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Lutheran Spokesman

O F
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What
 harm can
 sin and death
 then do? The
 true God now
 abides with you.
 Let hell and Satan
 rage and chafe,
 Christ is your Brother
 ye are safe.

AMEN

TLH 103 v.4

D A V I D . L I C K E .

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,

L O R D T H E B E R E S S E D B E crowned with glory and honour;

that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Hebrews 2 : 9

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” — Luke 1:68-69

Having The True Spirit Of Christmas

White lights delicately outlining the shapes of palm trees. Bright red bows tied around stately saguaro cacti. Temperatures dipping down into the upper 50's. It certainly feels like Christmas in Phoenix!

Perhaps the indications in your town are somewhat different, but on the local news reports in many cities there are stories about the “true spirit of Christmas.” Most are about assisting the needy. A charitable act is a fine thing—but is that what Christmas is all about?

Refreshingly different is the story of Zacharias who really did have the true spirit of Christmas!

Nine months was a long time to be silent. We can well imagine Zacharias

opening his mouth to say something to his wife, only to remember that he was unable to make a peep. His muteness was the result of doubting the Word of the Lord spoken to him by the angel.

Yet in every chastisement there is a blessing. Every time he would open his mouth to speak—and recall he could not—it would remind him he wasn't going to die childless.

More than that, as foretold in the Scriptures, he was going to be the father of a son who would grow up to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zacharias could read through portions of Isaiah and Malachi and think: “That's my boy!”

We can imagine how delighted he was when his son was born. Yet when

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Zacharias was granted the ability to speak on the eighth day after John's birth, he revealed that there was something else that gave him an even greater thrill—God was keeping His promise to send a Savior!

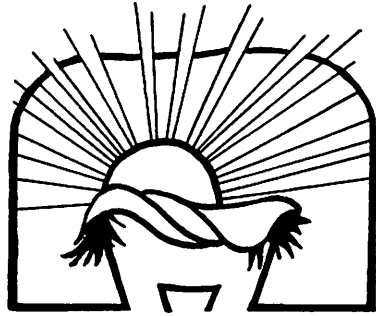
As Foretold By The Prophets!

He begins: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people." Up to this time the Lord had been visiting His people primarily through the word of His prophets. What the prophets had foretold was now beginning to unfold.

"And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David . . ." The symbol of the horn denoted strength and the ability to turn away enemies. A horn could also be filled with oil and used to anoint someone. We may also think of the horns on either side of the altar for burnt offerings which provided sanctuary from vengeance if one were to grasp them.

All of these fit the concept of the "horn of salvation" which the Lord would raise up three months later in Bethlehem and be found lying in a manger. Jesus would rise up to *turn away* the enemies of His people, for He was the One *anointed* from eternity to accomplish this salvation.

By holding fast to the "horn of sal-



"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."
Isaiah 9:6

vation," the believer is *safe* from the accusations of the Law and eternal vengeance.

With the birth of John, God demonstrated in a tangible way that He remembered and was performing the holy covenant which He had made with His people through the word of His holy prophets from long ago.

The love and mercy of God are at the heart of this covenant: Christ is coming to die so that you can live!

Once again this Christmas season the world will be attempting to divert our attention from the "dayspring from on high" to things mundane and devoid of the genuine meaning of the season.

As the first Christmas drew near, the Holy Spirit centered the thoughts of Zacharias on the true spirit and joy of Christmas. May He do the same for us this Christmas.

—Pastor Delwyn Maas



The Christmas Of The Christian

What can be said about Christmas that hasn't been said already? We hear it all every year: "It's over-commercialized!" "It's too expensive!" And that's true of the "Christmas" of the world. The world

has, of course, taken the Christ out of Christmas and replaced Him with an X-mas—which to them is only a time of Santa Claus and toys, hollow promises, depression, and greed.

But that's not the Christmas of the

Christian. And even then, what can be said about the true Christmas that hasn't been said before? Our children have already started to learn their parts for the Christmas Eve service. It is likely that we've heard these parts before. When Christmas Eve finally arrives, we will hear the kids saying many of the same parts that they said last year. Every year we hear from them what happened that first Christmas night. We hear the prophecies of the Old Testament promising the Savior; we hear that the only place that Joseph and the pregnant virgin Mary could find to lodge was a stable; we hear that Jesus was born there and laid in a manger; we hear about the angels and the shepherds, the wise men and the star.

Why go over all of this every year? Because those recitations are drawn from the account of Jesus' birth contained in God's Word. But won't we get tired of hearing about what happened in Bethlehem so long ago? Certainly we've heard it all before because we *want* to. We love to hear of the events that occurred that first Christmas every time that they are told.

While the X-mas of the world comes only once a year, the celebration of the believers in Christ at CHRISTmas is but the beginning of a celebration that lasts the whole year through. Unlike the day on the calen-

dar, our Savior's birthday is not simply a one day birthday celebration. It is a year-long celebration of the forgiveness of our sins that begins at Bethlehem where the Savior was born, continues to Calvary where sin was paid for, and proceeds to that empty tomb on Easter morning. It is because of what happened at that little manger and in that empty tomb that this celebration will never end. Our sins are forgiven! God's plan for our salvation has been fulfilled! Eternal life is ours! All because that little Baby, promised to us almost from the beginning of the world, was born in a little stable in Bethlehem just as God had said.

At Christmas time the jewelry stores tell us: "Christmas comes only once a year, but a diamond lasts forever!" After the presents are opened, the holiday leftovers gone, the tree waiting at the curb for the garbage man, and the toys discarded in the toy box, only one Gift will remain for eternity: the forgiveness of sins that God has given us through Christ Jesus. "For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

—Pastor Joel Fleischer

(Editor's note: The X in the Christian Christmas is the initial Greek letter of the name Christ; this letter Chi looks like the English letter X.)



Christmas thoughts from our Synod President—

A Season for Receiving

Areas of South Texas have experienced serious drought this past sum-

mer and fall. With the lack of rain use restrictions have been placed on resi-

dents' water usage because the reservoirs and aquifers are dangerously low. These sources of water cannot continue to give without being replenished. Therein lies a lesson for Christians.

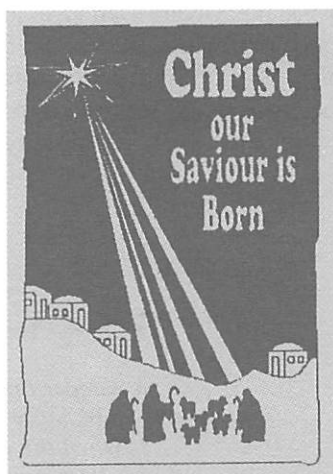
We are frequently reminded that Christmas is a time of giving. We suggest a thought that we like better: Christmas is a time of receiving.

We are not speaking in a material sense but a spiritual one. In a spiritual sense blessing comes first of all through receiving. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba Father'" (Romans 8:15). Jesus said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (John 6:51).

Christmas is the time of receiving the message of the angels who proclaimed that the promises of God had been fulfilled: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). The joy of receiving is well understood by the penitent who recognizes the indictment of Romans 6:23 and in faith believes the acquittal: "The wages of sins is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The message of the Savior's birth—and ultimately of all that our God has done for us in Christ—is foundational to our personal spiritual life, and to our life as a church. It is basic to the ministry of each pastor as well as teacher.

If the church is to fulfill its commission, and a pastor and a teacher are to fulfill the task to which each is called,



church members, pastor, and teacher need to take time out of their busy schedules to receive. This means that a pastor and a teacher will want to take time out of the day to receive the Word through personal reading. It means that members will want to take time out each day to read the Word with the family. They will want to take quiet time each Sunday to receive what is brought them from the Word of God.

We can become so busy even in the church—to say nothing of all the other activities in which we are engaged—so that we are no longer receiving.

Christmas is a particularly bad time for getting priorities mixed up. The well runs dry or the water becomes rancid without the refreshment of the water of life.

We pray that this Christmas will be a time of refreshment for all who read this. We pray that all our people will gather around the Word this season and thereafter to receive from the Father what He gives richly and daily in His Word—the precious gift of forgiveness and the confident hope of everlasting life.

Giving is an essential exercise of the

Christian life. Giving itself gives joy of heart. But it costs. Receiving costs nothing. May the Spirit help you that in all the giving of this season, you do not give up time and opportunity to

receive. Before everything else, receiving what your Heavenly Father gives you in His Word brings joy to His heart and blessing to yours.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



He Comes To Us

*A wonder that will never cease
To cause our hearts to stir
Is when the LORD came down to us—
With prophets' words concur.*

*We know we don't deserve a thing
From God and from His grace.
In fact, our sins condemn us all;
In shame we hide our face.*

*The wonder of it all we see
With eyes of faith and trust,
And marvel most of all because
The LORD GOD comes to us.*

*God sent His Son for just one cause:
To tell us, "I love you!"
"On my dear Son I'll lay your sins,
There's nothing left to do."*

*So here's God's Christmas Gift to you,
For sinners one and all.
Come with us at this sacred time
To that dark cattle stall.*



*And there we'll see the greatest Gift
That we will ever find;
For all our needs are met in Him
For peace in heart and mind.*

*The wonder of it all we see
With eyes of faith and trust;
And marvel most of all because
The LORD GOD comes to us.*

—Pastor L. Dale Redlin

Adapted from a Christmas sermonette on Hebrews 2:9-18—

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity . . . “

CHRIST OUR BROTHER

Have you heard of the Moravian Church? The Moravians are a Protestant sect which sprang up around the time of the Reformation. They are more Calvinistic and pietistic than they are Lutheran. This Church, which in our day still has pockets of adherents worldwide, was known among other things for its zealous mission work.

The story is told of a Moravian missionary who was sent to preach the Gospel to slaves in the West Indies in 1732. Upon his arrival the missionary sought to gather a small group of slaves together for worship in the evening hours. Though he succeeded to a degree, he found that for the most part the slaves who came to the meetings were so exhausted that they couldn't even listen to the Gospel message he wanted them to hear. All they could do was gnaw on their bread crusts before heading out to crawl into their straw beds, waiting for the master's whip to rouse them at dawn for yet another day of hard labor.

The missionary came up with an idea to reach these poor outcasts from society. He would—and did—sell himself into slavery. Then, while working together with the slaves in the fields, he spoke to them of their Savior, and talked with them of the forgiveness of sins found in the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross.

This missionary became a slave

among slaves that he might by all means win some for Christ. In this case, “by all means” meant selling himself into the same bondage and misery in which his would-be hearers lived.

The parallel, which is as striking as it is obvious, is the amazing truth and fact of Christmas—the incarnation of Jesus Christ! Indeed, the story of the missionary is but a dim reflection of the amazing love of Christ for sinners. He who existed from eternity as God took on the nature of a slave and was made in the likeness of men: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way . . . “ (Heb. 2:14-17). As the missionary thought he could best reach the slaves by becoming one of them, in an even greater way Jesus Christ did the same thing. Jesus was “made like his brothers” and was “made . . . a little lower than the angels” (v. 7) that He might be made sin for us, and a curse, and then suffer the penalty and wages of sin—death—on the tree of the cross!

The Wonder Of The Incarnation

There have always been those who question the Christian gospel. Why, the skeptics ask, would God make His own unique Son come into this world, and then have Him suffer innocently and

die vicariously on a cross. Well, those who understand the miracle and mystery of Christmas—the incarnation of the God-Man—know the answer to such questions: “In bringing many sons to glory it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Heb. 2:10-11).

Of course, sinners could never ever earn or merit the title of “holy people” or “saints.” But Christ’s mission to earth was to accomplish for sinners what they could never accomplish by themselves: “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

The mystery and wonder of Christmas is that Jesus was made flesh and blood to deliver us who all our lives were held in slavery by fear of death.

Inasmuch as Jesus was not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters to deliver us from sin and death, how could we ever be ashamed of owning up to our faith in Him or ashamed of the life of cross-bearing which Christian discipleship includes?

Let each of our lives then take on the drama of that of the Moravian missionary. Living in this land of the shadow of sin and death, we have been brought to see the Light. Now we are privileged to go and share this message of Light and Life with those still in bondage to sin and unbelief.

The Holy Spirit help us to live holy lives—lives worthy of the Christmas miracle that Jesus Christ became our Brother to save us.

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

A Chapel Talk

(Professor Clifford Kuehne's final chapel address at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin; May 10, 2000)

Fellow-redeemed in Christ:

ΕΝ ΠΑΝΤΙ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΤΕ

That’s the third and last line of the motto that appears on the bulletin board in classroom 7. It comes from verse 18 of our text: “In everything

keep on giving thanks!”

Have you ever wondered why the Bible urges us again and again to give thanks to God? Do these passages seem at times like so many commands, in which God demands that we give Him something in return for the blessings which He has given to us? Is our God like a conceited demagogue—we think of Adolph Hitler or Saddam Hussein—who demands that his sub-

jects acclaim him for all of the wonderful things that he claims to have done for them? Or is our God like a self-centered society hostess, who feels that she has been slighted if her guests are not sufficiently generous in their thanks as they leave her home?

Any such thoughts about our God would surely be blasphemous. You see, God doesn't need anything from us, not even our thanks, for He is perfect and complete in Himself. For example, in the psalm He says: "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness" (50:12). Is there, in fact, any reason why God would even want our thanks—we who are sinners, we who have rebelled against every law in His Book, we who have fallen so far short of His glory?

And yet God does invite us Christians again and again to give thanks to Him. Of this you can be sure: Such thanksgiving is entirely for our benefit, not His. As we thank God for what He has done for us, we are reminded of His great faithfulness to His promises—and our faith is thereby confirmed and strengthened. When we see how truly our hymn this morning (#36 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*) speaks about God:

Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today . . .

we can rest in the assurance that He will bless us also throughout our remaining years and bring us finally to Himself in heaven.

There is another way, also, in which our thanksgiving to God is for our own benefit. Christ once said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaks" (Mt. 12:34). Part of the enjoyment of a good meal at home is the opportunity to tell your mother or your wife how much you like it. Part of the fun of going on a nice vacation is to come back and tell others about it. Our hearts, now, have been filled with the joy of God's salvation. How frustrating it would be if we had to shut our mouths and were not able to let that joy out in thankful praise to God!

It is, then, for our own spiritual benefit that the apostle Paul exhorts us in our text: "In everything keep on giving thanks." Even though our thanksgiving in this life is imperfect in itself, God is pleased to hear and accept it for Jesus' sake, for our text assures us concerning such thanksgiving: "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

For what, now, will we be thanking our God? Of course we will thank Him for His saving love in Christ Jesus, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. Of course we will thank Him for granting to us so great a bounty of earthly gifts in answer to our prayer for daily bread. And of course a retiring teacher like me will be thanking the Lord again and again for the opportunity and privilege of working with Christian students, staff members, and fellow teachers at a school like ILC.

But our thanksgiving should not stop with such things as this. Notice the first two words of our verse, placed there to give them emphasis: "In everything keep on giving thanks." When the apostle says "in everything," he means that *nothing* should be excluded from our thanksgiving.

But can Paul really be serious? What, thank God for the troubles that come to us in life? Thank Him when

things go wrong with our social life on campus? Thank Him when our bodies are racked by sickness and pain? Thank Him when a dear relative or friend dies an untimely death? Thank Him when we feel frustrated by difficulty in learning or by a physical disability? Thank Him when in spite of our prayers and efforts our accomplishments fall short of our hopes? Thank Him when we feel shoved into a corner by unanswered questions and nameless fears? Thank Him when because of our confession of Christ we feel the sting of persecution? What, thank God also for these things?

Yes, thank God also for them—and especially for them! For when you get to heaven, if not before, you shall find that what you now regard as your greatest troubles in life have in fact been among your greatest blessings. Listen to what Scripture says of all

those who believe in Christ: “. . . all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). In another of his letters, the apostle assures us that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Our Lord Jesus has ascended into heaven, where He lives and reigns at the right hand of power for the benefit of His Christians. He is both willing and able to turn our every trouble into blessing! Therefore,

ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε

“. . . in everything keep on giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit! Amen.



Parables Of The Master

Luke 17:1-10

The Unprofitable Servant

Reason is totally contrary to faith. In this section Jesus reveals that man by nature cannot possibly understand or grasp the things of God.

Jesus' words make no sense in the real world. They are radical words of faith and loving service. We like to take pride in the things that we have done for Jesus. Many anniversary celebrations become endless recitations of personal and corporate accomplishments. Jesus reminds us that we are

servants or slaves, and that there is no glory or reward in doing what we were supposed to do in the first place. At best we, through faith, will be able to say: “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (v. 10).

The first part of Luke 17 contains

Daily Bible readings for home devotions, 2001

Dear reader: This program of Bible readings was built on the framework of the pericope used at Messiah of Eau Claire in 2000. In addition to the Old Testament, Gospel, and Epistle selections read in church each week, another of each was added in order to attain six Scripture selections for a week of home devotions. In the course of the year, the reader will contact the writings of Moses, Isaiah, and other prophets, besides reviewing large sections of the Gospels, Acts, Galatians, Colossians, 1Corinthians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, and 1 John. Other Scriptures are sprinkled in lesser amounts. Sundays have been omitted from this schedule, as indicated by the line below every sixth date. A minimum of punctuation reveals that a thought continues from one day to the next, or throughout the week, or that no connecting link is intended. May God bless you richly with His Spirit as you contemplate His Word by the use of these readings during the year of our Lord 2001.

Date	<u>JANUARY</u>	Hymns
1	Luke 2:21-24	Out from under the Law,
2	Luke 2:25-35	Jesus was customized for us
3	Luke 2:36-40	as Israel's pride and glory.
4	Is. 45:22-25	Isaiah knew Jesus, too.
5	Col. 3:12-17	We are the elect of God,
<u>6</u>	Num. 6:22-27	even though we're not Jewish.
8	Rom. 1:1-7	Behold the Christmas lights
9	Is. 61:10-62:3	on Isaiah's tree, wreathed with
10	Eph. 1:3-6	a garland of blessings;
11	Eph. 1:15-18	to enlighten other eyes also,
12	John 1:1-14	these lights were lit from eternity
<u>13</u>	John 1:15-18	in the living room of Scripture.
15	Is. 60:1-6	Who arises and shines?
16	Is. 42:1-7	Behold, our selected, special
17	Mt. 2:1-12	Morning Star of Bethlehem, revealed
18	Mark 1:4-11	when heaven's shutters opened.
19	Eph. 3:2-12	And when Paul arose and shined,
<u>20</u>	Acts 10:34-38	Cornelius saw the Light, too.
22	I Sam. 3:1-10	"Speak, Lord, I'm listening!"
23	I Cor. 6:12-20	Do we care about that?
24	John 1:43-51	"Follow me"... "Come and see."
25	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	Faintheart Jonah saw
26	I Cor. 7:29-31	God's grand plans
<u>27</u>	Mark 1:14-20	to salvage the trash.

29	Deut. 18:15-20	A good "pained" prayer	459
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1	Acts 3:22-26	God sent Him to bless you,	361

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7	I Cor. 9:16-23	From burden to blessing,	354
8	Col. 1:21-29	God has done it!	353
9	Mark 1:29-39	Always a help for those in need,	557
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16	Mark 1:40-45	"...from the leprosy of sin..."	149
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19	Is. 43:18-25	A sinful waste	385
20	Is. 44:1-8	From the womb	239
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22	Mark 2:13-17	A practical answer	363
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27	Mark 2:23-28	Ritual regulations	17
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(Advent begins Dec.2)

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27	Luke 12:42-48	Where our treasure is	93
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<u>29</u>	Col. 3:12-17	Whatever you do, in word or deed	108
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31	Matt. 25:31-46	with life eternal for you.	85:8-15

O Lord Christ, our Savior dear,

Be Thou ever near us.

Grant us now a glad new year.

Amen, Jesus, hear us! Amen.

what might be called “hard sayings.” Jesus warns us against causing one of these little ones who believe in Him to sin—it would be better that a heavy grinding stone be hung around our neck and we be thrown into the sea.

Years ago some Norwegian preachers wore the large white collar to remind them of this millstone and the danger of offending (causing to sin) anyone while they were in the pulpit. And Jesus admits that “it is impossible that no offenses should come” (v. 1).

Jesus also warns us to watch out personally lest we fail to forgive our brother seven times in one day for the same offense. How many times are we willing to forgive the driver that cuts us off in heavy traffic? How many times will we allow someone to insult us or our family? How many times am I able to forgive—from the heart—my husband or my wife?

The disciples sighed under the impossible burden of these ‘hard sayings’ and complained to Jesus: “Increase our faith” (v. 5). Jesus reminds them and us that only faith can make us living extensions of Jesus’ love and His serving attitude. Faith, if necessary, could pull up this mulberry tree and plant it in the sea. The power of God alone, accessed by faith, is able to achieve the impossible.

But we should not then boast about our faith. There is that human tendency to take credit for what God has done through us. There is that human tendency to take credit for doing what we were supposed to do. It is a sign of the times that children expect to be praised for doing their chores at home or completing their homework assignments in school. It is even more revealing that we are surprised when children do

what they are supposed to do and make a big deal about it.

Called To Serve

We are the servants of God called to serve Jesus in faith. Do we expect to be commended by God and man for doing our duty? Does the master thank the slave because he did those things that were commanded? Jesus says: “I think not”! (v. 9)

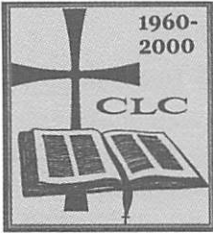
Even when we have served Jesus, this is no big deal or cause for pride. “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (v. 10). I am afraid that, like the Pharisees, many people are motivated to serve God by a sense of a reward of honor and praise in the eyes of men. By contrast, the faithful Christian, the faithful pastor, is unaware of doing anything special. We are servants simply doing what God has called us to do.

Remember, however, that Jesus turns things upside down. While no master would serve his slaves, Jesus, the Son of God, became the suffering Servant. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death for us.

Jesus will serve his faithful servants personally. “Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them” (Luke 12:37). To those who have no thought of reward because they are servants, Jesus will do the unexpected and give them an eternal reward which none can claim by merit.

So we confess: “We are unprofitable servants.” May God give us faith to serve Jesus with no expectation of

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Historical Markings

Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?

AS WE BRING THIS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY YEAR TO A CLOSE,
AN ANNIVERSARY PRAYER—

O God, our Refuge and Fortress, who in Christ has brought us into Your household, the Church, and made us fellow citizens with the saints, fill us with loving gratitude and praise for every grace and gift You have bestowed on us and on all Your people from generation to generation.

For the courage of the prophets we thank You. Give us in this day a similar spirit of loyalty and heroic zeal. For the testimony of the apostles we give You glory. Help us to continue steadfast in their doctrine and example. For the witness of all the martyrs we sing Your praise. Teach us also, O God, to take up our cross daily and follow our Savior with unflinching steps. For the truth of the Reformers we give thanks to You. Grant us by Your mercy to have the same spirit of wisdom and understanding in the things that pertain to our eternal salvation. For those who brought the light of Your Truth to this land we thank You. Help Your Church today to hold high the light of life that all people may come to know Your love in Jesus Christ.

We give You praise, O Father, for the faith and testimony of those who have gone before us in the history of each of our congregations and of our synod. Of Your glory they have told us. Of Your goodness they have shown us. Of Your love they have spoken to us. A godly heritage they have bestowed on us their children. As You preserved them in faith and life, so preserve us, O God, by Your mercy. As You kept them in the unity of the Spirit and the bonds of peace, so keep us. As You upheld them in their labors and defended them in their trials, so uphold and defend us. As You extended loving-kindness to them in their weaknesses, so forgive us, O God of our fathers.

We pray that You would help Your Church stand firmly on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone. Help us by word and deed, by true faith, living hope, and loving service to show forth Your glory and praise and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

We pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ in other congregations and in other lands. Deliver them from all dangers and stretch forth over them the right hand of Your power. We pray for our church's schools and for all Christian education to prosper. Be with us all, renew our faith, inspire in us obedience, forgive our sins, and hear our prayers, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our one Lord, through whom we are united into one body and possess one sure and certain hope—eternal life in Him. Amen.

Studies In Ephesians

Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of Christ (See 3:8)

Chapter 5:1-7

The Christian Life—A Fragrant Sacrifice

What does a sacrifice *smell* like? We who are long separated from life in the camp of the Israelites may have given little thought to such things as the *aroma* of a Levitical offering. But we're not far removed from the aroma of a summer's evening barbecue a few houses down the block! What was the sweet smell of the whole burnt offering like? It was probably like the odor of meat roasting over an open fire. A delicious aroma that made its way through the whole camp of the people.

But what use did the Lord have for roasted lamb? How is it that even He found the odor sweet? ("You shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the Lord; it is a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord." Exodus 29:18) This smell was the smell of atonement—the removal of the guilt of sin.

But the atoning sacrifice that really cleanses God's people is that of Christ who "loved the church and gave Himself for it" (5:25). It is the wholly spiritual aroma that fills the camp of those who are pilgrims and strangers passing through this earth, hungry for that which lies beyond in the joyful presence of God.

It is this odor—Christ's innocent suffering and death—that "saint-tifies" God's people, rendering them separate, distinct, and unspoiled by the foulness of the sinful world. Through faith that Christ's sacrifice has justified us (cleared us of guilt), we (the Church) become a people holy and pleasing to Him.

Living As Children Of God . . .

Such a noble and pure calling compels us to *live* as children of God. Ever see a child—with his dad in the workshop—reaching for a screwdriver when his father takes one, or a hammer, or sandpaper, and imitating the important task he sees his father engaged in? Paul urges us to be *mimics* (imitators) of God "as dear children."

The better we come to know this God to whom we have been reconciled and sanctified by sacrifice, the better we will reflect His great love and purity (holiness) before the world. The key is to be mindful of the sacrifice; it was performed in a most unselfish love.

So then let us "walk in love," letting our sacrificial attitude prove a glorious fragrance to those around us.

The sacrifice offered for us was

pure and unspotted (“the precious blood of Christ . . . a lamb without blemish and without spot”—1 Peter 1:19), so that our corrupt and impure records might be expunged, and we be judged pure and holy in the sight of God. How then dare we indulge our bodies—eyes, ears, and minds—in the corrupt and filthy lusts of the world?

Paul regards the Church as a pure, holy body (Whose body?) surrounded by a filthy world—therefore let not even the mere accusation of impurity “be named” against us.

. . . In An Evil World

In place of the world’s typical topics of discussion—scatological humor, sexual innuendo, a brazen desire to introduce the most intimate acts of man and woman into the public discourse—the talk heard within the Body of Christ will be different. It will be that of uninterrupted gratitude for abundant blessings—yes, even that of marital love and pleasure—that God has poured out on His children. More than that, it will tell of the blessings of righteousness, spiritual peace, divine protection, and an everlasting life imparted to us through Christ.

With God’s help every Christian will make every effort to ensure that the pure aroma of sacrifice not be mingled with the putrid smell of worldliness, corruption, lust, and blasphemy. Our sanctification means we have been fully separated from all that.

But “all that” continues in the unbelieving world, for which reason “the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” The mark of a true heir of the Kingdom of Christ and of God is godliness. He who claims God but proves to be a “fornicator, unclean person . . . covetous man” forfeits this inheritance. He is left only with a justly angry God.

Experience proves that it is all too easy to be stained by the business of living in this world or sometimes even to fall into the *Dreck* (mud, dirt, filth-ed.). But Scripture testifies of the forgiveness and cleansing that is to be found for those who repent and turn again in faith: “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4).

The key at all times is to rejoice in the aroma of Sacrifice by which we have been sanctified.

—Pastor Peter Reim



In lieu of a “Hymn of the Month” this month, a contributor to that series was invited to help us take note of a special anniversary—Ed.

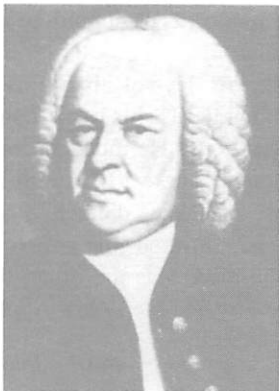
“To God Alone the Glory”

Johann Sebastian Bach

1685-1750

The abilities and talents that God gives to His children vary greatly, not only in kind but also in measure. To

one He gives much; to another little. But whether it is much or little, it is God who gives the gifts. For this rea-



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

son it is improper for us to boast of our natural abilities. God alone should have the glory for these things.

It is always good to see Christian men and women giving God the glory for their talents and for their accomplishments. And it is especially good to see when the person is someone who has unusually great gifts.

Johann Sebastian Bach, the great composer who died 250 years ago, was such a man. His accomplishments in the field of music are such that they astonish us. The sheer quantity of his work is amazing: 300 sacred cantatas, four-part settings of 371 Lutheran chorales, numerous concertos and organ pieces.

The quality of Bach's work is so high that it remains unsurpassed today. He wrote music of great beauty, complexity, and power. But he knew the source of his talent and its purpose. He understood that music itself is a gift of God, a part of His creation. He believed that his musical gift was a gift of God and that it was to be used for God's glory. At the end of a composition he would write the letters SDG—for the Latin words *Soli Deo Gloria*, "To God Alone the Glory."

Born March 21, 1685 in the German

city of Eisenach, Bach was baptized two days later in St. George's Church, where Luther had once preached on his way home from the Diet of Worms. In his youth Bach received instruction in the Word of God in the Lutheran church and he remained a student of the Scriptures all his life. His copy of Luther's German translation of the Bible has been preserved, and it contains many notes showing the composer's understanding and devotion.

A Church Musician

For much of his life Bach worked as a church musician both composing and performing music for worship services. Lutheran hymns formed the basis for a large share of his musical output. His choral and organ compositions have brought these fine hymns into concert halls around the world. Many a concert-goer who has never set foot in a Lutheran church has been exposed to the words of a Lutheran hymn expressing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bach also wrote musical settings for passages of Scripture. Among his greatest choral works are settings of the passion history of Christ from the Gospels of Matthew and John. These works also have brought the gospel into places where it is not otherwise heard.

The universal and enduring appeal of Bach's music is truly amazing. You will find, for example, recordings of Bach organ music with the accompanying notes written in Japanese. This is all the more remarkable when we remember that Bach's fame in his lifetime was primarily as an organist. His compositions were not much appreciated for a long time after his death. It wasn't until the 1800's that composers

such an Mendelssohn and Schumann recognized the value of Bach's works. Since then his reputation has grown steadily, and today his works are more popular than ever.

In the church of St. Blasius in the city of Muehlhausen where Bach served as organist for a time, on the organ loft are the words *Soli Deo Gloria* — "To God Alone the Glory." Those words well sum up the composer's view of his life and work. It was

Bach's motto, as it should be for all Christians.

In the last days of his life the composer did not cease his work though his sight was gone. He dictated compositions note by note to his son-in-law. The last of these, dictated not long before he suffered the stroke from which he died, was the organ chorale "Before Thy Throne I Now Appear."

—Pastor John Klatt



District Delegates—Pastors & Laymen
June 2000 CLC Convention
Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin



West Central



Pacific Coast



Minnesota



South-Eastern



Great Lakes

PICTURING THE PAST



Recognize anyone??

This fortieth anniversary year we dug into synod archives and pulled out a few pictures which might bring back memories regarding the early years. The above photo shows the 1966 Choir of ILC, Eau Claire. It was taken in Messiah Lutheran Church.

“ . . . Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith . . . ” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

What would keep us from a confident look to the future?

- *FAILURE TO CONCLUDE* that the *blessings* of the past are with us in equal measure in the present in order to reassure us for the future.

- *FAILURE TO APPRECIATE* that the *trials* of the past were to mature us for today and to train us to persevere in true faith in the future.

- *FAILURE TO BELIEVE* that the fierce personal *enemy* who relentlessly seeks to devour us is Satan who rebelled against God, was vanquished by Christ, and thus in and through Christ is a defeated foe.

- *FAILURE TO ADMIT* that *sin* is the great malady afflicting the human race ever since Adam's fall in the Garden; and that as a chain reaction sin has been and shall be handed down by inheritance from one generation to the next.

● *FAILURE TO SEE* that the *solution* to the problem of sin and evil in this world is to be found in God's free grace towards us in the person and work of His Son, not in our past works, our present piety, or our future efforts.

● *FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND* that *grace* is that quality in God which moved Him to grant salvation as a free gift in Christ Jesus who was virgin-born in Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary, rose, ascended and now lives and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords in heaven.

● *FAILURE TO KNOW* the necessity of true *repentance* which sees sin as an affront to the righteous and holy God, makes daily confession of sin, and trusts in His Son Jesus Christ who cleanses from all sin.

● *FAILURE TO CONFESS* the vital role of the *Holy Spirit* in our faith-life—from His calling us to faith in the past, to His keeping us in the faith till the present time, and His earnest desire to nurture that faith in the future through the Means of Grace in Word and Sacrament.

● *FAILURE TO DETERMINE* that trusting in God's *providence* begins by accepting God's creation of the world out of nothing through the power of His almighty Word; further, that all credit belongs to God for upholding this world, for giving us all that we possess; for making us what we were, are, and shall be, and that no credit is ascribed to past luck, our present ingenuity or private enterprise, or future "fate."

● *FAILURE TO REALIZE* that the *Kingdom* of God was established by God as a spiritual kingdom, now exists wherever there are believers in Christ, and shall be seen in its full glory not now in time, but hereafter in eternity.

● *FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE* that the *Word of God* was our sustaining strength in the past, is our precious heritage today, and shall be our confidence and hope in and for the future.

● *FAILURE TO TRUST* that the blessings we possess by *faith* today rest upon past accomplished facts as revealed in the authoritative Scriptures, and that for the future our faith must be reposed on the promises of God contained in those same inerrant Scriptures.

**O God, our Help in ages past,
Our Hope for years to come,
Be Thou our Guard while troubles last
And our eternal Home!**

Note: Some years ago a congregation we served undertook what was called a "Look to the Future" program which included a building project. These statements were written at that time for the purpose of reassuring the members about the future. Perhaps there is something of inspirational value here for all of us as, by God's grace, we prepare to enter the year 2001. — Pastor Paul Fleischer (Editor)

Continued from page 11

reward or special praise. May we simply be given the faith to do our duty as servants of Jesus Christ called to serve others as slaves of Jesus Christ.

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



What could I do
without
so that an
unbeliever might
hear the gospel
...and be saved?

The CLC 40th Anniversary Thank Offering

Announcements

Eligible For Call

Upon completion of the re-entry process, Pastors John Schierenbeck and John Klatt have recommended that Rev. Karl Stewart be declared eligible for return to the active clergy roster of the CLC. Upon this recommendation, Rev. Stewart is declared eligible for call into the ministry of the CLC.

—Daniel Fleischer, President
Church of the Lutheran Confession

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Steven P. Sippert, elected by the CLC Call Committee for Educational Institutions, was installed as professor on the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College, August 21, 2000.

—Pastor Vance Fossum
ILC Board of Regents

In accord with our usage and order, Roland H. Gurgel, who was called by Our Savior's Ev. Lutheran congregation of Jamestown, N.Dak. to be its pastor, was installed on October 15, 2000. Pastor Michael Schierenbeck preached the sermon and assisted in the installation.

—Pastor Michael Roehl

Compliments of:

GETTHESEMANE LUTHERAN CHURCH
E. 11315 BROADWAY
SPOKANE, WA. 99206

To our readers—
A blessed Christmas
in the Christchild
born to save us.

May the peace and joy
He brings be with
us in the coming year!

2001 Daily Devotions

We extend our sincerest appreciation to Professor emeritus Paul Koch (*Spokesman* Assistant Editor) for the daily devotional readings to be found inserted in booklet form in this issue. Not only did Prof. Koch compile the scripture, theme, and hymn suggestions, but also submitted them to us "camera ready." Also, in an opening paragraph, he indicates the background and direction of these devotions.

We pray—we know—that our readers will be blessed as they use these devotions faithfully!