation.*

The cost of the CD is \$10 (plus \$1 per item for shipping costs on mail orders). Please send orders to: Tour Choir CD, ILC Bookstore, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701.

• **THE MESSAGE** (Pastor D. Maas submitted this poem written by Victor Tiefel, December 1930)

Once shepherds 'neath the heavens clear
Slept while their flocks were grazing near,
And unto them came on this night
The harbingers of cheer and light.

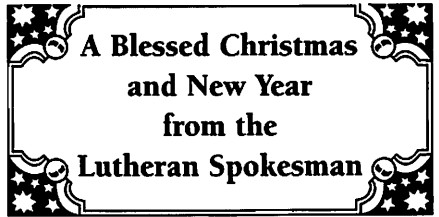
Then rose their sweet, seraphic choir
And the whole sky was bathed in fire.
Surprised, the shepherds stood in awe
At what they now both heard and saw:

"A Child is born to you this day,"
They sang, "to save the sons of clay,
A Savior which is Christ the Lord,
Alike by heaven and earth adored."

"O haste ye straight to Beth'lem town.
There lieth meek, without a crown,
In lowly manger Christ the King
Of whom the Father's angels sing."

To Beth'lem swift the shepherds trod.
Lo! there they found the new-born God.
They knelt and prayed and glorified
And spread the sweet tale far and wide.

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Gebhardt
811 S. Union Road
Spokane, WA 99206



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