

S LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?"

The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do *it*. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

John 14 : 10 - 18

The Trinity

All people. The knowledge of the only true God is not. Christians describe God as Triune (three-in-one) in order to confess the only living God in contrast to endless guesswork by fallen man's reason.

Since the Fall into sin natural man can know God only by what can be observed in creation. Human reason will acknowledge a "god" who rewards the good, punishes the evil, protects when called on, and generally acts just like . . . man!

Everyone wants "god" to be on his side. Search the history of man for a description of a common "god" and we can expect to find as many differences among the "gods" as there are among people.

This is what happens when the creature attempts to describe the Creator God. Surrounded by pagan beliefs in a generic "god," we face the



same need of divine revelation as when Paul wrote about human corruption: "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man— . . . who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . ." (Rom. 1:22,23,25).

We humbly turn to the holy Word of God to know the only true God. The Lord used language we might understand by faith. The terms *triune* and *trinity* do not appear in the Bible. But

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the Holy Scriptures reveal this truth about God.

God's Word clearly teaches there is only one true and living God. "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deut. 6:4) "There is no other God but one" (1 Cor. 8:4).

God's Word also reveals God is three persons in one Being, each co-equal and co-eternal. The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His followers to baptize and to teach in the name of the Triune God when he said: "... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20).

The Trinity is beyond human logic. Although much may be said about God as Triune, in the end this mystery can be held and confessed by faith alone.

Christians Confess The Triune God

Jesus taught how serious this confession is when He said, "That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (Jn. 5:23).

It is not enough for anyone to say he believes in a "god." There must also be a confession of the only true—Triune—God. The 1932 *Brief Statement* simply declares that all who "deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity are outside the pale of the Christian Church."

All Christians confess the

Apostolic (p. 12, *The Lutheran Hymnal*), the Nicene (p. 22, *TLH*), and the Athanasian (p. 53, *TLH*) Creeds. The Athanasian Creed says in part: "*Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic (that is, universal, Christian) faith. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. . . .*"

Some may accuse those who cling to such a confession as relying on an outdated document. Others might suggest that such a confession is archaic and no longer to be held by modern man. Reducing God to the size of man's understanding has resulted in views that God does not punish, or that all people will eventually get to some sort of a "heaven" regardless of what is believed.

May the only true God—God the Father who created us, God the Son who redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit who sanctified us—protect us from any denial of the Triune God. Let us heed the warnings of God's Word in an age which rejects faith and obedience to God.

To the glory of God may we receive the blessing of our Lord when He prayed: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn. 17:3).

—Pastor Rick Grams



So When Will The Lord Come?

As we come to the end of a century and move toward the year 2000, we are hearing more and more of end-time prophecies. Add in the Y2K concerns and there is a ready-made opportunity for fanciful interpretation as well as for fear and hysteria.

There are, of course, those who do not believe that there will be an end. They deny reality as well as Scripture. Apart from the fact that there will indeed be an end of the world, such conveniently forget that they will die. When they die, that is the end! At death all mortals will have to face the eternal Judge of all.

Christians do not deny the end of personal life or of the world. But when will it be? Just as the individual lifespan of each person is determined by the Creator-God, so the lifespan of the earth is known but to Him.

We know the end will come. We do not know when. God told Noah that He would destroy the earth with a flood. No one listened to Noah. In God's time He sent the flood that destroyed the earth. Scripture says: "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt. 24:36-37).

We know from Scripture that the disciples of our Lord were already told that they lived in the last times. But they did not know the precise time of the end. They wrote by inspiration of the Spirit, encouraging the exhorting of one another, "and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

Scripture clearly tells us that the whole New Testament era is the "last

times." Consequently the apostle wrote: "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7).

When will the end be? Again we read: "God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world . . ." (Acts 17:31). "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . ." (2 Pet. 3:10). Furthermore, we read: "As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt. 24:27).

There will be no specific sign of the end that says: "It is the hour," or "This is it." Man cannot predict it any more than he can predict where or when a thief will strike or where lightning will strike.

Warning Flags

Surely we have certain flags that should warn us of the near approach of the end. They are warnings calling us to be watchful. Scripture says that before the end there will be a falling away first (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2). It further says: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, hav-

ing a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Shall we fear? No, but Scripture does tell us to turn away from that which is evil and hold fast in faith to Christ Jesus. Christians will want to live each day as though it were their last.

Christians live in the certain hope of everlasting life by reason of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. As such they await the return of the Lord. As such they will pray for the strength to live as salt on the earth. They will want to glorify their Lord through Christian living. They will want to live in honesty and truth toward all, showing the love of Christ to all in words and actions.

Christians recognize that the world yet stands only because God is gracious and does not desire the death of

the sinner, but that the sinner turn away from sin and find his life in Christ.

It is not as important to know WHEN the end will come as to believe that it WILL come. So the child of God prays on the one hand for forgiveness day by day, and on the other hand for a watchful spirit so that when the end does come he may be with the Lord where He is—in heaven before the throne of God's glory, in peace and joy forever.

After the toil of this life, and all the sorrow and evil, they who have found their life in Christ will know the reality of these words: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9).

"He who testifies to these things says, Surely, I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20f)

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



Father's Day Thoughts —

A GOOD START

Ever notice if you don't get the first button right, all the other ones end up wrong as well? Ever notice that if a child doesn't have a good start in life, the rest of his life often goes bad? Without a good beginning to life, a child will often grow into a miserable adult as well as into someone who makes life miserable for others.

God wants children to have a good start to life. From God's perspective a good start means bringing children to Jesus. "Let the children come to Me," the Savior says, "and do not forbid them."¹



Bringing children to Jesus for a good start involves, first of all, baptism. Through baptism the child's sins are washed away, and he is adopted into God's family through faith in Christ. After baptism comes more

watering and more nurturing. Like a tender shoot, the soul of the child needs lots of tender loving care. It needs the tender love of Jesus and His Word.

But whose job is it to get children off to this kind of good start? The church's? Yes, in part. "Feed my lambs"² was Christ's word to Peter, and to the church of all time. Yet the church is there to aid, not replace, Christian parents. There is no substitute for godly parents who work together to "train up a child in the way he should go."³

With that said, ever notice it's often Mom who must take chief responsibility for the spiritual training of the children? Society is plagued by deadbeat dads. The church faces the problem of deadbeat spiritual dads. To Christian fathers the Lord says: "... do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."⁴

Dads, we need to take charge of our family's spiritual welfare. We need to play a big part in getting our children off to a good start. From day one our children's eternal welfare needs to be our chief concern. We need to be the one who makes sure the TV gets turned off and the family is gathered to hear God's Word. We need to make sure Johnny knows his Bible passages, and Sally knows her hymn verses. We need to show our son the importance of Sunday morning worship over the Sunday morning football game. We need to show our daughter what the Lord is looking for in a Christian father and husband so that she will look for the same qualities when it's time for her to marry. In short, dads, we need the same enthusiasm for Jesus and His

"... All that self-reliant, tough guy stuff has to go. Only the Lord can give us the wherewithal to be faithful Christian fathers. Only He can turn our heart in Christ-like devotion to our children. Only with His grace and blessing can we get our children off to a good start."

Word that Mom has.

But more than anything, we need Jesus. We need our Savior's forgiveness, His strength, His wisdom. And we have it. Christ paid for all our sins as fathers. And Christ, with His Word, gives us all we need to carry out our high calling as Christian fathers.

In speaking of the public ministry, St. Paul writes: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."⁵ In shepherding our families, we fathers must rely on the sufficiency of our Lord and Savior.

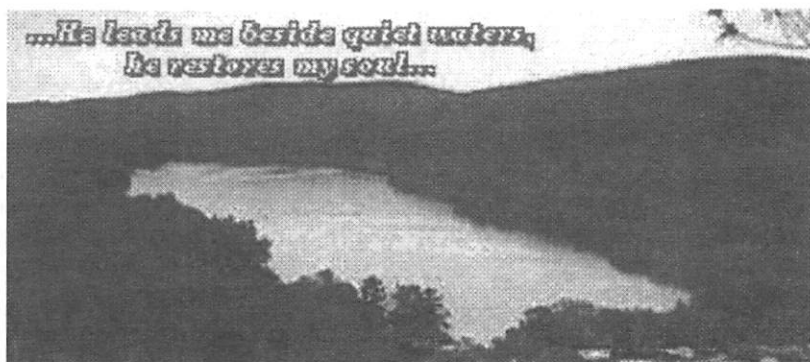
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—Pastor Michael Wilke

Footnoted passages:

- 1 - Luke 18:6
- 2 - John 21:5
- 3 - Proverbs 22:6
- 4 - Ephesians 6:4
- 5 - 2 Corinthians 3:5





A devotion delivered at Holy Cross Ev. Lutheran School in Phoenix by Pastor Delwyn Maas

“In everything give thanks, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

PEBBLES IN OUR SHOES

Imagine a beautiful, sunny day. Your plan is to hike a mountain trail. As you begin, you can’t help but notice the beauty of the trees, the blue sky, the birds and animals scurrying about.

After walking for a while, you notice that there is a pebble in your shoe. Well, you don’t want to bother sitting down and taking your shoe off, so you try to ignore it and enjoy your hike anyway. It may not take long for the pebble in your shoe to seem bigger than the entire mountain you’re climbing!

Sometimes we focus our attention so much on the uncomfortable things in life, that we miss many of the wonderful things. Truly, the pebbles in our shoes can make us very angry. We can also think of things like stubbing our toe on the chair or getting a flat tire. Some people call these things bad luck.

Do you remember what our text said? It said: “In everything give thanks.” When you first heard it, did

you wonder about it? In EVERYTHING give thanks? While changing a flat tire or washing our skinned knee, it’s not likely that we are going to feel particularly thankful. Yet the Lord does tell us that we can and should be thankful in everything.

How can we possibly be thankful for the pebbles in our shoes?

Look at the entire passage: “In everything give thanks, for this is God’s will in Christ Jesus.” God wants to make it possible for us to be cheerful and thankful no matter what. To that end He shares with us some information about Himself, especially about His Son, that gives us an entirely different way of looking at everything.

God wants to deliver us from the very worst things, such as sin, guilt, punishment, and eternal death. He does not want us to go to hell. He does want us to live forever with Him in Paradise.

Since that is what He wants, He is going to do everything necessary to

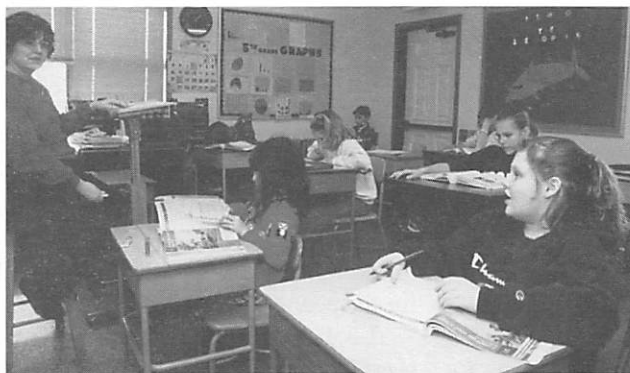
make it possible. "Everything" includes sending His beloved Son Jesus Christ to suffer and die on the cross for us. He punished Jesus for our sins, so that we need not be punished. And Jesus was willing to do it because of His great love for us.

God cares about us so much that He is involved in all our life. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows when to give us things that make life fun and cozy. He also knows when something uncomfortable is needed.

He may place a pebble in our shoe so that we must sit down, remove it, and therefore won't reach a point on

the trail at the same time when the mountain lion does. On occasion, the pebble slows us down that we may more fully appreciate the many things He has placed along the way for us to enjoy. It may serve just to keep us humble. God is involved in the smallest details of our life. Whether it is our favorite candy bar or a flat tire, God knows just what to provide for us and how to make it all work together for us to eventually join Him in heaven (Romans 8:28).

That is why we can thank God for everything, even for the pebbles in our shoes.

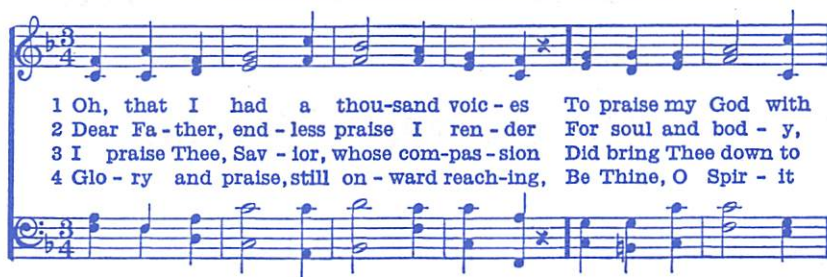


Mrs. Karen Strike, St. Paul's of Austin, Minn., conducting her 'one room' school. (see p. 19)

Mrs. Strike leads music class. (Mrs. Strike served in India last year as part of the synod's Mission Helper program.—ed)



Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns



1 Oh, that I had a thou-sand voi - es To praise my God with
2 Dear Fa - ther, end - less praise I ren - der For soul and bod - y,
3 I praise Thee, Sav - ior, whose com - pas - sion Did bring Thee down to
4 Glo - ry and praise, still on - ward reach - ing, Be Thine, O Spir - it

Oh, that I had a Thousand Voices

Hymn of Praise to the Trinity
#243 in The Lutheran Hymnal

Our annual pilgrimage from Clarkston, Wash. to Eau Claire, Wis. takes us over Lolo Pass on the Idaho/Montana border. Lolo is a continental divide; to the west, rivers flow to the Pacific; to the east, they flow to the Gulf of Mexico.

Trinity Sunday serves as such a divide in the church year. It marks the end of the “festival” half and the beginning of the “non-festival” half of the calendar. It is a vantage point from which we can look back at what we have seen our Trinity God do for our salvation, and also look ahead to growing in that knowledge, producing God-pleasing fruits of faith.

This month’s hymn, written by Johann Mentzer in 1704, fits the bill quite nicely. In stanzas 2 through 4 Mentzer pens his praise to the three-in-one God for His work on our behalf: to the Father, Creator and “Guardian kind and tender;” who “freely for my use supplied” “all the noble joys I find”; to the Son “whose compassion Did bring Thee down to ransom me”; and to the Holy Spirit “Whose holy pow’r and

faithful teaching Give me among Thy saints a place.”

In the verse chosen by *The Lutheran Hymnal* editors to end this part of the hymn (see TLH #30 for more stanzas), Mentzer looks ahead. He finds in God’s loving creation, redemption, and sanctification more than enough motivation to live a life of praise no matter what the future may bring: “Shall I not praise Thee evermore And triumph over fear and sadness, E’en when my cup of woe runs o’er?”

His words are given added depth when we consider that Mentzer might have been moved to pen these words when a nearby farmhouse was destroyed by lightning. How blessed it is for us and him to realize, as did Job, that “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!”

No matter what tomorrow may bring, still praises to our God we’ll sing; for His compassion of the past, will keep us long as earth shall last!

—Pastor Paul Krause

Parables Of The Master

Luke 13:6-9

The Barren Fig Tree

St. Paul uses words like “grace” and “love” to personify Jesus, as in Titus 2 and 3. There is another word which hasn’t been overly used or abused yet—the word “kindness.” Paul’s use of it in Titus and Ephesians 2 reminds one of Nehemiah 9 and Isaiah 54—where this tender expression is used for God’s Gospel.

Jesus came as the very visible reality of God’s “kindness.” There wasn’t a mean bone in His body. Or, as someone else has said: “The meanest meanness of God is more tender than the kindest kindness of men.” And this for two reasons. First, viciousness is not an attribute of God. Second, God has an ultimate and underlying goal in His dealing with mankind—He wants to rescue us, save us, deliver us.

To deliver us He plants us in His Word. There we receive His grace; we receive Him, His tenderness, His love. We learn to trust Him. And serve Him. We abide in Him. And whoever does that bears much fruit. Not just John 15, but Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17 also testify to this.

The certain man who planted the fig tree knew what the fig tree was supposed to do. You would think that the fig tree also knew—but (see Jeremiah 17 again, verse 9) the heart being so desperately wicked as it is, it seems that the fig tree had other ideas. Basically, it did not intend to bear the

expected fruit.

Somewhere there should be a congregation named “Macedonia Lutheran Church”—because of the example in 2 Corinthians 8. It seems to have heeded well the admonition given two chapters earlier, the one “not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

The grace of God is there in His Word and sacraments. Not to use these for their intended purpose is to “use up the ground” like the barren fig tree did. Other New Testament usages of the concept “use up the ground” are not complimentary. Waste is implied—rendering the Word of God powerless, exhausting it, abolishing it, making it of no effect, bringing it to nothing, despising it.

The church of Jesus’ day did just that, even as He neared the end of His ministry. The “kindness” of God will face the judgment of God on the Cross. Zacharias’ “tender mercy” of our God will continue long after the Cross and Resurrection. Groundskeepers will continue to dig and fertilize around the trees.

The church of Jesus’ day in its self-righteous impenitence did not realize the times. Despite John the Baptist’s warning (Luke 3:9), it had no sense of the axe being so near and so sharp. The Word of God was abused and twisted in the service of spiritual pride and self-glorifying. Neither warning nor nourish-

ment made any impression.

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness,” says St. Paul in Romans 11. “Otherwise, you also will be cut off.”

God amply gives the means to repent and bear repentance’s fruit. Impenitence stands under the threat of

being chopped down at any moment. So we rejoice in the kindness of God, which is still at work to save us from doom.

Every verse of Hymn 340 (*The Lutheran Hymnal*) ends on this note. Sing it soon to yourself. It’s hard to sing it standing up or sitting down—you pretty well have to be on your knees.

—Pastor Warren Fanning



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

Psalm 125

“LORD, thank You for keeping my soul safe.”

A Psalm of Thanks

Psalm 125

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.

For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.

Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.

As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel!

In this psalm the poet pictures the superior strength and power of the Lord, and the stability, permanence, and safety of all who place their trust in Him.

He does so by comparing the Lord to the mountain range which surrounds Jerusalem (v. 2) and God’s people to Mount Zion (v. 1).

Says Leupold (an Old Testament Bible commentator—ed): “There can scarcely be a finer comparison to convey the thought of a completely unshakeable solidity than that of a mountain rooted deep in the rock of the earth.”

The Jewish pilgrims may have sung this song as they drew near to Jerusalem and Mount Zion and saw the mountains rising up from the ground all around her. The thought must have come to their minds: “With Jehovah, our Savior-God, hedging us in on all sides (protecting and defending us from harm), we are safe and secure. No evil can befall us.”

A comforting thought for us too. The world we live in is in a constant state of flux. “Change and decay in all around I see.” Many are the quakes and tremors that threaten to shake our Christian confidence and crumble our faith to dust as we continue our journey to the Jerusalem above. Tremors in the

form of trials, tribulations, stress, worry, attacks from the unholy three (devil, world, flesh—ed.).

This psalm teaches us where alone we can secure the strength and stabili-

ty needed to withstand the powerful shock waves. It assures us that, as we place our trust in the Lord, nothing can move us, nothing can separate us from His love. Our souls are safe in Him.



SMORGASBORD

Our staff members were invited to pass along what they may have written on the subject of the Littleton, Colorado tragedy for their local bulletins or newsletters. We offer the following Christian perspectives.

• POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT

Is there such a thing as demon possession?—I mean apart from the scriptural examples like Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven devils.

A thinking Christian can hardly escape the realization or avoid the obvious answer: Certainly! The evidence slaps us in the face every day. The Kosovo “ethnic cleansing” is but the modern chapter of an ancient legacy of evil-spirited tribal feuding. So are the inter-religious and inter-national stupidities in Ireland and tribal Africa and India that resemble wholesale mutual suicide pacts. How could two teenagers of the “trench-coast Mafia” in Littleton, Colo. do what they did in such a blood-curdling way? What possessed them?

The answer is a lot simpler than the news anchors are allowed to reveal: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)

We are regularly surprised that people are newly surprised at the fact that there is no bottom to the pit into which Satan will drag a willing victim. The key factor seems to be “with the

victim’s permission,” for Satan cannot take possession of a heart and life that is already God’s sanctuary—not unless that soul is willing to desert Jesus by giving in to Satan.

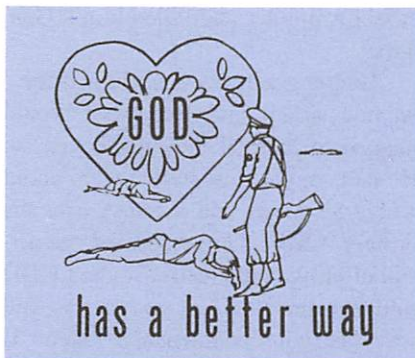
People will do that, of course, by giving in to the temptations Satan dangles before them. Even God’s sons and daughters are assaulted by the deceiver. Just give in to anger against a stubborn child; relish the injuries done by an unloving spouse; nurture dissatisfaction about the clumsiness of a teacher/pastor/relative; get drunk to drown emotional stresses; give warmth and shelter to any ungodly, selfish attitude—and you are on your way to giving residence in your heart to an evil spirit. Start skipping your church services, learn to ignore Bible study, and don’t even try home devotions or personal Bible reading—and you will open the starting gate for all other spiritual demons to run on your track.

When the news lady expressed disbelief that the murderers at Littleton had “gone to the Senior Prom just three days earlier,” I wondered; what if they had gone to church three days earlier? Is Satan a stranger to church-goers? We have seen the shadows of evil in our own mirrors.

We harbor no illusions about ourselves being exempt from the attack of demons lurking in the shadows of our own sinful natures. We have our own

dark side. And that's why we approach life 'ala pp. 5-6 of our hymnal: confession of sins—our very own sins—is so elementary, after all. What seems obvious is that two teenagers nursed a sinful, ungodly, devilish attitude in their hearts to the point that they got controlled by their demons. That was their personal tragedy, and it got multiplied at Columbine High School.

V. P. Al Gore, in response to an interviewer's query about those teenagers being possessed by evil, was on the right track: "Everyone has a choice . . . to say



NO to evil." But when does the time come that the choice can no longer be made because the demons are already in possession of the heart? What Judas did on a dark Thursday evening was not a new departure in immorality for him; he had been playing games with evil spirits for years in his own backyard before he lost his soul.

With the apostle, we understand the cleansing pain of contrition and repentance: "Oh, wretched man that I am; who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24)

With Luther, we have also experienced the pleasure of God's own release from our demons: "With might of ours can naught be done; Soon were our loss effected. But for us fights the Valiant

One Whom God Himself elected . . ."

And that's why we give voice to our own spiritual conviction in Paul's response: "I thank God—(that I can be victorious over the evil spirits both in this life and through death into the life to come)—through Jesus Christ our Lord." Hallelujah!

(Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch)

• TRAGEDY IN COLORADO

The tragedy last Tuesday in Littleton, Colorado understandably has been the subject of much discussion in the days following. In the comments that have appeared in editorials and letters to the editor in the *Houston Chronicle*, many have expressed perplexity at the killings, asking how such a thing could happen. We, too, ought to be shocked at the wanton savagery that has claimed the lives of a teacher and eleven young students and the evil in the hearts of those responsible.

But as believers who look in the Holy Scriptures for answers to serious questions, we ought not be as perplexed as many of those who are commenting on this crime. For the Bible teaches how sin and evil entered the world with the fall of Adam and Eve, and how the world has been under the dominion of Satan from that time forward until today.

People do not like to admit or confront the evil that exists in people's hearts and minds. There is practically no bottom to the depths of evil to which people can sink when they give themselves over to it. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jer. 17:9)

And are we not also shocked by the evil thoughts that can arise in our own minds, hateful or lustful thoughts that

we would be ashamed to have revealed? Think what evil deeds would result if some of our thoughts were carried out or acted upon in our lives.

Evil—yes, even great evil—should not leave us perplexed, though we are rightly shocked and outraged by it.

The Bible also reveals the only cure for evil. It is Christ our Redeemer, who bore the world's sin in His own body on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith in Jesus, leads us to repentance, and gives us the power to resist temptation.

(Pastor John Klatt)

• 'SIN LIES AT THE DOOR'

All kinds of people in and out of the media are trying their best to analyze reasons behind such tragedies as the one that occurred this week in Colorado. Some predictably point the finger at guns, or at violence in the media, or on the internet, or speak of a need for anger management and overcoming hatred in a culture of violence, and so on. Others touch on the real problem, as did the father of one of the latest victims when he said: "The only system that failed is that God is left out of everything." It is truly sad. With a total of 15 dead, this latest is only the most deadly of a rash of "children killing children" episodes that have happened on American school grounds the last few years.

The Bible remains the best (psychology) book available on understanding human behavior. It is that because in His Book God Himself is telling man everything he needs to know to understand himself and the human condition in general. He also tells man how to manage or overcome such things as anger, hatred, and mur-

der. When first created, Adam and Eve lived in a perfect, hateless, deathless world. All this changed when they disobeyed their Creator's test command. Immediately Adam and Eve died spiritually, and would eventually suffer physical death and even eternal death unless God Himself saved them.

Adam and Eve received a shocking illustration of the ugliness of their new (sinful) condition in the horrible act committed by Cain, their very first son. The seed of sin-hatred in Cain's heart erupted into murder as he "rose against Abel his brother and killed him" (Gen. 4:8).

God is good. Even as He had forewarned Adam and Eve what would happen to them if they disobeyed, so He had sought to forewarn Cain about where his anger and jealousy over his brother Abel's God-respected sacrificial offering could lead: "So the LORD said to Cain, Why are you angry? and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:6f). Cain didn't take the cue—and Abel paid the price.

Most simply—and most profoundly—the root cause for all anger and jealousy, for each and every murder is the "sin-nature"! Jesus recognized the



problem. He said: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mt. 15:19). Unless sin is ruled, it is ever ready to do the ruling. Unchecked sin is ever ready to spring up into full-blown deeds and acts of the sinful nature (see listing in Galatians 5:19ff).

For those who are seeking to learn how to rule over sin, God's Book provides all necessary answers. One thing God teaches is that the sinner cannot rule over sin in his own strength! "The carnal mind is enmity against God . . ." (Rom. 8:7). The sin-nature needs to be recognized for what it is—totally depraved—and then put to death, crucified. How is this "holy violence" accomplished? Paul says: "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (Christ), that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:6; cf. Rom. 8:13, Col. 3:5).

What this says is that one who, by Spirit-wrought faith, knows Jesus Christ and why He was crucified, died, and rose again—to rescue and redeem sinners out of His pure grace and mercy—will be given strength to rule sin, rather than be ruled by it. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,

who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:12f).

Dear friends, all this is not just some stuffy, impractical "theology"! It is divine "psychology"! And it works. This gospel of the sanctified Christian life provides, in a nutshell, the solution to how sinners—both Christians (each of whom still has the sin-nature) as well as non-Christians—can learn to rule sin rather than be ruled by it!

Since the Fall "sin lies at the door" of every human heart. Sin can be ruled, but only in and through Jesus Christ and His Gospel. That Gospel of God's love for sinners in Christ needs to be taught in the home. It needs to be taught by parents in word and example. It can be and is taught in Christian schools. It cannot be taught in public schools. In a secular, humanistic, truth-denying age, we cannot expect it to be taught by liberal media, by television or Hollywood movie moguls.

Therein lies the continuing dilemma for the public school system in America's new "culture of violence." Sin is lying at the door of the human heart and can't be kept outside by any alarm system, metal detector, or other security system man can devise.

(Pastor Paul Fleischer)



" . . . The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

--Philippians 4:7

From The Editor:

A Synod Anniversary

The constituting convention of a new confessional Lutheran church body known as the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) took place August 9-12, 1960 at Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Watertown, S.Dak.

The year 2000 will therefore find the CLC observing its 40th anniversary. A synodical committee is making plans for an anniversary observance. No doubt the next synod convention (set for June 19-23, 2000) will direct our thoughts toward appreciation of our heritage so that, in turn, we might go forward confidently under the guiding hand of Him who is Lord both of history and of His Church.

But if a synod is forty years old, so are many of its member congregations. Thus we expect that many CLC congregations will be observing their own anniversaries in the next year or two. Such churches—particularly those which were charter members of the new synod—are invited to submit a brief historical resume, with pictures, to the Lutheran Spokesman.

The congregation served by your editor, Grace of Sleepy Eye, Minn., was a CLC charter member. In fact, the record shows that the above-mentioned Watertown, S.Dak. constituting convention was recessed to Sleepy Eye, where the synod subsequently met January 24-26, 1961.

Companion articles in this issue tell a bit of the Sleepy Eye story. One capitalizes some facts of the congregation's history as submitted to the local paper. The second addresses the basic doctrinal issue which made a new congregation—and finally a new synod—necessary for those whose consciences were bound in the Word of the Lord.

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH— SLEEPY EYE, MINNESOTA

Grace Ev. Lutheran Church was born out of doctrinal conflict. It was organized in 1959 when a group of 200 communicants and 284 souls severed their membership for doctrinal and conscience reasons from St. John's Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye.

The new group had its first service on Thanksgiving Day, 1959 in what at the time was All Souls' Episcopal Church on Walnut Street and Second Avenue SW. An organizational meeting was held on January 12, 1960. At the same time the congregation became a charter member of a newly organized

conservative Lutheran synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

The former Trinity Lutheran Church building (now the Senior Citizens' Center) was purchased by Grace Lutheran Church in December 1959 and, after their incorporation, the first service was held in the new building in February 1960. The downstairs served adequately as a parsonage apartment for the church's first minister, Pastor Paul F. Nolting and his family.

In 1961 the congregation purchased one city block (its current location) in the southwest part of the city. On this site a new parsonage was built in 1963 and dedicated on February 23,



**Grace Church
and Parsonage,
Sleepy Eye**

1964. Construction of a new church was undertaken in September 1969. Dedication of the new church took place on June 14, 1970.

Over the years Grace congregation has maintained a Student Aid Fund to give financial assistance to its young people who choose high school and college education at synod schools. A number of these young people have been moved to serve in the public preaching and teaching ministry. These include: {pastors} Theodore Barthels, Jerome Barthels, and Paul D. Nolting; {teachers} Karla (Kroeger) Olmanson, Susie (Carstensen) Rehm, Dean Carstensen, Daniel Barthels, Scott Theneman, and Lane Fischer.

Grace congregation—which in 1999 numbers 160 communicants and 180 souls—has been served by five pastors: Paul F. Nolting (1959-67), George Barthels (1967-83), Robert List (1983-92), William Hartmann (1992), and Paul Fleischer (1993-present).



‘KEEPING THE HISTORICAL RECORD STRAIGHT’

(First written for the July 6, 1997 bulletin of Grace Lutheran in Sleepy Eye)

It is interesting, to say the least, how the history of Grace appeared in the 125th anniversary edition (July 3, 1997) of the *Sleepy Eye Herald*

Dispatch as part of the history of city churches {your pastor did not write the piece; where they got their information I don’t know}.

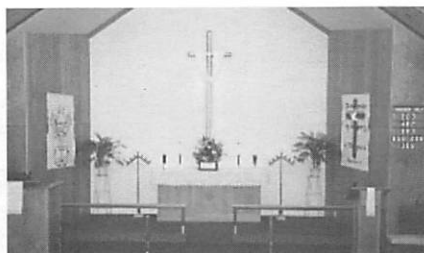
We refer to the words in the first paragraph which speak of how the first pastor of Grace, Paul F. Nolting, “began considering aligning with a new synod . . .” and that “he asked the congregation of St. John’s to vote with him in separating from the Wisconsin Synod.” What is by-passed, of course, is the *reason* the pastor and a good many members subsequently voted for separation. It was no small matter. It was a matter of Bible doctrine.

Also, the article suggests it was a rather quick decision. Hardly! The historical record will show that the doctrinal issues involved were studied for a number of years before the vote to separate took place. The whole matter was being discussed synodwide starting already in 1953. In some quarters of the Wisconsin Synod, even before that. Also let it be said that up to 50 other pastors and congregations were moved to the same action taken by the pastor and founding members of Grace. These united to form the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), with one of the organizational meetings of the new synod being held here in Sleepy Eye in January 1961.

The doctrinal question had to do with whether or not, and when, the

Wisconsin Synod should separate from its false-teaching sister synod, Missouri. When Wisconsin USED HUMAN JUDGMENT INSTEAD OF CLEAR BIBLE TEACHING* to determine how long it would remain together in fellowship with Missouri, the pastor and not a few members of St. John's had no recourse. With consciences bound to the Word of God, the pertinent passages from Holy Scripture were applied (Rom. 16:17-18, 1 Cor. 1:10, 2 John 9-11 etc.). The Wisconsin Synod by its use and defense of a human judgment approach toward false teachers had itself become guilty of doctrinal error; had itself become a false-teaching church body.

That was a long time ago now. Has anything changed? To the contrary. It has become clear from doctrinal meetings between representatives of the CLC and of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) that WELS defends its previous actions (or inactions!) with respect to the application of the fellowship doctrine. In other words, the doctrinal difference still remains. The leaven of false doctrine at St. John's (and in WELS in general) which brought about the beginning of



Interior of Grace, Sleepy Eye

Grace in 1959 continues to fester and do its deadly work, as Scripture says it will (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 5:9).

Our title says we want to keep the historical record straight. When it comes to doctrinal controversies, a frequent ploy is to "rewrite" the historical facts and thus subtly nullify the evidence of what actually happened. The WELS, for example, doesn't like to face facts which reveal it bought into a "human judgment approach" in its interpretation of the Romans passage.

As its name suggests, Grace congregation was founded and continues to exist by the *grace* of God. Let us not forget the history which gave us birth. Neither let us self-righteously rest on our laurels by which we would invite God's judgment in our direction. Treasuring our heritage of the Truth, let us be faithful users of the means of God's grace in Word and Sacrament. At the same time, bound in conscience to the pure Word and doctrines of our God, let us in the power of the Holy Spirit pass along to our children and children's children an uncompromising sensitivity for God's inerrant Word of truth.

***God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure,
Shall now and evermore endure!***



* In official writings Wisconsin interjected the following thought by way of interpretation of Romans 16:17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and—when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail—avoid them." You can see what this does. It's what we choose to call the "human judgment approach," since the time when separation from false teachers is to take place becomes a matter of subjective human opinion. Put another way, the application of the "avoid" is left to a time determined by the often prejudicial judgment of sinful human beings.

A Return to the *One-Room* School House

(By Chris Williams, Austin {Minn.} *Daily Herald*, February 28, 1999)

It is a mix of Biblical teaching, traditionalism, and old-fashioned values designed to help prepare students for the modern world.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran School began teaching students in the fall of 1972 with 29 students and two teachers to assist the parents of the congregation in providing a Christ-centered education.

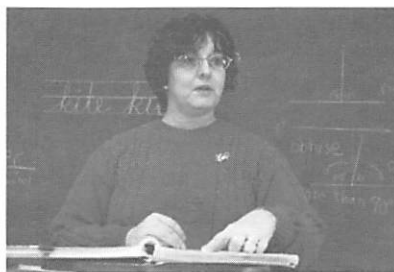
Twenty-six years later, the school still continues to teach and train students in grades one through eight.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church is a member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession Synod. The church and school were located for many years on 9th Place SW next to the bandshell. The floods of the '70s and early '90s forced the congregation to move more than two years ago from the stone building to a new church and school on 16th St. SW next to the Southgate Elementary.

Today, the school has twelve students and one teacher. St. Paul's pastor, Stephen Kurtzahn, said the school runs much like the old country schools of the past, with all grades congregated in one room where one teacher divides her time to teach all classes. In the school, there is one first grader, two second graders, four fifth graders, three seventh graders and two eighth graders.

The members of the congregation still subsidize the school, making it affordable to the families the school serves. The school is open to members and non-members.

Kurtzahn said there are things that separate St. Paul's school from others.



Mrs. Karen Strike enjoys what she's doing



Students enjoy something older one-room schools didn't have!

"We provide the fundamental academic skills that children need in today's world along with instilling in them that God's Son came to this earth to save us from our sins," he said. "St. Paul's, unlike many other Lutheran churches in our day, still believes and teaches that the Bible is the inspired Word of God without mistakes or errors in it."

Teacher Karen Strike was called by the congregation to teach at the school and began this fall. She is formerly from Fridley, Minn., where she taught at a CLC Synod church school. She lives in Austin with her husband Ron.

Strike is a strong believer in Christian education. She has been teaching in the CLC Synod for seven years off and on. She enjoys being in Austin, teaching at the school.

"I really enjoy these children," she

said, "They are a joy to be with."

The teacher usually works with one subject and one class at a time. The other classes are normally doing assignments or projects while she works with the class.

Strike said that it is a challenge to teach all grades, but there are advantages. Because of the small class sizes, she said that she can usually work with the students more at their own pace.

She also said that she believes because of the one-room scenario, there is an advantage that the students seem to care for one another more, especially between the older and younger children.

Strike said she hopes she can make an impact with her students.

"I want to teach them to be good citizens and learn to enjoy living," she said. †

Announcements

Great Lakes Delegate Conference

The Great Lakes Delegate Conference will be held at Faith Lutheran Church, Coloma, Mich. Monday and Tuesday, June 7-8, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Delegates, pastors, teachers, professors who need housing and meals, please announce to the host pastor.

Retirement Reception

After twenty years of faithful service at Faith Lutheran School, Coloma, Mich., Alvin Sieg is retiring from the teaching ministry. Faith congregation will say farewell Sunday, June 13 at an 11:00 a.m. luncheon reception at the church. Guests and greetings are welcome.

Please direct RSVP or inquiries to Larry Blackburn, 10393 Adams St., Holland, Mich. 49424. E-mail: tebe@softhouse.com; phone: (616) 396-9489.

Retirement Service

Luther Memorial Church of Fond du Lac, Wis. will commemorate the retirement of Pastor John H. Johannes and forty-two years in the public ministry with a special service on June 27, 1999 at 3:00 p.m. There will be a dinner with a speaking program following the service at the church. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Don Eserhut, 920 Co. Rd. V, Fond du Lac, WI

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

54935, or phone (920) 921-6072. Can also E-mail at djesperhut@hotmail.com.

Minnesota Delegate Conference

Date: Sunday, June 13, 1999

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Place: Faith Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minnesota

Agenda:

* "How can we retain more of our young people in our congregations?" Mr. Tom McLaughlin, Berea, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

* "Welcoming the guest to our worship service" — Pastor Wayne Eichstadt

* Business Meeting

Please announce attendance to the host congregation.

—Pastor Rick R. Grams, Secretary

Parenting Seminar

Immanuel of Mankato will be hosting a parenting seminar on four successive Sundays beginning September 12. Sessions will begin at 3:00 p.m. and continue to 5:30 p.m. with a break between segments. A supper will follow each session. For more information please contact Immanuel directly or through your pastor. Address: Immanuel Lutheran Church, 421 N. 2nd St., Mankato, MN 56001.

Time Of Worship

Ascension Lutheran Church, Kimball, Minn. has a 9:30 a.m. Sunday worship service year around. I made a mistake of listing a 9:00 a.m. summer service in the CLC Directory. Please join us at 9:30.

—Pastor Jon Ude