



LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, TENDERHEARTED,
FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO FORGAVE YOU"
EPHESIANS 4:32

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Families And Forgiveness

What makes for a truly happy home and a functional family? There are many things that can contribute to this, but one thing stands above all the rest—living according to the gospel of Christ. This means that the gospel is more than something we heard at church last Sunday. It is the basis for our interaction with each other.

Look around your home and what do you see? Sinners—sinners everywhere! Don’t forget, that includes the person in the mirror. How can so many sinners possibly coexist within the same walls? In some families there are those who try to coexist by keeping their frustrations inside, allowing anger, bitterness, and resentment to build up year after year. There are also those who attempt to deal with such frustrations by controlling those

around them. They may do this by shouting, threatening, or the silent treatment. Others use things like guilt, fear, and avoidance. If someone hurts or disappoints them, they may respond by inflicting pain in return.

What are some other things that people try to do in order to coexist with those who share the home? Denial? Running away? Callousing the heart? How can you effectively cope with living in such close proximity to sinners, including the spouse lying next to you or the brother in the bunk above you?

The answer is the gospel. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from eternal suffering. On the cross Jesus paid the debt for all sins. He also fulfilled the Law for us. Thus, sins have been forgiven and Jesus’ righteousness covers those who trust in

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Him. They will rise to be with Him in Paradise because He rose from the dead.

We love those gospel words. But what do they have to do with the way we interact with our family?? Everything!

“Sweet” Words

We are given a new perspective by these words. That person with whom I share the toothpaste is not just my spouse. That pesky kid who knocks on my door and runs away laughing is not just my little sister. These people have been redeemed from their sins by the blood of Christ just as I have. They also have weaknesses, say things they shouldn't say, neglect to do things they ought to do, and get tired and cranky just as I do. Rather than trying to excuse our behavior or telling others that they shouldn't let it bother them, it is best to freely admit our failings.

Some of the sweetest words sincerely spoken are: “I am sorry.” This is short for “I regret that my behavior hurt and disappointed you. I am dismayed when I do that. I want to relieve the sadness I caused you.” It is also

good to spell out exactly what one is sorry about rather than leaving it generic. This helps to demonstrate sincerity.

Even sweeter are the words: “I forgive you!” So much peace and joy is shared when family members care enough to stop and have such a dialogue. They are connecting on an emotional and spiritual level.

Isn't this a direct application of the gospel and precisely what the Lord says He wants us to do? (John 13:35; 20:23) When we Christians say, “I am sorry” and “I forgive you,” we are truly glorifying the name of our Savior.

The most excellent expression of kindness and being tenderhearted is forgiveness. What a joy it is to hear youngsters end a squabble all by themselves by saying they are sorry and by forgiving each other!

Where are they going to learn to do that? At church? Perhaps. It is more likely, however, that they will learn this from observing Mom and Dad. That is something worthwhile for parents to think about. Confessing and forgiving sins does wonders for marriages too.

—Pastor Delwyn Maas

WHY WERE WE CONFIRMED??

The following joke was told to this writer at a pastoral conference several years ago. Two Lutheran pastors met for their monthly study club. “How's it going?” the one asked. The other answered, “Not so good. We have a problem with a bat in our church.” “Have you tried catching it?” asked the first. The other answered, “I've caught him three times now, but I can't get rid of him! The last time I caught him and

drove way out into the country and let it go. The stupid thing beat me back to the church!” The other one says, “We used to have that problem too, but I took care of it.” “What'd you do?” asked the troubled pastor. “Well,” answered the other, “I caught that bat, sat him down in catechism class, confirmed him, and he hasn't been back since!”

While it is amusing, they say that

the best jokes are those that have their roots in the truth. Sadly, this joke is all too true for Lutheranism today.

We can all think of examples of people who were confirmed in years past and have rarely been seen in church since. But that is not how God intends it to be. He wants us to delight in His will and to continue in His ways.

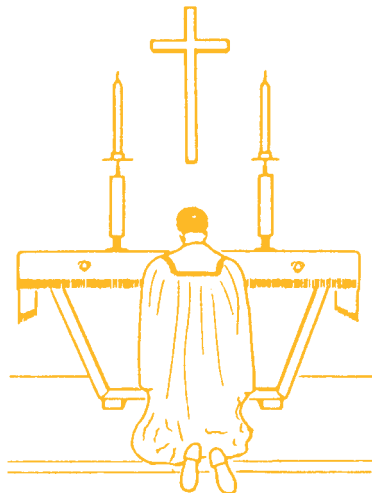
Those things that we like to do, we do as often as we get the chance. For some people it's golf. Others enjoy skiing or running, hunting or fishing. Students have favorite subjects in school that they'd rather do to the exclusion of the rest of their school-work.

While we delight in many earthly things, for the believer in Christ the greatest delight will be in the LORD and doing His will, as the psalmist declares: "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand!" (Ps. 84:10) If we truly delight in the Lord's will, then we will delight in His Word, for not only is His Word the revelation of the will of God; it is His will that you delight in His Word, as He proclaims: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28).

And how can we not delight in this Word? It is in the Word of God that we hear the message of the forgiveness of sins. These are the Scriptures that are able to make one "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

A Promise Was Made

In Catechism class we have been made wise unto salvation through the study of God's Word. At confirmation we promised to remain faithful unto our Lord and His Word even to the point of death. Believers for thousands



of years have given up their lives rather than give up their confession. How were they able to do this? Because they knew and believed the promises of their Lord, knowing that the delight that He promises is not only for this world. It is eternal delight.

When Christ our Savior rose from the dead, He guaranteed our resurrection as well, as He promises: "Because I live, you will live also (Jn. 14:19). He promises us that we will never die (Jn. 11:25f). To whom does He promise this? To all who believe in Him as their Savior from sin. To know and trust in the true God for the forgiveness of sins is to have life eternal, as Jesus Himself said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn. 17:3).

Our motivation for pleasing our Lord is this enduring love that He has shown unto us. He "called us by the gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified and kept [us] in the true faith." God has done everything necessary for our salvation. He has provided the perfect life to replace our imper-

fect, sinful lives. He has provided the sacrifice needed to pay for our sins. He has worked the faith in our heart—faith which clings to God our Savior. And He has promised to keep us unto life eternal.

That is the goal of His love—to forgive us our sins, to bring us to faith, and to grant unto each of us eternal life. This is what the Lord God desires for all people, as it is written: “[God our Savior] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Confirmation shows that we have grown in this knowledge since our Baptism. But were we confirmed in the faith so that we could “graduate” from

church? No, we were confirmed because following our course of Bible study we had shown ourselves to have a firm grasp of the chief parts of Christian teaching. But, young or old, we still have much learning to do. We need to continue to grow in the faith and knowledge of God’s Word throughout our lives.

As believers in Christ Jesus we, with all believers, delight in the Word of God and in spending time in His courts where that Word is proclaimed. We heartily agree with the psalmist who says, “I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Ps. 84:10).

—*Pastor Joel Fleischer*

A Chapel Talk-

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5).

“Going to church, or a picnic?”

When a person dies in an unusual, spectacular manner, especially while still a young person, do you think that’s the way God deals with the really bad people? That’s what some folks apparently thought when they pointed it out to Jesus—and they wanted His theological opinion on it. But instead of joining them to point the finger at others, He points the finger of

God at them. They needed to learn something about their own hearts and about their own status in God’s sight. Some day just like today, at any other moment just like this moment, God can and will stop the heartbeat of everyone of us here today, for we are mortal sinners, one and all.

When that navy fighter plane slammed into a quiet neighborhood in

Nashville, sending five souls to meet their Maker—do you think that those individuals were being punished for being sinners worse than the usual sort, and so God picked them out of the other hundred thousand folks in Nashville for that quick-as-a-flash stroke of death? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Some folks go to bed safely in their own homes, but never survive when their house burns down—as that couple who recently perished in nearby Fairchild, Wisconsin. Were they worse sinners than others in Fairchild, or Mondovi, or Eau Claire, that God decided to let them burn to death? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Or perhaps you’re safe at church; two elderly nuns were at worship in their convent when they were slashed to death by a deranged ex-musician. Were those nuns worse sinners than others, nuns or not? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Or you’re a successful middle-aged athlete like Dave Schultz, Olympic class wrestler, killed by someone’s hand with a .38 revolver. Or a high school sophomore taken from the gym where he had collapsed with a heart attack; or the elderly gentleman on the west side of Eau Claire found dead at the end of his driveway next to a broken snow shovel. Were these individuals guilty of something extra bad that God had to get them out of our sight and into the grave? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent; you will all likewise perish.”

You and I are just like them—sinners! Mortal sinners! People who don’t

know in the morning whether we will be alive at supper time. You and I are going to die; one of us in a house fire, another in a mangled automobile, someone on a bus after an away game, someone by a stray bullet during hunting season; someone on the job with the phone still in hand; another one killed by a lunatic; and lots of us will die from the deterioration of old age and illness.

So what’s the message here?

If you are tempted to neglect your soul’s needs and your soul’s health with the stupid thought that you won’t die young because you are not a very bad sinner—God won’t cut your life short because you are so average—then you are the one to whom Jesus says: “Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.”

Sometimes you or I need this reminder, this pointed finger, this warning: Do not think that you’re any different in your mortality than those folks who went out one lovely morning to picnic near the pool of Siloam and never lived past the potato salad and pickles; those eighteen adults and teenagers and kids had no forewarning from God that the tower was going to topple on them as God’s way to end their earthly time of preparation.

If you ask why did God choose them? Ask—Why NOT them? Why not YOU? Why NOT me? That’s the point!!

You know by now that this is a law message from God brought closer to our hearts, as it was brought to other hearts by Jesus that day in old Jerusalem. Do you need that scary, ominous finger pointed at you too? Only you and Jesus know; so don’t neglect to hear the message if it is

going to help you be more attuned to your soul's welfare.

And, of course, I can't turn you loose today without at least a passing reminder: the repentant sinner is ready for that moment of leaving behind this earthly existence, because Jesus has made you ready; you have been drawn by the overriding love of God—who loves your soul unto all eternity—to hold onto the hand of Jesus through life and death.

When your Tower of Siloam falls,

or when your house burns over your head, or when you gasp your last in the crushed hulk of a highway collision, you are going home—that's God's way of taking His dear child off this planet to be with Him to all eternity, finally safe from all that here we suffer from Satan, the world, and our own sinful natures.

Safe at last—but you knew that, didn't you?!

—From the chapel-talks file of Prof.
Em. Paul Koch



Parables Of The Master

Matthew 20:1-16

The Laborers In The Vineyard

(Or: Grace Is Not Fair)

Jesus had been dealing with the increasing opposition of the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day. The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous and they despised others. The Jews thought that they had earned salvation because they had been God's chosen people for two thousand years since the days of Abraham. They also believed that there was no room in God's kingdom for any Johnny-come-lately Gentile.

These parables of the kingdom reveal the truth that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways. This is particularly revealed in Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

One of the recurring phrases of chil-

dren in the classroom and at play are the words, "It's not fair." Children reflect adults who also often complain, "It's not fair." Jesus confronts us with the reality that *God's grace is not fair!*

A Fair Arrangement

Are you acquainted with the modern day labor pool? Laborers gather every day hoping that someone will hire them for the day. This is also the way it was in Jesus' day. Jesus tells of the landowner who went into the marketplace to hire some laborers for his vineyard. He went out at daybreak and hired a group of men to work twelve hours in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius (a denarius was a coin worth about a day's wages, equal to about \$75-\$100 in today's money).

It was a fair arrangement.

The landowner went back at the third hour (9:00 a.m.) and found some more men with nothing to do. He hired them with the agreement that he would pay them what was fair. The landowner did the same at noon and again at 3:00 p.m. Finally, at 5:00 p.m. he went out and found another group of workers, who had not been hired. The landowner hired them for one hour with the assurance that he would pay them what was fair.

When the workday ended at 6:00 p.m., the owner called the workers together to pay them. He summoned those who had worked only one hour and paid them a denarius (\$100). When the first ones hired saw this, they expected to be paid more because they had worked all day. When they were also paid a denarius (the same \$100), they complained that this was not fair. They complained against the landowner, saying: “These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day” (Mt. 20:12).

We would agree with them. By our standards, it doesn’t seem fair. According to the principle that a person gets what he deserves, it is not fair. Jesus reminds us that the landowner paid the first ones hired what they had agreed to. If he wanted to pay the others the same \$100, that was his business.

A Fair Warning

Jesus warns God’s people—especially second or third generation confessional Lutherans—about comparing their lives with others and whining, “God, it’s not fair.” This is the self-

“Grace is not fair by its very nature. Grace is a free gift of God. Salvation is a gift to those whom God has chosen and brought to faith in time through the working of the Holy Spirit....”

righteous attitude of a person who has borne the heat of the day, laboring all his life in God’s kingdom. The person who has been a Christian since birth through baptism and worked in the church all his or her life looks at others and concludes that he or she deserves more from God. The fact that the thief on the cross could confess Christ in his dying hour and be welcomed into paradise doesn’t seem fair. Perhaps this is why the Catholic Church had to invent purgatory so that these persons could suffer and pay the fair price. It does not seem fair that a person like Aristotle or Plato or a good neighbor will not go to heaven just because he doesn’t believe in Jesus.

Grace is not fair by its very nature. Grace is a free gift of God. Salvation is a gift to those whom God has chosen and brought to faith in time through the working of the Holy Spirit. Grace is not without cost, because it cost God the suffering and death of His beloved Son, Jesus. Those who have received the grace of God through faith tend to conclude that this is due to something that they have done. There is no worse condemnation of one’s own self than to conclude that someone else doesn’t deserve what God has given him. For in doing so, we condemn ourselves. It is not fair that God has saved us from sin and the deserved consequence of

eternal death.

God will do what He wants to do. God's ways of grace and God's thoughts of free forgiveness are not our thoughts and our ways. God is in control. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?" (Mt. 20:15)

Jesus concluded this parable with the familiar words, "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen" (Mt. 20:16).

Those who thought they were deserving (the Jews) would be replaced in the kingdom of God by those who were the unworthiest (the Gentiles, and especially us).

Man can't handle the concept of grace and an acceptance by God outside of us and outside of what we have done and so complains, "It's not fair." Thank God that grace is not fair, or we would be in big trouble. God's grace is not fair precisely because it saves sinners like us by grace.

—Pastor John Schierenbeck

THE LORD'S PRAYER—A Series

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

4th Petition "Give us this day our daily bread"

Scripture tells us in Romans that the Heavenly Father "did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). Jesus died for all people. He died for all, because the Father's desire is that all be saved. The passage continues: "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" When we think of the blessings that the Father gives us in Christ, our thoughts appropriately turn first of all to the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life that comes to all who believe in the Lord Jesus. But shall we not also think of the privilege that is ours in Christ to be called the children of God? If the Triune God did nothing

else for us, we would have reason to speak thanks without end.

But there is more in the "all things" of Romans 8; we include even those things which for the sake of Jesus the Father is pleased to give us for our physical welfare. So the Christian is not bashful to approach the Father in prayer and say, "Give us this day our daily bread." We know—as Martin Luther says—that "God gives daily bread even without our prayer, even to all the wicked." The truth is that if God gave us what we need only when we ask, we would have precious little. Too often we forget to ask, and even more do we forget to give thanks! Our Lord

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S *Small Catechism*
(Concordia Publ. House, 1943)

The Fourth Petition

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

What does this mean?

God gives daily bread without our asking, even to unbelievers, but we pray in this petition that He would teach us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

“Daily bread” means everything we need for our bodily well-being. It includes food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money and goods, a godly husband or wife, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace, health, education, honor, faithful friends, trustworthy neighbors—and things like that.

—MARTIN LUTHER'S *SMALL CATECHISM*
(Sydow edition, 1988)

A comparison of two currently used versions

provides the rain that waters the earth, and the sun that gives warmth to the earth—essentials to producing food. All people profit, and even the animals of the field and the birds of the air profit. How richly the Lord provides.

Recently we were told that one reason for the difficult economic situation on farms is that prices are too low. And why? Because farmers are producing

too much. We will not speak to the economics; we surely will not blame God or the farmer for the economic condition. The point we make is that even in flood or drought the Lord gives the farmer the knowledge and He provides the necessities to produce food. We know of a farm family in the same condition as all other farmers, but whose confidence on one hand and trust on

the other was maddening to the neighbors. This family in Minnesota just believed that there was no reason to worry themselves into a frenzy—whatever the circumstances—because they believed that God would provide in the amount He wills. And that is the way it works!

In the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer we approach the Lord for physical needs—for everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body. But life here includes many needs if we are to enjoy the blessings of the earth. So we pray for "house, home, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline (education), honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." Luther said: "Although we receive from God all good things in abundance, yet we are unable to retain any of them to enjoy them in safety and happiness unless He gives us stable and peaceful government. For where dissension, strife and war prevail, there our daily bread is wholly lacking or constantly reduced" (Large Catechism, 1935, APH, p. 147).

It is not greedy to pray for things for this life while we await deliverance to

the better life in heaven. It is appropriate to pray and then to leave it to the will of God as to how much and what He is inclined to give us. Surely this prayer is also a prayer that is directed against the devil who inspires greed. "Give us this day our daily bread." Each day we pray that the Lord will give us what we need for that day. Where that is the attitude of prayer, we find nevertheless that the Lord so often provides more than we need.

For all of which we want to give thanks. Generally we are not bashful to ask, but we are less mindful to give thanks. We know that we can never repay the Lord for all that He has given us for body and soul. But a word of thanks is pleasing to the Heavenly Father. In keeping with a *word* of thanks is an expression of thanks in *action*. One way that the Lord provides for us is through each other. In sharing with others who are in need of the abundance of things which the Lord has given to us, we are putting thanks into action, as well as expressing confidence and trust in the Lord to answer our prayer as we pray again, "Give us this day our daily bread."

May the Lord give us thankful, trusting hearts.

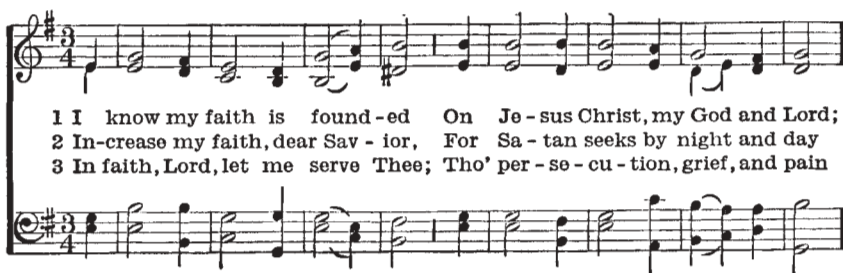
—Pastor Daniel Fleischer

*Praise to the Lord,
The Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him,
For He is your health and salvation!
Let all who hear
Now to His temple draw near,
Joining in glad adoration.*

*Praise to the Lord,
Who will prosper your work and defend you;
Surely His goodness
And mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do
As with His love He befriends you.*

#748:1 & 4, Worship Supplement 2000

Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns



The image shows the musical notation for the hymn "I Know My Faith is Founded." It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The lyrics are printed below the treble staff.

1 I know my faith is found-ed On Je - sus Christ, my God and Lord;
2 In-crease my faith, dear Sav - ior, For Sa - tan seeks by night and day
3 In faith, Lord, let me serve Thee; Tho' per - se - cu - tion, grief, and pain

I Know My Faith is Founded A Hymn Celebrating Justification by Faith #381 in The Lutheran Hymnal

Our faith in Jesus Christ is under relentless assault in this world. The devil, the unbelieving world, and our own sinful flesh never give up in their attempts to undermine, weaken, and destroy our faith.

For this reason it is necessary that our faith rest firmly on the solid rock of Christ revealed in the Scriptures. If faith rests even partly on something other than Christ in the Word, it is thereby weakened and made vulnerable.

The hymnwriter Erdmann Neumeister, a Lutheran pastor in Germany in the early 1700's, understood this. He preached the gospel to his flock, upholding sound Christian doctrine. He labored during a time when much of Lutheranism had become cold and formalistic. At the same time, the movement known as Pietism encouraged believers to judge their faith on the basis of their own works and personal religious experiences. Neumeister opposed Pietism and worked to instruct his congregation in the old Lutheran teachings from

the Bible.

In addition to preaching, Neumeister used hymns to instill Christian teaching in his congregation. "I Know My Faith is Founded," one of 650 hymns that he wrote, teaches that sound scriptural doctrine is the only solid basis for faith. The first line is a paraphrase of 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul's confident confession of faith in Jesus: "I know whom I have believed." The believer can speak with this same confidence when his faith is grounded in God's Word, for "God's Word is all-sufficient, It makes divinely sure, And trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure."

Our faith needs constant strengthening by the Spirit through the Word, so that it can withstand the forces that threaten it: human reason and wisdom (stz. 1), Satan (stz. 2); persecution and trials (stz. 3).

*"In life and death, Lord, keep me
Until Thy heav'n I gain, Where I by
Thy great mercy The end of faith
attain."*

—Pastor John Klatt

THE WORSHIP SERVICE

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”
Psalm 95:6

Sixth in a Series—

The Confessions of Sins (continued) and The Absolution

The congregation, now filled with repentant contrition, openly, verbally, heartily prays: *“O most merciful God, who hast given Thine only-begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; . . .”*

“Only begotten Son” is a special term which reminds us of the words of the angel to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35).

In Him alone God grants us mercy and for His sake assures us of the “remission of all our sins.” For when God says that He was in Christ “reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them,” He means all people and all sins. It is beyond a shadow of a doubt! “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

“ . . . And by Thy Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of Thee and of Thy will and true obedience to Thy Word, to the end that by Thy grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

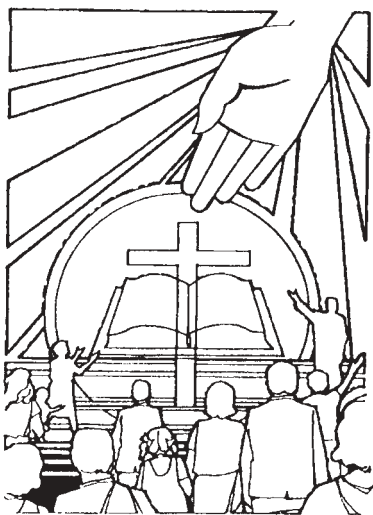
The time has come in our liturgical service to give special attention to the

work of God the Holy Spirit. Having prayed for that tremendous blessing of the “remission of all our sins” for the sake of Jesus Christ, now we are moved to call upon our Lord for added blessings through the Holy Spirit, namely: 1) that our knowledge of our Lord and His will be increased; and 2) that we may be moved to true, heartfelt obedience to His Word.

How highly we should treasure the working of the Holy Spirit in each of us. We know that “no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). He assures us: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). It is the Holy Spirit who not only calls us by the gospel but also sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith.

So also the truly penitent child of God (who realizes how we have been blessed) deplores his sin and prays earnestly for the strength of the Holy Spirit to avoid anything that may reflect negatively upon the gracious name of God. It is the desire of the believer to grow stronger every day in the knowledge of the Lord and in dedicated obedience to His Word.

Our liturgy reminds us that by the



power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Means of Grace we will make our way through this sinful and adulterous world and finally "come to everlasting life" in all of its full glory "through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

The Absolution

"Almighty God our Heavenly Father, hath had mercy upon us and hath given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgiveth us all our sins."

It is a never-ending marvel in the mind and heart of the people of God that the "Almighty God," Creator of all, mercifully reaches down to sinfully corrupt mankind and blesses them with His forgiving love in His Son. What a privilege it is for the minister to announce to those who have confessed their sin the grandest blessing that they will ever receive—God's complete forgiveness. "The wages of sin is death." God's Son, true God from eternity, came to pay the wages for us. That is why the Apostle John is inspired to

state so simply (in what Martin Luther referred to as his "little Bible"): "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

"To them that believe on His name He giveth power to become the sons of God and hath promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

"Giveth power to become the sons of God" is an unfortunate translation of John 1:12. It should be translated: "To them He gave the right to become children of God." Such a right or privilege is granted to those "that believe on His name." God's name is everything He has told us about Himself in His Word. In His name we live, move, have our being, and are blessed with the Holy Spirit. Thus God Himself dwells in us and "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). Indeed, "You are the temple of the living God, as God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (2 Cor. 6:16).

And so we conclude the absolution with the confident affirmation of Mark 16:16 and a humble prayer: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' Grant this, Lord, unto us all."*

*Oh, how blest it is to know:
Were as scarlet my transgression,
It shall be as white as snow
By Thy blood and bitter Passion;
For these words I now believe;
Jesus sinners doth receive. (TLH 324:6)*

—Pastor L. Dale Redlin

Creation/Evolution Debate

Your pastor attended a debate on February 22, 2001 at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. The participants were Dr. Duane Gish for Creation and Dr. Edward Max for Evolution. Both men are noted speakers and renowned in their respective fields. Dr. Gish, a UCLA graduate, represented the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego. Dr. Max is a Harvard and U. of Pennsylvania graduate in the field of molecular genetics at the National Institutes for Health (NIH). Both men have many “letters” after their names and have written numerous books and pamphlets in their respective fields.

I had attended Creation Seminars in the past, but never a debate. The debaters had agreed beforehand to address four different subjects: I. Thermodynamics; II. Probability, Random Mutations, Selection; III. Homology; IV. Fossils. Each speaker was given thirteen minutes to set forth his case, and an additional five minutes to react or respond to his opponent. With opening and closing remarks and an intermission, the debate lasted over three hours. There was also time for a post-debate question-and-answer period.

The debate was most interesting, and even enlightening in its own way. Dr. Gish and Dr. Max had debated each other on four other occasions. Above we called them “opponents.” It soon became clear the two men would not mince words. I suppose we could be accused of prejudice, but our distinct

impression was that Dr. Max used far more personal “ad hominem” attacks (“ad hominem” is Latin for “attacking one’s opponent rather than dealing with the subject under discussion” [Webster]). In one segment Dr. Max intentionally addressed Dr. Gish repeatedly as “Dr. Gosh” and, referring to Gish’s tendency to use hand gestures, criticized Gish’s “hand waving” as well as his “vague claims.”

Dr. Max also launched repeated verbal jabs at the scholarship and/or “professionalism” of his opponent (as well as at those in the audience who might happen to agree with the creationist position). Included in my handwritten notes are comments from Dr. Max such as these:

Those who endorse the creationist position “do not meet minimum standards for scholarship”; creationists use “bogus, non-professional science”; a “live audience is too naive” so Dr. Gish thinks he can get away with his arguments; “Non-professional audiences can be fooled” by Gish’s arguments; Gish should “use numbers and equations, not vague statements”; Gish “ignores real science . . . (which is why) he must direct his arguments to non-professionals only”; Gish “uses outdated views (which is) evidence of his poor scholarship.”

One doesn’t have to be a rocket scientist to deduce that if you happened to agree with Dr. Gish’s creationist position and comments, you were a naive person easily duped by bogus, non-professional science.

Without doubt Dr. Max gave evidence of his own evolutionary “scholarship.” With many overheads he showed the “numbers and equations” arguments which, he opined, supported the doctrine of evolution (Gish stressed that indeed evolution is just that, a the-

ory or a doctrine; one Gish quote in my notes: “Evolution is no more scientific than creation, and is just as religious”). I confess that I was too untrained to follow some of the rambling “scientific” arguments Dr. Max made in his presentation. However, it was hearten-

EXCERPT: *SELECTED SERMONS of E. Schaller* (See book review in issue of May 2001)

Festival of Christ’s Ascension; Sermon text: Hebrews 4:14-16

“ . . . *But in the hour that His feet left the ground on which He last stood, when He departed from His loved ones, from the church of disciples, He had spoken the last words. With His going, the Gospel and all of its truths, the entire wisdom of God, had been given to men. From then on it was complete and it was unchangeable. Nothing could be added, nothing taken away. Everything that God wanted mankind to know for their salvation was then in the hands of men. God chose a few of them, inspired them with the Holy Spirit, and they wrote down in books the full Gospel message as we now have it in our Bible.*

“*Let us remember that upon this complete Gospel Jesus received His strength to ascend into heaven. The Father would not have taken Him back into glory unless and until He had fulfilled all things and taught all things necessary for our salvation. Furthermore, everything that Jesus Christ is now doing in heaven is based on this complete Gospel. He can pray for us at the throne of God because He knows that we believe in Him and all that God sent Him to teach us. He promised us that He would get a place ready for us in heaven; this He is doing, building our eternal habitation on the basis of the truth that He revealed to our hearts.*

“*No wonder, then, that we are urged to ‘hold fast our profession.’ Just as Jesus is building our salvation upon the complete truth that He imparted to us, so our salvation depends upon our holding fast to this truth. We have learned what to profess. It is not guesswork to find what we ought to believe. Nor does the truth change. It is foolishly held by some people that truth changes constantly. They say that what was truth 100 years ago is perhaps not true today, and what is true today may not be true 100 years from now. They want us to think that God adds to His gospel or takes away from it; that as mankind gets older it learns to know God better. Others also maintain that truth depends upon how you look at it.*

“*If this were true, would it not be a great mistake to ‘hold fast our profession’? Such advice would be bad advice indeed. If the Gospel changes, we would have to change our profession accordingly. To refuse to do that would be narrow-minded indeed. But while earthly knowledge and wisdom do indeed change, the divine truth has been fixed since our Lord left for heaven. Jesus refused to admit that time would change His teachings. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away,’ He said, ‘but My words shall not pass away.’ And again ‘The Word that I have spoken, it shall judge you at the last day.’” (pp. 143-144)*

ing to note Dr. Gish's proficiency at shooting holes in his opponent's theological assertions.

From my handwritten notes, here are a few quotes from Dr. Gish with which I—and judging from the applause, most of the rest of the audience of over 2000 people—agreed. Gish quoted an evolutionist who admits that evolution is “a secular religion—a full-fledged alternative to Christianity”; another evolutionist states that “you are an animal and share a common heritage with earthworms” (“Isn't that encouraging?” Gish asked); according to evolutionists, commented Gish, “you and I are the result of countless (genetic) mistakes”; each debater had his catchy lines; Gish said that it is “unbelievable what an unbeliever must believe in order to be an unbeliever”; he quoted an evolutionist who said: “I believe that one day the Darwinian myth will be ranked the greatest deceit in the history of science”; with regard to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, Gish pointed out that “everything is going in the wrong

direction for evolution to take place; natural laws . . . are destroying everything—how could those same laws create everything?!”

Max had his “scientific” overheads, Gish did also. While Max may have used more “numbers and equations” to illustrate his evolutionary arguments, Gish was well prepared and used many pictures and graphs to illustrate creationist points.

Prior to the debate it had been agreed that arguments by either debater would not be based on “religion” but purely on “science.” Yet there was no mistaking the fact (underscored by Gish more than once) that it is impossible to discuss the matter of origins without reference to “God” as a special designer of the universe in general and man and other creatures in particular.

We came away thanking God that He, in His grace and mercy, has given us a child-like (naive?), Bible-based, Christian faith (see Matthew 11:25ff, 1 Corinthians 1:26ff). We thank God that through His Spirit He has brought us to confess with Luther in the First Article:



Immanuel Lutheran High School, Mankato, Minnesota presented its Spring concert on Palm Sunday, April 8, 2001. Lane Fischer is director and Mrs. Karla Olmanson accompanist.

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth . . . I believe that God made me and every creature and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. . . .”

The Creation/Evolution debate has raged and will continue to be waged as long as the world stands. As far as Bible believers are concerned, when all is said and done, the Bible beginning

with its very first chapter has the final answer: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:1-3). “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

—*Pastor Paul Fleischer
Grace, Sleepy Eye, Minn.*



Missionary David Koenig sent these photos. This one shows the newly-formed NCLC congregation in Lagos, Nigeria.



Larry (left) and Martin Hansen helping make cement blocks (one at a time) with a block mold.

From the CLC Mission Newsletter, May 2001

...In January two CLC laymen, Larry Hansen and his son, Martin, traveled to Nigeria to direct renovation of the old mission house, so that it would be suitable for another missionary and his family. With the assistance of NCLC volunteers the home was replumbed and an addition was built. Upon the Hansens’ return, they agreed that a second missionary to share the work (with David Koenig—Ed.) in our foreign fields is needed!

2000 VBS at Zion in Atlanta



2000 VBS at Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, Ga. Pastor Johannes is at far left.

As preparations are being made by CLC congregations for their 2001 Vacation Bible Schools, a brief report from the first VBS held in Lawrenceville, Georgia (Atlanta area) may be of interest.

With the help of the Traveling Vacation Bible School (TVBS), Zion held its first VBS. The TVBS distributed 6500 fliers in the Lawrenceville area.

Many responses were received. The outreach effort resulted in a VBS in July attended by seventeen children (only three of these were of member families). Zion will again hold a VBS the last week in July, 2001. The mem-

bers will be doing their own canvassing, and the VBS will be conducted with volunteers from the congregation.

Zion received mission status in February, 2000. The congregation called John H. Johannes as its permanent pastor. Pastor Johannes had been called in May, 1999 on a temporary basis for a year to serve the ten families which form the nucleus of the congregation.

The members of Zion seek the prayers of the members of the CLC as they continue their outreach among the four million-plus people in the Atlanta area.



Parsonage of Zion, Lawrenceville, which was purchased with a CEF loan, was dedicated in October 2000

Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Timothy Wheaton, who was called by Mt. Olive Ev. Lutheran congregation of Lamar, Colo. to be its pastor, was installed on April 29, 2001. Assisting in the installation were Pastors Victor Tiefel, Peter Reim, and Frank Gantt.

—*Pastor James Sandeen*

In accord with our usage and order, Rev. Karl Neumann, a member at Grace Lutheran Church of Fridley, Minn., who was called by Ascension Lutheran Church of Kimball, Minnesota to be its pastor, was installed on April 29, 2001.

—*Pastor John Ude*

New Address

Pastor Karl and Mrs. Lorraine Neumann
P. O. Box 482
Watkins, MN 55389
Phone (320) 764-2975

REUNION

Immanuel High School Classes
of 1975, 1976, 1977
Saturday, August 25, 2001
Picnic lunch, adult evening meal
Registration needed

Contact Ross Roehl
509 Ingram Dr.
Eau Claire, WI 54701
(715) 831-8306 or lgroehl@execpc.com

Series Concluded

With the article appearing in this issue, the series entitled "Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns" is being concluded. A total of 29 hymns have been treated in the series which began in November 1998.

We trust that our readers have found the series helpful and have grown in appreciation for the rich musical and theological heritage found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941).

We thank Pastors John Klatt and Paul Krause who took turns meeting alternate deadlines.

—*The Editor*

CLC Foundation Guidelines Review

The 2000 CLC Convention referred some proposed "substantive" amendments for the CLC Foundation Guidelines to a Review Committee for reporting back to the 2002

Convention (see pp. 105 and 71-74 of the 2000 Proceedings). Input is invited from all persons interested in the Foundation and its service to the CLC and its supporting members in fiscal matters and donation opportunities. For committee materials on the amendment questions, contact Duane Riggert, 1618 Gateway St. So., Middleton, WI 53562 or 608-831-9102 or Trigger@chorus.net.

Cover: Matt Schaser



In March 2001 on his way home to the Midwest from Nigeria, Larry Hansen stopped for a visit with Pastor Johannes in Atlanta (see p.18).