



LUTHERAN
SPOKESMAN

“Oh My Father,
if this cup cannot pass away
from Me unless I drink it,
Your will be done.”

Matthew 26: 42 b

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

It was a long journey. They had traveled to Judea from every direction of the Mediterranean world. The descendants of Abraham were required to attend the great Passover Festival in Jerusalem at least once in their lives.

The journey of a lifetime was near its end. Rounding the Mount of Olives the traveler gets a sudden view of the city in all its splendor. He sees the great walls stretching over the hills, the white marble of the Temple complex shining brilliantly under the sun.

This glorious scene caused pilgrims to break forth into a song of praise to almighty God for bringing them there. They recited the words innumerable times at religious festivals. *"Save now {"hosanna"}, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Ps. 118:25).*

What a scene! Among the many travelers to Jerusalem another crowd

was coming from the city. There in the valley, a Man on a donkey, the crowds all shouting: *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest" (Mt. 21:9).*

If we had been there we could not have stopped ourselves from joining this national celebration of God's compassion and protection. It was the first day of holy week, the day Christians call Palm Sunday.

The Promised Messiah

We celebrate the triumphal ride of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Those who shouted their hosannas to Jesus commonly used the

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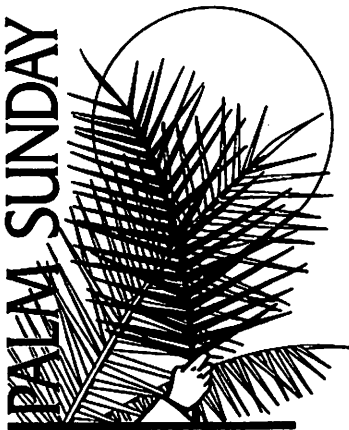
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PALM SUNDAY



branches of fruit and palm trees in festivals of joy and thanksgiving to God.

The original of *hosanna* meant “help” or “save.” The palm branch became a national symbol of ancient Israel, reminding them that God had blessed them again by His providence and blessing. The palm branch was a sign of life for those who laid them down for the path of Jesus.

In spite of themselves they proclaimed Jesus to be the King of kings, the Son of David, the greatest king Israel ever had. The Lord had revealed how David would have a king to sit on the throne of His eternal kingdom. *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever”* (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

The text reveals that the people con-

tinued to lay down the branches, giving the highest praise to Jesus as the Son of God. They welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, the One descendant of David whose glory is from eternity and whose kingdom would continue forever!

Religious Pilgrims

They proclaimed that Jesus came “in the name of the Lord”—that Jesus came according to the Word of God to bestow the gifts and treasures of His heavenly kingdom.

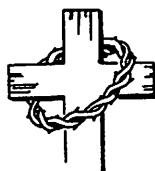
What they proclaimed on Palm Sunday was true according to God’s Word, but by the end of the week many joined the shouts for the crucifixion of Jesus!

We too are religious pilgrims again this year. Through faith in Jesus we continue together along the narrow road to the city of God.

Our Savior rules on the throne of God forever, and His kingdom will have no end. When, by faith, we enter our heavenly home, we will not return to a life of sin and darkness. We shall remain in the kingdom of God to serve the Lord in Christ’s righteousness and holiness forever.

Every day of our lives we are traveling toward Christ’s heavenly kingdom of glory. What a sight that will be! Then we shall sing our hosannas to the Son of David, the living Lord Jesus Christ, forever!

—Pastor Rick Grams



“And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk. 22:44).

THE SORROW AND THE JOY OF GETHSEMANE

A Christian cannot be unmoved when contemplating the scene presented in Gethsemane. Here we behold our beloved Lord Jesus in an agony so intense that His sweat became great drops of blood falling to the ground. The sight truly fills us with sorrow, but we are also cheered by it.

How can the Lord who bid the tempest be calm, cast out devils, and raised the dead be this same Jesus lying face down, praying with strong crying and tears? It is because He is fully aware of the contents in the cup His Father placed before Him. To drink of this cup meant He must endure the very wrath of God for the iniquity of us all.

There are many people who speak lightly about damnation, and even joke about going to hell. It was no joking matter for Jesus. He understood completely what it meant to be damned and cut off from His Father. The very thought of it filled Him with horror!

The sinless Son of Man was about to suffer as if He were the only one responsible for every sin. The reality of this is more than we can comprehend and more than we could bear. But Jesus knew. That is why He was bowed to the ground and why His sweat turned to blood.

Paradise Is Open!

Jesus was seeking the joy that would come from gathering together sinners like us to dwell forever with



Him in Paradise. That meant He had to confront and overcome the problem of our sin. As long as any sin remained connected to us, we were banned from Paradise.

Jesus came to redeem us from the curse we deserved by suffering the curse instead of us. Was there any other way He could deliver us? From what we see and hear at Gethsemane, it was clear that there was not.

So, when we behold Jesus in Gethsemane, we are filled with sorrow because we know that we are the cause of His agony. If it were not for our sin, there would have been no need for

Jesus to be there.

If we ever think that our sins are not too many or not too serious, we need but consider the impact they had on Jesus even as He prepared to pay the price for them. His sorrow fills us with sorrow. Within us a sharper awareness of our guilt and culpability is increased.

It is amazing, but true, that the very same scene also cheers us. How? Because Jesus rose up from His prayer and went forward to do the will of His Father.

Never would Jesus have considered doing otherwise. He was determined to do whatever was necessary to redeem sinners. For this to happen, it was

required for the Just One to die for the unjust ones.

Though drinking the bitter, burning contents of the cup was no pleasant prospect for Jesus, He drank it anyway, down to its last deadly drop. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2).

Having eliminated that which barred us from His Home, Jesus has flung wide the gates of Paradise and announced: "Welcome home!"

His sorrow turned into joy . . . and so has ours!

—Pastor Delwyn Maas



Studies In Galatians

Standing Fast In The Liberty By Which Christ Has Made Us Free (See 5:1)

Chapter 6: 11-18

A Crowning Word: In The Cross of Christ I Glory!

We hear it often enough when it comes to a discussion of religion affiliation: "Oh, so you're a Lutheran? Well, I'm Presbyterian (Baptist etc.), but it really doesn't matter, does it? After all, when we get to heaven, it doesn't matter where we went to church, as long as we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

On one level, that's pretty hard logic to refute. After all, true Lutherans would be the *last* to argue that we are saved by something *other* than simple

faith in Jesus Christ! In fact, Paul, at the end of his letter to the Galatians seems to echo that "it doesn't matter" statement with one of his own: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation" (6:15).

But we've also seen by now that Paul was hardly laid back in his approach to the differences of teaching that were cropping up in the Galatian churches. His urgency was evident in the start of the letter, where he brushed

through an unusually short introduction, and in the end, which again is unusual for its abruptness. The seriousness of the matter at hand—which teaching is right and which is wrong—is underscored by the words, early on, “If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9).

Still, many would shake their heads at this apostle’s concern. All the other party (the Judaizers) was seeking were some concessions to the larger Jewish community; a few adjustments in lifestyle; a minor operation. . . .

But in Paul’s book these teachings were like “witchcraft” (3:1); a “curse” (3:10); and a “bondage” (5:1). This fellow from Tarsus had quite a head of steam up over the thing. Was he just one of those folks who criticizes everything, but has little to stand for?

Not at all. In closing this letter Paul is crystal clear in letting it be known what he believes and where he stands: “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been

crucified to me, and I to the world” (6:14). This is his pride and glory—the true apostolic Gospel (1:6-9) of Jesus of Nazareth, who was so miserably and cruelly betrayed, slandered, and executed.

That would seem like a strange boast—and it is, if one is looking for worldly glory. The Gospel of Jesus was an offense to the Jews, who found it hard to swallow the idea that their long-awaited Messiah was supposed to be this Jesus who was condemned and crucified by the Romans. We humans aren’t inclined by nature to line ourselves up behind the loser in a contest.

The Pauline View Of The Gospel

Even harder to accept is the meaning of the cross for the person who claims Jesus as his or her savior. There is no hint of human pride or bravado associated with it. To believe the Gospel means to accept the idea that we need whatever it was that Jesus did. To believe is to first acknowledge the fact that by nature and deed we are under the curse of the law (3:10) and are spiritually helpless. To accept the righteousness provided through Christ is to abandon all attempts to justify ourselves before God. It is to take to heart Isaiah’s lament that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” and to find our needed salvation in “Christ {who} has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (3:13).

No, Paul’s boast was a strange boast in the eyes of his adversaries. They were busy looking for something visible and material to boast in. Most of all, they were desperately seeking to sway



the congregation in their direction, one result of which would be for the male members to be circumcised and live under the Old Testament laws. There was a practical reason for them to push this so hard. The Pauline view of the Gospel obviously liberated people from the requirements of the Jewish laws, and thus, from a “salvation is from the Jews” mind set. Paul’s gospel was too free, too gracious, too merciful, too open-handed. Furthermore, Paul’s doctrine left no middle ground between the Christian gospel and traditional Judaism as did the fence-sitting Judaizers. The Judaizers were trying to escape persecution from the Jewish community by trying to impose Jewish customs on new Christians.

Paul would not let his friends start down that road of works-righteousness. As for himself, having stated his case for the pure Gospel of Christ, he was

now free—free to live to Christ by faith, and let the fruits follow faith; free to abide in Christ’s word, unshaken by the opinions of others (“let no one trouble me...” 6:17). In Christ, a “new creation” comes about (6:15), a person led by the Spirit of Christ, working the new life of love; rejoicing in Christ’s full and free pardon; enjoying peace with God, no longer condemned under the Law. Let the others boast in their apparent successes; let them struggle to maintain ties with the corrupt doctrine of their old beliefs. The crowning word of the Christian Gospel is the Cross. For under the Cross alone can any man find true peace and mercy; under this Cross alone abides the true Israel of God. If our brand of Lutheranism stands for anything unique, let it be for this, that we are unashamed in preaching this pure and clear message of the Cross.

—Pastor Peter Reim



MOTIVATING CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

We all have someone in our lives whom we would like to change. There are times when my wife would like to change me, and for good reason. But how to do that? In particular, how to get the Christian to do what God wants? How to get the church member to be more fully dedicated to Christ? How to get the Christian child to obey his parents? What do we use to motivate Christian behavior?

Laying down the law is the usual method used to produce proper behavior. For example, to increase offerings, a congregation may try shaming its members into giving more. In such a

case the law reads something like this: “A good Christian would give ‘x’ amount of his income to the church.” In a troubled marriage the law might read: “I’m taking the children and leaving unless you clean up your act.” Parents also have clever ways of forcing their will upon their children. People use the Law to pound people into compliance.

However, the Law often incites our sinful nature to do just the opposite of what it commands. “. . . When the commandment came, sin sprang to life . . .” (Rom. 7:9).

An illustration of this is the father

who puts a note on his tool box. In big, angry letters it reads: "Don't even think about messing with my tools!" The result? Quite likely the children will dig out the tools the first time Dad turns his back.

The Law awakens in us the very disobedience it forbids. And even if the Law's threats stop us from committing the crime, it can never motivate anyone to want to do good. God is looking for willing compliance.

Scripture teaches that the Law has three purposes: 1) as a CURB for all people, when it stops them from doing wicked, sinful deeds; 2) as a MIRROR when it shows people their sin and need for a Savior; 3) as a GUIDE when it informs the Christian about the kind of life God expects them to live (definitions from the Sydow Catechism). However, nowhere in Scripture does God use the Law to motivate God-pleasing behavior.

The Gospel The Power

So how do we motivate God-pleasing behavior which begins in the heart? We can't. That power lies with God alone. God's power to do that is the Gospel. The Gospel declares what Jesus did in life, death, and resurrection to save a world of sinners. Hear what Scripture says about the transforming energy of the Gospel: "Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Tit. 2:14 NIV).

Part of our problem in using the Gospel to produce change is that we want instantaneous results. And often, from our point of view, the Gospel doesn't seem to work very fast. So we

are tempted to give up and revert back to the Law.

A pastor, for example, preaches the Savior's love week after week, but church and Bible Class attendance don't improve. He decides, therefore, that he must "give it to his people" with the Law. Instead of using the Law to confront spiritual apathy, he uses it as a motivator. "Do this or else!" Lo and behold, things seem to improve. The law frightens the people into outward conformity. But their change of behavior has nothing to do with wanting to please the Savior.

Is using the Law to get quick results ever worth it? Never. Law motivation can only do great damage to the spiritual welfare of the Christian. Either it will put such fear in the heart that the Christian will doubt his very salvation, or it will make him a proud Pharisee who thinks he is righteous because he has outwardly conformed his life to certain standards—so righteous that he sees no need for a Savior from sin.

H. W. Gockel in his book *What Jesus Means to Me* has an illustration of the Gospel's power to compel godly behavior. A mother was upset when she saw several suggestive pictures hanging on her son's dorm room wall. She didn't say anything about it at the time, but sent him a package containing a beautifully framed picture of Christ. Proudly the boy hung it on the wall above his desk. Before he went to bed that night he removed the pin-up picture which hung closest to the face of Christ. The next day another picture went into the wastebasket. One by one they all were removed until only the portrait of Jesus remained. The mother never once badgered him. Jesus' love, as called to mind by the picture, worked in that

young man's heart, making it impossible for him to keep the other pictures on his walls.

"For Christ's love compels us . . . and he died for all, that those who live

should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

—Pastor Michael Wilke



Third In A Series (from an essay by Pastor Thomas Schuetze)—

Psalm 122

"LORD, thank You for the privilege of worshipping You."

A Psalm of Thanks

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces. For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.

This psalm pictures the joy of the believing Israelite who has been invited by his friends to "go into the house of the LORD" to participate in the public worship service.

He considers it a great blessing to be able to do this. He knows that it is in the house of the LORD that God "comes to be with His people." The tabernacle was a symbol of His gracious dwelling in their midst. Here God's people could join together in

worshipping Him who promised—in the fullness of time—to send them a Savior from sin. A pleasant thought indeed for every true Israelite!

Leupold (*who is well-known to pastors for his Old Testament commentaries—ed.*) comments: "The ideal Israelite of whom David here writes is stating what feelings always surged through his heart when his townspeople indicated that they were ready to make one of the usual pilgrimages to the capital city on the occasion of one of the great festivals. He was glad over those who informed him of their intention. He liked that kind of people who loved the house of the Lord sincerely enough to plan to go there three times a year as a true Israelite was in conscience bound to do."

We who are members of the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) through faith in Christ share the sentiments of the psalmist. We consider it a privilege and blessing to gather as a congregation each week at church to worship Jehovah, the God of our salvation, and sing His praises with united voice. That is a blessing not to be taken for granted! ●

Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns

1 Christ, the Life of all the liv - ing, Christ, the Death of
2 Thou, ah! Thou, hast tak - en on Thee Bonds and stripes, a
3 Thou hast borne the smit - ing on - ly That my wounds might

Christ, the Life of All the Living

A Lenten Hymn

#151 in The Lutheran Hymnal

Believers are at times troubled by past sins, for Satan tries to rob us of our peace with God by reminding us of our sins.

And, poor, miserable sinners that we are by nature, Satan has plenty to use against us. Those who come to faith in Christ later in life must be especially vulnerable to these assaults of the devil, who will surely remind them of how much of their life was misspent in service to the world and the flesh.

Such a man was Ernst Homburg (1605-1681). A lawyer by profession, he was also a highly regarded poet. For much of his life his God-given talent was spent entirely on secular poetry, including love songs and drinking songs.

But later in life, the trials of illness and other afflictions led Him to seek the Lord. It was then that he began to use his gift for poetry to write hymns, devoting part of his Sundays to this work.

It is clear that Homburg was troubled by his frivolous and worldly youth. He once wrote that some might say of

him, "He follows the common custom of the world and sacrifices unto the world the most precious flower of his youth, but renders only the dry chaff of old age unto God."

Homburg found the comfort of forgiveness in the cross of the Savior. His hymn *Christ, the Life of All the Living* speaks of the atonement in each stanza. In a variety of ways the hymn tells of how Christ suffered in place of us sinners to free us from God's just wrath and punishment for our sins.

*Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing . . .*

Each stanza also expresses the thanks of the redeemed and forgiven sinner with the refrain: *Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus unto Thee.*

We cannot make up for our past sins by future service to God. All of us, whether we come early or late to the kingdom of God, are saved by grace

alone, through faith in Christ. But as we look back with regret on the time that we have wasted, let us not think that it is too late for us to serve God.

Think how God has used the above

hymn to comfort and strengthen countless believers. So will He accept our thankful service and use it to the blessing of others.

—Pastor John Klatt



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

The Book Of Ruth

Obedient, Faithful, Loving Servants Of God

In the Old Testament book of Ruth we find a wonderful account of the power of God’s Word to direct the lives of His people. Set in the backdrop of the period of the judges, where human selfishness and lovelessness prevailed, when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), the book of Ruth provides a breath of fresh air.

The Holy Spirit’s work in the God-fearing characters of this story teaches us valuable lessons about trust, commitment, choices, and love. In this article we will examine the actions of three of the characters in Ruth: Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth. May we learn from their examples.

Naomi

Naomi was the wife of Elimelech, a prosperous landowner from Bethlehem, and the mother of two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Because of a famine in her homeland, she traveled with her family to Moab.

While in Moab, her husband died and her two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Then both her sons died. Within ten years she had lost the three most important people in her life.

When the famine in Canaan was over, she planned to return alone to her homeland. Concerned about the future welfare of her daughters-in-law, she urged them to remain in Moab and remarry. Orpah took her advice, but Ruth “clung to her” and returned to Bethlehem with her.

Upon her return she wished to be called “Mara,” which means “bitterness,” because the Almighty had dealt bitterly with her. These feelings of bitterness remind us of Job who too was allowed to experience great loss and sorrow. But like Job, Naomi remained faithful to her God in spite of trouble.

Naomi demonstrated her genuine concern for Ruth in trying to secure for her a husband and provider. She was

obedient to God's Old Testament laws regarding property and marriage. She later showed herself to be a loving grandmother to Obed, Ruth's son.

From Naomi we learn faithfulness to God, even in times of earthly suffering. We learn obedience to God and His commands. We learn love and concern for those around us.

We also learn the power of a godly example. Why did Ruth cling to Naomi? The Holy Spirit used Naomi to bring the message of salvation to Ruth. She served as the connection between Ruth and the true God.

Boaz

Boaz was a wealthy landowner from Bethlehem and a blood relative of Elimelech, Naomi's late husband. Boaz owned the field in which the Lord directed Ruth to glean.

Boaz inquired about Ruth, and because of her kindness to her mother-in-law, Boaz granted extra privileges to her beyond what God's law required. He welcomed her to glean with his female servants until the barley and wheat harvests were finished and instructed his men to leave behind plenty of grain for her.

When Ruth later expressed her desire to be his wife, he did not take advantage of her, but rather treated her with honesty and respect. Instead of manipulating the circumstances to his advantage, he publicly secured the legal right to marry Ruth and to purchase her family's property from Naomi.

Boaz then married Ruth and they had a child named Obed, "the one who serves."

From Boaz we learn of love and obedience. Because of his wealth and

status in the community, Boaz could have either ignored Ruth as an underserving foreigner or taken advantage of her. Instead, he loved her.

In everything he did, we see in Boaz a respect for God's law and a desire to do that which is pleasing in the sight of God. He provides us with an example of what a boss, a citizen, a father, and a husband should be.

Ruth

Ruth was raised in the land of Moab and taught to worship the god Chemosh. She married Elimelech's son. After his death she faced a difficult choice.

The choice for most would be obvious. It was the choice her sister Orpah made. Why not return to the security of her Moabite family? Why not remarry one from her own land and raise a family? Why not say good-bye to Naomi, as even Naomi expected her to do? Why travel to a far-off land with a mother-in-law who painted a picture of a future full of uncertainty?

Ruth provides us with an answer in her memorable words to Naomi: "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth had her priorities straight. She was willing to leave her family and her country. She was willing to forfeit security and familiarity and perhaps the chance of marriage. She clung to Naomi because of the Savior she had come to know through her new family. Her family, her country, and her home

were wherever the message of the Savior could be found.

The choice for her was obvious. What kind of life could she have in a pagan country hostile to the true God?

Once in Bethlehem, Ruth became the provider for the family. She faithfully worked long hours to secure food. She was obedient to her mother-in-law in all things. She, no doubt, sweetened the bitterness felt by Naomi. The Lord saw fit to bless her faithfulness by giving her a loving husband. He chose her to be the great-grandmother of David, an ancestor of the Savior, her Savior.

We live in a world today that is in many ways like the world of the judges of the Old Testament. In times of economic prosperity we often forget from

whence our blessings come.

We live in a world that accepts and even promotes unfaithfulness. Many try to bend the laws of God and those of our country to make life a bit more convenient. Selfless love is hard to find. Most would choose the security of the unbelieving world rather than cling to the Savior.

Lord, grant that we may be more like Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth: obedient, faithful, loving servants of Yours.

Wilt Thou find this one thing needful,
Turn from all created things
Unto Jesus and be heedful
Of the blessed joy He brings.

For where God and Man both in one are united,
With God's perfect fullness the heart is delighted;
There, there is the worthiest lot and the best,
My One and my All and my Joy and my Rest.
(TLH 366:2)

—Prof. Joseph Lau



The CLC in Weslaco, Texas



Members of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Weslaco, Texas identified with the Church of the Lutheran Confession on Thanksgiving Day in 1998. 23 are presently members of this new congregation served by Rev. Daniel Fleischer from Corpus Christi. During the winter months he is assisted by L. D. Redlin. Weslaco is in "Winter Texan" country. CLC members wintering in the Rio Grande Valley as well as others have swelled the attendance during the winter.

Saint Patrick—Could He Be One Of Us?

Everyone ought to know some facts about Patrick—not just the Irish. For example, you would be surprised to learn that the Celtic Church in which Patrick served was more Lutheran than Roman Catholic. And this too, that “saint” simply meant “missionary”—the Celts did not canonize their members or clergy.

There’s more. Earlier in this century much was brought to light about these early Christians—thanks to historians and scholars like Archibald B. Scott, W. Douglas Simpson, and F. R. Webber. They have shown these Christians to have been an intensely biblical, mission-minded, out-reaching church which flourished in the British Isles and beyond. For almost 500 years (from AD 420 to 890) they reached out to parts of present-day France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy.

Celtic Christianity began and continued among those who had little sympathy for developments in the Latin (or “Italian” church). Martin of Tours, opposer of Arianism and defender of the Nicene Creed, set up his “Logotigiac” (*Candida Dasa*, or bright white house) as a training center (not a monastery). From that place issued forth many missionaries. St. Patrick was active by AD 430. He was never at any time a communicant member of the Latin church.

Saint Patrick’s Day (March 17) will not fall on a Sunday again until the years 2002, 2008, and 2013. This will give pastors time to think about including him in a sermon. And perhaps to learn to sing “Saint Patrick’s Breastplate” (hymn): “I Bind Unto



SHAMROCK

Myself Today The Strong Name Of The Trinity!” Let paraments and vestments be green! Put on a shamrock! This man deserves mention with honor in Lutheran parishes.

Confessional Lutheran Connections!

Why? Well, for one thing, because his (Celtic) liturgy was more like ours than Rome’s—with vernacular Invocation, Glorias, Creeds (including Athanasian), Offertory, Sanctus, Lord’s Prayer, Words of Institution, Agnus Dei, and Close Communion! Yes, even among the several Celtic groups there were doctrinal disagreements; participation in the Holy Supper was closely and jealously guarded.

Why else? Because they were a maverick group, intensely independent, bound to Justification by Faith and the Great Commission, to promotion of full biblical doctrine, with the Cross of Christ at the center. They had their own Easter date. There was no tonsure, no ruling territorial bishop, no political goal, no papal jurisdiction, no veneration of Mary, no intercession of the so-called saints, no canonization, no purgatory, no works supplemental to

Absolution (so as to make it more “valid”), no transubstantiation, no withholding of the cup, no traditions held alongside of Scripture.

Why else? Their missionary vigor was unparalleled. They had a chain of schools called “muintirs” (origin of -minster?) which brought forth missionaries, not pastors. These men were largely “awakeners,” going out in pairs on long preaching trips.

Sure, it is a crying shame how things have degenerated, how history gets twisted, even among Christians. Some tie “the luck of the Irish” to a four-leaf clover. Patrick knew nothing

of this. He used the three-leaf plant as a simple though feeble reminder of the Trinity. And the snakes? For Patrick it meant chasing the devil and his henchmen out of whatever country, sending them back to hell where they belong.

Patrick and the Celts would have liked confessional Lutheranism. Today they would wake us up—to history, to mission endeavor, to doctrinal clarity, to the proper application of Law and Gospel, to getting men ready to meet their God and Savior.

Could he be one of us? He most certainly was not one of THEM, if you know what I mean.

—Pastor Warren Fanning



Third in A Series—

Christian Marriage: A Sacred Spiritual Commitment

It is significant that Holy Scripture speaks of Christian marriage as much in terms of commitment as it does in terms of love. And even the term “love” (which the world sees primarily as romantic love), when used in Scripture (*agape*) includes something greater.

The “love” in Christ’s relationship with His Church and the husband’s relationship with his wife is much more than a feeling. It is first and foremost a commitment.

Love Commitment

Our definition of *commitment* might be “a sincere desire and promise to someone or something.” Next to our Spirit-worked faith covenant/commitment established at our Baptism and

reaffirmed on our Confirmation Day, the second most significant “commitment” we will ever make is that of Christian marriage.

The word describing the institution of marriage is especially telling (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5): “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall *cleave* to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh.” The word *cleave* is sometimes translated *joined* (NKJV) or *united* (NIV) and is sometimes expressed as being *bonded*, *fused*, *adhered*, even *superglued*.

You get the picture. The commitment is so great and the bonding before the Lord so strong that husband and wife literally become “one flesh”—joined together.

Try prying apart a laminated board,

a fused bone, a grafted branch. It soon becomes obvious that separation was never part of the plan. Even more so with Christian marriage.

The Christian husband and wife recognize this, rejoice in it, and reflect it in their attitudes and actions toward one another. They are one. The other's feelings, desires, needs become their own. "Nourishing" (caring for) and "cherishing" (treasuring) each other become joyous objectives for their marriage.

And so their relationship becomes a love-commitment in Christ. Far from being a burdensome obligation, the honoring and fulfilling of one's marriage vows become a fruit of the Gospel in their lives.

In loving one another for life, husband and wife serve and glorify God. In seeing their marriage through all of life's challenges, obstacles, and trials, they reflect the love commitment of their Savior to His Church: unconditional, unselfish, unwavering, and unending.

Trust

One of the key elements in any good relationship is trust. With commitment comes trust.

In the spiritual realm, trust is the very essence of our faith. Implicitly we trust our faithful God. He has proven Himself totally deserving of our trust. His grace and mercy, His Word, His Gospel, His loving care have always been there for us.

What a wonderful blessing for us to have such trust in our relationship with our God. Securely our hearts rest in Him—fearing, loving, and trusting in Him above all things!

The same is true in marriage, our

closest human relationship. A foundation of trust between husband and wife is essential to a blessed marriage.

It is a God-pleasing, beautiful relationship when husband and wife can implicitly trust each other in all things. Likewise, it is a frightening, even devastating, experience when that trust is threatened or shaken, much less destroyed.

Trust often seems to be the missing ingredient in today's alternatives to marriage.

- Living together by its very nature presupposes a lack of commitment or trust in one another and in the permanence of their bond.
- The increasingly popular "pre-nuptial agreement" (designed to protect oneself financially) is almost like admitting marital defeat in advance.
- Adulterous, extramarital relationships shatter the sacred bond of trust, in many cases, beyond repair.
- Unscriptural divorces, now socially acceptable (even "no fault"), do untold damage to the institution of marriage.

All of this is really no surprise in a world characterized by a selfish lack of commitment to one's own word and to others.

The Christian marriage love-commitment is a wonderful foundation for a blessed relationship of trust between husband and wife.

A promise made before the Lord at His altar is always "a sacred spiritual commitment"—whether it be on our Confirmation day or our Wedding day.

—Pastor David Schierenbeck



SMORGASBORD

● **THE BLESSEDNESS OF UNITY IN CHRIST** (*a bulletin article from Resurrection Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas; Daniel Fleischer is pastor*).

The movement toward union is not a new endeavor in the church, but seems to be accelerating. The question is not whether union is permissible. It is rather what kind of union is acceptable unto the Lord, and therefore is a blessing to the Church.

First of all, we must recognize that union and unity are not one and the same. Even the union of two people in marriage who are not in "unity" demonstrates the fallacy of church union without unity. It is a sham.

God-pleasing union, and therefore a blessed union, is that which is based upon a unity in the Word and faith. Such a union, born of the Spirit of God, is a reflection of the oneness between the three persons in the Trinity.

It is the Lord's will that union be based on unity in Word and faith (1 Corinthians 1:10). They are blessed who, being of the same mind and judgment, confess the same Lord, proclaim the same Gospel of salvation by grace through faith, trust in the same Savior, live in the same Word, hold the same hope, and rejoice in the same salvation.

A union based on an agreement to disagree contradicts the divine pattern as well as the Word. To enter into union without unity is dishonest and in time bears fruits of discord within the body.

To maintain unity within the framework of union is a continuing challenge to the children of God who appreciate the fact that it is God's will, and that

however difficult it be, it is the way of blessing. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1).

There is a reason why the word "union" is not found in Scripture, but "unity" is well spoken of. Unity within the church, created by the Word and manifest by mutual bowing to the Word, is to be cherished because it is but a foretaste of the perfect unity we shall enjoy in heaven by the grace of God, Who "did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:9-10).

● **A RESPONSE** (*Written last October by Pastor Paul Krause for his congregations in Clarkston, Washington and Orofino, Idaho.*)

A few weeks ago a 21-year-old University of Wyoming student named Matthew Shepard was brutally pistol-whipped and left hanging on a fence like a scarecrow. He later died from the injuries he received. His death made the press nationwide, not just because of the brutal beating, but more so because it is alleged that the victim was beaten because he was a homosexual.

All across the nation people responded with services and prayer vigils. Several groups in the Valley sponsored one such prayer vigil on Tuesday night (Oct. 20th) in Brackenbury Square in downtown Lewiston.

A representative from the YWCA in Clarkston called your pastor to

encourage his (and the congregation's) participation in this vigil. Your pastor firmly refused. No doubt his refusal to take part was not understood by those involved. This is to explain to you why he declined to take part.

The first problem is that participating in such a prayer vigil would involve uniting together in prayer and worship to God with members of various faiths. This type of activity is called "religious unionism" and it is not a God-pleasing form of fellowship. God wants those who worship Him and pray to Him to be united in what they believe and confess. Paul addresses this when he writes: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

So whether the prayer vigil was for a good reason or not, we could not participate because of the unionistic fellowship involved.

As for the reasons given for holding the vigil, the following observations can be made. The prayer vigil was held for basically two reasons. One is supported by Scripture, the other not.

First of all, it was held to protest the violent way in which Shepard was beaten. As Christians we agree: violence by one human against another is never in any way condoned. In the fifth commandment the Lord says: "You shall not murder." Along with Martin Luther we understand this to mean: "We should fear and love God that we do not hurt nor harm our neighbor's body; but we should help and be a friend to him in every bodily need." Doing anything

harmful toward our neighbor is just plain wrong. God goes so far as to say: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 Jn 3:15).

Even though we cannot participate in the prayer vigil in good conscience, we can applaud this type of peaceful and law-abiding statement against violence.

However, there was a second reason given for the vigil. Remember that Shepard was a homosexual. This vigil was also used as a platform to defend and even promote the homosexual lifestyle as being acceptable.

With this we cannot agree. The Scriptures in no uncertain terms denounce the sin of homosexuality. In the sixth commandment God says: "You shall not commit adultery." Sex is reserved by God Himself for marriage between one man and one woman. Any other sexual activity is wrong—and that includes homosexuality. To condone the gay lifestyle is to condone sinful activity, no matter how well accepted it may be in society today.

What those assailants did to Shepard was despicable and wrong. Violence is wrong no matter who the perpetrators or who the victim, no matter what the reason.

But at the same time, we dare not act or speak approvingly of the gay lifestyle, for that too lies under God's condemnation.

How can we as Christians respond to Shepard's murder? Within our fellowship we CAN and SHOULD pray together and privately that the Lord would bring an end to such violence in our nation, that He would bring such murderous offenders to see the wrong of their ways and to repent.

As for our attitude toward homo-

sexuals, may God move us to have compassion on them (as Jesus had on the sinners of His day) and when we have the opportunity bring them, yes, the condemning word of the Law, but also, and more importantly, the forgiving and life-changing word of the Gospel.

In that way, through the Word, the Lord can work on their hearts, moving them to repent and to amend their life. Society would have us believe that it is wrong to try to "convert" a homosexual from that lifestyle. But according to God, such a change is both God-pleas-

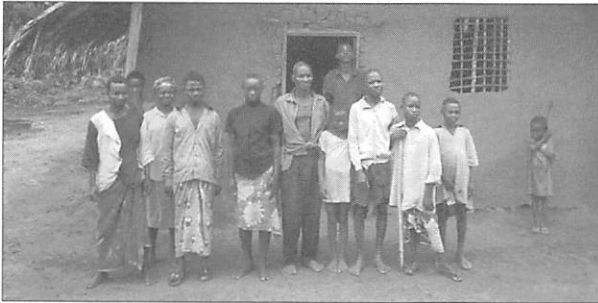
ing and *possible!*

Paul wrote concerning this to the congregation at Corinth: "Neither homosexuals, nor sodomites . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you!* But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

May God's Spirit move us to be a positive force in our sinful world as we continue to proclaim the message of the forgiveness of sin through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ!



These pictures were taken by our 1997 Visitation Team in Nigeria. Shown (opposite) is Patrick Udo, wife, and new baby boy.



Some of the brethren at a sister church of the NCLC in Ukokai.

In India, Pastor Bas and BELC workers in Uthukottai area.



Announcements

Colloquy

Rev. Steven Karp, formerly of the Lutheran Church-Canada, has applied for colloquy with the intent to enter the ministry of the CLC. Any correspondence related to this application should be in the hands of the President by April 3.

—Daniel Fleischer, President

Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council of the CLC will meet at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis., on April 14 and 15, 1999. The first session will begin in Ingram Hall after chapel on the 14th.

—Daniel Fleischer, President

Call Committee on Graduates

The Call Committee on Graduates will meet on Wednesday, April 14, 1999 at 7:00 p.m. in Ingram Hall on the ILC campus. Calls for a candidate for either the preaching or the teaching ministry should be in the hands of the president by April 3 with all pertinent information as well as the call itself, minus a name, which will be filled in by the Committee.

—Daniel Fleischer, President

SPOKESMAN-ON-TAPE

An audio tape of each month's *Lutheran Spokesman* is available from Pastor Walter V. Schaller, 201 Woodcrest Drive NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (phone: 616-791-7552). The cost remains at only \$10.00 for a full year of tapes. (We know of people who use these audio versions of the *Spokesman* in place of listening to a radio on the way to work—ed.)

The Spokesman-On-Tape is free to the visually impaired.

M/M Albert Gebhardt
811 S. Union Road
Spokane, WA 99206

Appointment

Rev. Mark Bernthal has made the decision to resign from the Board of Regents of Immanuel Lutheran College. He continues as a member of the Board of Doctrine to which he was appointed at the last convention. Rev. Theodore Barthels has been appointed to the Board of Regents to complete the unexpired term of Rev. Bernthal.

—Daniel Fleischer, President



Vacation Bible School at Salem Lutheran Church, Eagle Lake, Minn. Aug. 24-28, 1998. At the time Pastor Redlin was serving as vacancy pastor.