

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



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From Palm Sunday to Palm Eternity

Five days before His vicarious sacrifice for all sin and seven days before His victorious resurrection, Jesus entered Jerusalem to suffer and die according to His Father's will. St. John recorded that a great multitude of people "took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him and cried out: 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!'" (Jn. 12:13) Hence the name Palm Sunday.

Their welcome was not an unusual way of greeting conquering kings. Perhaps many of the people that day believed that Jesus—their Messiah, Worker of wondrous miracles—had come to save their nation from the ruling hand of the Romans and from other wrongs and woes. Their very cry of "Hosanna" means "save now" or "grant salvation."

The palm tree mentioned is the date palm—stately and beautiful. It has deep tap roots and can thus flourish in desert climes, growing tall and living long. Its value was beyond question, producing dates for food and the by-products of sugar, wine, oil, resin, tannin, and dyes. Cattle were fed its seeds, trunks yielded lumber, and from its leaves were fashioned roofs, fences, mats, baskets, thread, and rope. Its fruit is reported to get sweeter as the tree matures.

No wonder then, that to the oriental the palm tree was the perfect tree—everything a tree should be. It became a symbol not only of victory (in classical Greek literature), but also of life and salvation.

With the very recent raising of Lazarus from death to life still immense in the people's minds, a cho-

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rus of “Hosanna” to the King of Israel was not inappropriate. Yet any expectation of social or political deliverance was repudiated with the enacted parable of Christ riding humbly into town on a donkey. He had come as Jehovah’s King—but for the purpose of saving His people from sin and Satan, and to graciously give perfect righteousness and true spiritual life.

Faithful Believers

Two thousand years later our daily link to the stately palm is found in Psalm 92 (vv. 12-14): “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall thrive and be very green.”

So faithful believers are likened unto palm trees. Our roots are grafted into Christ by faith, and from Him we draw strength and vitality. Planted in God’s House, we delight in His saving Word, producing even to old age the sweet fruits of praise. “Hosanna” is our

whispered prayer and our mighty chorus. Having died unto sin and death with Christ, we have life in His name.

Hence our daily lives are to be a gospel-preaching of love and hope. Some Christians are even buried with palm fronds in their hands (an old custom), testifying to their faith in the One who alone saves.

What provided a gentle path and appropriate greeting for the Lord Jesus as He rode in Jerusalem was itself a picture in miniature of eternity. For the same John saw standing in heaven a great multitude of the redeemed and resurrected saints “clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” Their loud chorus— “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9b-10) The righteous in Christ will flourish forever in God’s House, enjoying in glorious bodies the final and perfect fulfillment of their Savior’s Kingdom.

How can this vision not incite and encourage us to flourish like palms—made beautiful and special in the Lord, perfect in His righteousness, ever useful in His service, bearing good fruit to His glory, sweeter even in old age!?

By God’s grace may we “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

May we faithfully sing from Palm Sunday to Palm Eternity: “Hosanna!” ‘Our salvation belongs alone to God . . . and to His Lamb!’

—Pastor David Fuerstenau

A MANDATE TO LOVE

For Jesus, Maundy Thursday was a night of intense temptation and bitter betrayal—a night when He faced

the horrible fact that He would soon be cut off from His Father.

Yet with all this pressing on His

heart, our beautiful Jesus made time to comfort and instruct His fearful little band. In the upper room He taught His disciples many lessons—including a lesson on love.

Maundy is Latin for *mandate*. Jesus mandated (commanded) His disciples to love one another.

How could it be any other way? The Savior-Master whom we follow is love. His every thought, word, and action are pure love. How could His followers not be people of love?

By the power of the Spirit working through the message of redeeming love, we have been set apart to be people of God’s love. Jesus’ new commandment to love is an encouragement to live out the new life He has implanted within us. He gives us faith. Where there is faith in Christ, love will follow.

Why then is there so often a lack of love within Christian homes and congregations? Why so much strife and hurt feelings? Where is the love? Sad to say it is so often missing in our dealings with our fellow family members and Christian friends. It ought not be so. It is a shame when it is so.

High Standards

It has been said that if Satan can’t get in the front door, he’ll sneak in the back. The church of pure doctrine says it will not allow Satan to get in the front door and twist God’s truth. But does she strive with equal fervor against the devil’s back-door method? Does she fight against Satan’s attempts to sow within its membership seeds of bitterness and resentment?

The family that stresses home devotions may take its stand for the truth, but does it also strive to develop within itself a spirit of Christian love and



Maundy Thursday

forgiveness?

Jesus knew how important it would be for His New Testament people to love one another. It was so essential that He addressed the subject on the eve of His death. Perhaps pastors, church members, and family members would do well to review what the Spirit says through Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. An honest reading of that text must certainly humble us. It reminds us that love has incredibly high standards and that we have failed miserably to meet them.

More essentially, however, let one and all see the desperate need to return to that tiny mountain called Calvary which towers with God’s insurmountable love!

God’s love will still receive and cleanse unloving people, such as you and I often are. That love can still change our often selfish and proud hearts; that love will bless our work together as congregations and our living together as families.

“ . . . Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. . . .” (Eph. 5:1).

—Pastor Michael Wilke

The LORD brings an end to the ultimate TERRORISM

Ever since the great tragedy on September 11th, the single most talked about topic in the news has been the subject of terror or terrorism.

On a daily basis without fail the media has been bringing reports to us relating to terrorism. With a banner entitled “War on Terror” posted at the top on the television screen, news reporters and commentators have been covering the ongoing efforts to root out culprits in the world who are committed to terrorism. These same reporters and commentators tell of measures to establish a homeland defense that would protect our nation from future acts of terror.

With so much talk about such terrorism, you might almost think that this is the most important issue to occupy our minds day after day. Is this the most important issue for our lives?

The Most Important Issue

If we were chiefly concerned about our physical life and safety, it would certainly rank high on the list. However, as Christians we realize that there is more to life than our temporal well-being—namely, our spiritual and eternal welfare.

In this latter realm of life there is a form of terror that is far worse than the one our nation has been struggling with in the last five months or so. The terror of which we speak is of a truly dreadful kind which can torment our innermost being day and night. It can cause paralyzing feelings of anxiety, sadness, fear, depression, and even utter despair. The culprit causing this fearsome terror is found in each and



every one of us. It’s called sin.

Consider the unrelenting terror that vexed the heart and soul of King David after he committed the sins of adultery and murder. He writes about his conscience pangs in Psalm 32, “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (vv. 2,3).

Consider also Judas Iscariot, who became so overwhelmed by feelings of guilt for having betrayed Jesus into the hands of His enemies that he went out and hanged himself. Tragically, this desperate measure did not deliver him from terror, but rather sealed his fate of suffering never-ending torments in hell—torments which far exceed any terror we will ever face in this temporal life.

Judas is a good example of man’s impotent and futile efforts to eliminate sin-induced terror. How vain it was for Judas to think that he could deliver himself from his terrorized conscience by returning the betrayal coins but then

paying with the loss of his soul.

If only countless souls who are being terrorized like Judas would realize—and rely upon—the wonderful news of our deliverance from such terror through our Savior Jesus Christ!

Peace And Joy!

On the night when Jesus' special operation of rescuing the whole world from everlasting terror would begin to intensify, He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27).

In order to remove terror of the soul that lasts eternally and to replace it with everlasting peace, Jesus had to suffer the greatest terror that will ever be experienced by anyone. The prophet Isaiah testifies of this as he writes of

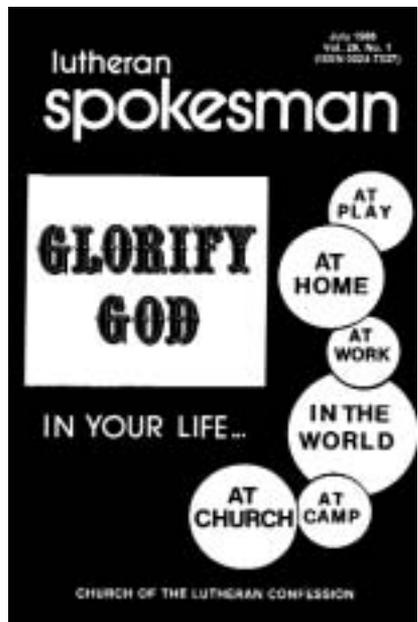
Jesus' passion on the cross, saying, "The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6). "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:4,5).

From the pages of Holy Scripture we also hear Jesus' blood-curdling cry from the cross, when He was suffering the torments of hell in punishment for all our many sins, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mt. 27:46)

The psalmist David writes of the great peace and joy that is experienced by the penitent sinner who knows by faith God's forgiveness through Jesus' redemptive work, as he exclaims,



Bernthal cover, August 1988



Bernthal cover, July 1986

“Blessed (happy) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity” (Ps. 32:1,2).

It is the good news of Jesus’ delivering us from the terrors of sin and hell

that needs to be declared throughout the world each and every day. This is the good news that we all need to be reminded of on a daily basis so that we can find lasting peace in a sin-terrorized world.

—*Pastor Mark Gullerud*

“(Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25).

JESUS, THE BENEFICENT ONE

This world was created perfect. At the end of the six days of creation, God said that everything that He had made was very good. This is especially true of the grandest of all His creatures, mankind. God went on to give the man whom He had made, whom He called Adam, a garden in Eden. Both the man and the woman, however, sinned against their Maker. He therefore drove them out of the garden, but not before He promised that Someone would come along and restore all things.

The Tragedy Of Sin

Adam and Eve were indeed guilty of committing offenses against God. Our Scripture verse says that Someone was put to death for our offenses or trespasses. That Someone was the One whom God had said would restore all things. And all things truly need to be restored, because human sin had violated God’s perfect order of things. The original Greek describes these offenses or violations as breaches. It is as if someone came up to a perfectly constructed building and tore great breaches throughout its entire construction.

This tragic progression of sin con-

tinued on after Adam from generation to generation. Man knew within himself that he had put up a barrier between himself and God, and he tried in every way to overcome that barrier. He only succeeded, however, in increasing the barrier instead of destroying it. The sins, the trespasses, the breaches just kept piling up and up. The prophet Isaiah lamented all this when he stated: “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” That was the black truth. That was man’s horrible, pitiful condition as God saw it. There was nothing any of us could do except go down and down in our sin. Only a miracle of God could save us all from going straight to hell for all eternity.

Jesus, Our Substitute

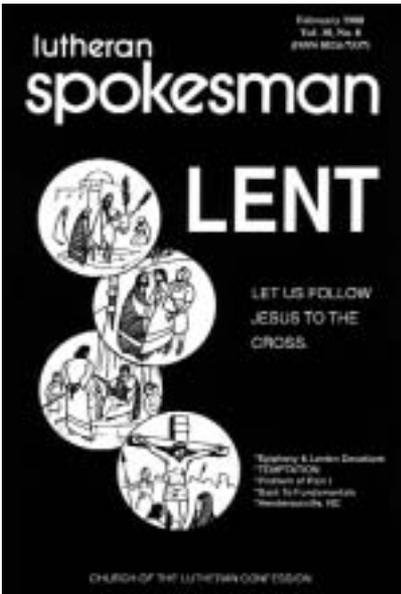
Our Scripture, though, does not just speak about trespasses. It tells of One who was put to death for them — all of them. Since none of us people could do anything to get us back to God, He Himself had to get us back to Him. The famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah speaks of none other than Jesus who was that Deliverer who brought us back to God. We read that Jesus was wound-

ed for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Transgressions and iniquities are another way of saying trespasses. After Jesus had lived His perfect life here on earth, keeping His Father’s law flawlessly in all things, He took all our sins with Him to the cross. His going all the way to the cross was how He was delivered into death for our breaches, our breaking up of God’s perfection.

As Jesus hung on that cross, His burden of our sins because so great and awful that His Father was forced to turn His back on Him. Father God could no longer stand to look at His own Son with all our errors resting upon that Man. This rejection of Jesus by His Father sent Him crashing right down into the lowest depths of hell itself. He sank lower and lower into hell’s pains. “My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?” He cried

out at last. This was the most horrible moment for Him in this whole affair. It was the thing that completely broke His heart. It was the deepest stroke that pierced Him. There is nothing that is more awful than to be forsaken of God. From all eternity He had known why He had to be forsaken by His Father—the truth is that He must be forsaken so that we would never be forsaken.

But then Jesus passed through it, and God’s comforting presence was restored to Him. Then, after He received the bitter drink of vinegar, He gave another cry. “It is accomplished!” He announced. Then He yielded His spirit. Yes, Jesus had just made the sufficient payment for all our transgressions. His blood was the glue that healed together all those breaches we had made against God so that they were erased out of His sight. His death completed that beautiful bridge that



Bernthal cover, February 1988



Bernthal cover, February 1986

returned us to God. We were once again reconciled to our Creator, as St. Paul says: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

“Double Grace!”

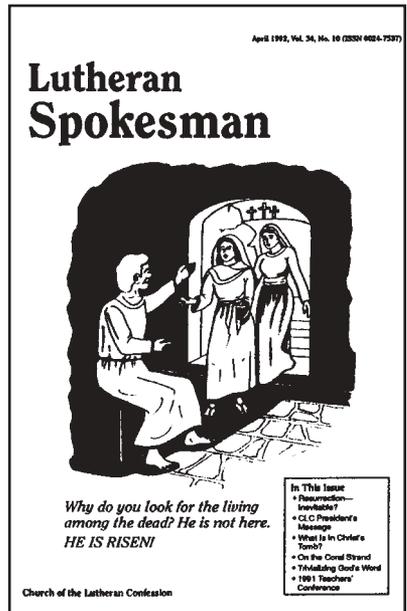
Our verse has something even more to tell us. It says that Jesus was raised again for our justification. Very early on that first Easter morning, well before the sun was up, Jesus was made alive in His grave by the Holy Spirit. He then vanished outside of His tomb. When He did that, the final step of God’s plan for our salvation had been accomplished. Jesus’ blood was the thing that erased our offenses from God’s sight. A dead Jesus, however, does no one any good. He also had to rise again from the dead for our justification.

The Bible’s meaning of the word “justify” is “to declare righteous.” God declares us righteous because of Jesus’ perfect earthly life, His suffering and death for our sins, and finally His resurrection. Christ’s suffering and death and then rising again to destroy our sins is a beautiful example of God’s giving us double grace for our offenses. Isaiah states that from the hand of the Lord we have received double—that is, double grace—for all our sins (Is. 40). Surely Jesus’ rising from death shouts to us that His Father had accepted His payment for all our wrongs. The way back to Father God had been constructed by Jesus, the Son. Praise be to His glorious name forever and ever.

Another grand truth about Easter is that Christ’s resurrection means our own resurrection. One day He will come and take us to Himself. He has told us that in His Father’s house there



Bernthal cover, April 1987



Bernthal cover, April 1992

are many mansions. Scripture says that there will be new heavens and a new earth in store for us.

I have chosen to call this new creation, The World Of The Wonderful. There everything will be all smooth, perfect, and beautiful with no more breaches. It will be the Garden of Eden once more—only on a much, much grander scale. There will be no more sorrow, sickness, pain or death for us. All the believers will be united together into one happy and blessed family, never to be parted from one another again. Truly the most tremendous realm of our joy will be to behold Jesus

Himself, our Father God, and the Master of Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, in all their fullest glory.

All of this will be the result of Christ's having come to earth, having suffered and died for our trespasses, and then having risen again so that we would be declared righteous. Because He has done all this for us, He is certainly the One who is Jesus Beneficent, goodness in essence, goodness in quintessence—the great, holy Savior-God.

— Submitted by Greg Kesterson,
member of Berea Lutheran Church,
Sioux Falls, S.Dak.



Understanding Our Faith

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
(From a series of bulletin articles)

“... Christ came as the King He was, though in lowliness—not as an earthly king to satisfy the dreams of men. He came as the King whose kingdom is spiritual and whose scepter is peace.”

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday is the last Sunday in Lent. It introduces the Passion week which includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The week is followed by the celebration of our Savior's resurrection from the dead.

On Palm Sunday Jesus, who humbled Himself—that is, made no show of His equality with God—came into Jerusalem on a lowly beast of burden. He was greeted with palm branches and hosannas.

The entrance into Jerusalem in this

manner was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Zechariah 9. Christ came as the King He was, though in lowliness—not as an earthly king to satisfy the dreams of men. He came as the King whose kingdom is spiritual and whose scepter is peace. He brought His royal rule of peace to all in the world who, feeling the burden of their sin, find their forgiveness and eternal hope in Him.

Palm Sunday was observed in the Greek Church as early as the fourth cen-

ture and in the Western Church since the seventh century or earlier. Greek and Roman churches held a procession on that day. The members carried branches that had been previously blessed. During the Middle Ages a live donkey, beautifully decorated and carrying a priest with a consecrated host (*church-blessed wafers used in the Catholic Eucharist—ed.*) and the Book of the Gospel, headed the procession. In England Palm Sunday was formerly celebrated with much ceremony, but during the reign of Edward VI the blessing and procession of palms was discontinued in the churches of England.

Many rites that are not with us today were conducted on this day throughout its history. In the Lutheran Church Palm Sunday became a day upon which confirmation was traditionally observed. The result was that the real significance of this day was lost upon many.

On the first Palm Sunday the people sang “hosanna” to the Lord. No doubt there were many sincere expressions of praise; but the reality is that many who sang “hosanna” were among those who by the end of the week were crying for Jesus to be crucified. In other words, they became caught up in the emotion of the moment on Palm Sunday—an



emotion that soon wore off.

It is an easy thing to become emotional about Jesus; but emotion lacks substance if it is an emotion not grounded on a firm foundation.

The Lord does not desire mere emotion but is pleased with an abiding faith anchored in His sacrificial atonement. Such faith prevails through the peaks and valleys of life. Such faith is not swayed by the opinion of the moment. It is not embarrassed by the lowliness of the Savior. Rather, it rejoices in His lowliness, believing that in His lowliness the believer in Christ is exalted to heaven.

That is good reason to sing “hosanna” and to pursue a life that supports the word of praise. Faith—“steady as she goes”—looks unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who shall return in glory to take His people home.

SMORGASBORD

• **SO MUCH CONFUSION (This report comes to us from a member of the Mission Helper team, Michael Thom.)**

As newcomers to Nigeria my wife and I have been struck by many strange sights and sounds: the chaotic city traffic; the midnight village drums; the sea of dark faces gazing curiously at us.

And the many, many, churches. Traveling down any road in Akwa Ibom State, home of the NCLC Bible Institute, one cannot travel even one mile without passing several churches. And in the city, every block seems to have at least two or three.

Some of the churches are Christian,



Michael & Mary Thom before leaving for Nigeria, December 2, 2001

but a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are also evident. Churches that advertise miracles and wealth are large and popular.

The names of the churches range from the traditional to the bizarre. On our last trip to Uyo, I saw the Methodist Church and the Lutheran Church of Nigeria. But there were also the Wide World Prayer and Healing Mission, the Ultimate Liberty Ministries, and the Garden of Miracle Chapel.

Looking at the large number of churches here, one might ask, "What are we doing here? What need is there for more missionaries in a country that seems so full of them?"

The best answer to that question is the one given by Mr. Umoron, a businessman from Uyo whom we visited last week. Speaking of the many churches, he said, "There is so much confusion! One church says one thing and the other says something else. And so many churches are only interested in your money!"

Many churches mean much confusion. Satan likes that. Satan can use the multitude of churches effectively to keep many Nigerians in a state of bewilderment and spiritual ignorance. If he is able to keep on pouring out his flood of false doctrines, perhaps the simple message of the crucified and

risen Savior from sin will be drowned out. That is Satan's plan. And it seems to be working quite well.

But God has a different plan. And we are part of it. God's plan is to send forth His Word—through us. God's plan is to use our lips and our tongues to share the message of Jesus, our Savior from sin. Through that Word He will cut through the confusion and bring understanding, peace, and joy through Christ.

That is why we are here.

May God continue to thwart Satan's plan to confuse! May He continue to spread the pure and saving gospel of Christ.

• "THE TRUE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH"

— A three-volume set of books entitled "The Wauwatosa Theology" was published in 1997 by Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wis. The set contains essays of three professors (J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller) from the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

In their monthly Study Club meetings pastors of our CLC's Minnesota district have been reviewing some of these essays. At a recent meeting Pieper's "The True Reconstruction of the Church" (first delivered at the August 1919 Convention of the Wisconsin Synod at New Ulm, Minnesota—and found in Volume III) was reviewed. The essay came across as especially pertinent to the church and its ministry also in our day.

Yes, the essays are from the first decades of another era, but a conscientious reader will find that what is said

could have been written for the first years of the twenty-first century as well.

We would like to share just a few paragraphs and observations from that (50-page!) essay. It soon becomes clear that the writer was concerned about the direction of his church (synod)—even as we are about ours today. All emphases (italics) are in the original.

“The true weal and woe of the church is to be measured by this standard. The stronger its spiritual character is, the more glorious it is, and the weaker its spiritual character is, the more wretched and deplorable is its condition. This is true of each individual member of the church, of every congregation, and of every synod.

“Our general synod is not in a flourishing condition inasmuch and insofar as it has brilliant and titled professors, educated and eloquent pastors, master teachers, capable officials, model constitutions and organizations, adequate facilities, beautiful church and school buildings, imposing education institutions, or a phenomenal external growth, constantly overflowing treasuries, heavy endowments, adequate property and lucrative business establishments; *but it flourishes to the degree that the spiritual character just described—faith, knowledge, fear of God, piety, blessedness, holiness, love toward God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the very image of Christ itself—dwells in it.*” (pp. 298-299)

A bit later the following diagnosis is made—and then elaborated upon at great length.

“ . . . The spiritual life among us is in the process of diminish-

ing. We have now had the gospel in its truth and purity in great abundance and power for so long a time, and have accustomed ourselves to this blessing so thoroughly, *that we no longer regard it as something extraordinary.* This is already the first step toward despising it. We have already begun to make of our entire church life and Christianity a matter of effortlessly transmitted tradition, inheritance, and custom; and thereby to retain the outward form or shell and to lose the kernel and the essence—that is, the spirit of faith, of love toward God, of fear of God; the spirit of mortification of the flesh and of good works; and the spirit of brotherly love.

“ . . . To prove this, I shall have to go somewhat into detail. In our Christian homes there is and remains very little of God’s Word, hardly even the regular family worship with Scripture reading and prayer every morning and every evening. Yes, in some Christian homes there is no common prayer at all anymore, neither spoken by the father, nor by the mother, nor by the children, particularly in such homes in which the children do not attend a Christian school. Even the table prayers have been discontinued in some families. The Bible is seldom or never opened. Only the grandmother still prays perhaps with her hymnal; all the rest either leave the hymnal at the church, or they put it away immediately after the church services until the following Sunday;

it only serves in the regular church service. Is this not true? . . .” (pp. 302-303)

The essayist made every effort to show his concern was more than impractical theological theory.

“Let each one ask himself: Is my Christianity, my faith, still power and life, or merely an outward form and habit? Is Christ and his grace really still the only strength of my heart and my portion, or is it the things of this world? Do my thoughts and desires seek that which is above, or that which is on earth? Am I still one who prays? Is God’s Word still being used in my house, or have the Bible, the hymnal, and the catechism become silent and dead books to me? What is more important to me, the spiritual and eternal welfare of my children, or their temporal and worldly advantage?” (p. 305)

While such questions directed the reader toward spiritual self-examination, no question was left as to the source of strength for spiritual revival. For example:

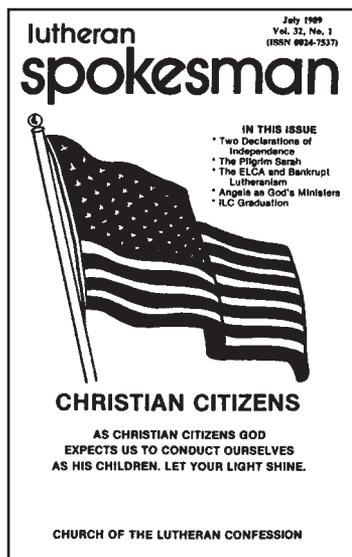
“. . . Here is the secret to success. This Word [the Bible] is spirit and life, sheer divine power, divine fire. This Word must restore the world, the church, our ministry, if only it lives in it, that is, in faith and prayer thinks it through, meditates on it, studies it. No one can sit in a hot oven without being warmed. No one can live in the Word, in the gospel, without being illumined by its light, being warmed by its glory, being

set on fire by its fire, being strengthened by its power, and being spiritualized by its spirit— unless, of course, a person is entirely unfit for faith, obdurate, ossified, or mummified.” (p. 318)

Whenever the essayist pointed fingers, he did not forget that some of those fingers pointed backwards. As a seminary professor he sought to touch the hearts and consciences of his fellow “professional” clergy. Often it was pointed out that if the religion of pastors and teachers was shallow and superficial, what do they imagine they can do for God’s people in the pews or behind the desks?

The three-volume set of books is not cheap. Yet it would be a worthy investment for any pastor or layperson who is ready for a personal spiritual examination on many fronts. — Seems that should be all of us.

(Note: permission was received from Northwestern Publishing House to reprint these quotations. — Ed.)



Bernthal cover, July 1989

Patriotism vs. Evangelism

It must have been there all along, only lying inactive and unused. It must have already been there in order to come alive so quickly and so forcefully. Patriotism must have been in us and our fellow Americans, but was perhaps put in the closet of our minds because we had so much else to do. We never quit treasuring our country, but the burning desire to publicly declare our national pride was put on the shelf of our hearts and quietly gathered dust UNTIL . . . until it was reawakened by an attack on our soil against our countrymen.

Now, American flags whop in the wind above vehicles of every sort. Billboards cry out “UNITED WE STAND” upon a backdrop of red, white, and blue. The men and women serving in our nation’s law enforcement and armed services are once again our heroes; and children who once aspired to be computer programmers now talk about being fire-fighters and Army Rangers.

One dramatic, horrific, and deadly attack has awakened a whole nation and re-inspired her citizens with a loyalty to their country that has been largely absent for many years. We’re different now. We now have something for which to fight. The honor of our country has been challenged, and we’re ready to defend it!

One has to believe that those outside of America are now seeing evidence of just how much we treasure our freedom and our richly blessed land—whereas earlier there may have been

some doubt in their minds. Such is the nature of American *patriotism*!

As wonderfully blessed as we are to live in the United States, God reminds us that we are citizens of a better, heavenly country. “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Heaven’s citizens practice a patriotism that is better known as *evangelism*.

Patriotism is “being a patriot.” Evangelism is “being an evangelist,” and an evangelist is, literally, “a good news spreader.” Therefore we do the work of an evangelist and declare our “Christian Patriotism” when we declare and share the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus.

In patriotism we declare our love for our country and our willingness to serve the country and our fellow citizens. In evangelism we declare our love for our heavenly country and the Savior who makes citizens of the kingdom of heaven. In evangelism we declare our willingness to serve our Savior and our fellow sinners.

It took a ferocious attack on America to rekindle patriotism. Yet day after day Satan and his armies are unleashing even greater attacks with even more significance . . . and the world hardly notices. But we wouldn’t really expect the world to notice the attacks of Satan and his wicked army, because the sinful world and its sinful ways are part of Satan’s forces.

As wicked and dangerous as terrorists against America may be, those who

seek to destroy our citizenship in heaven are even more dangerous. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Our citizenship in heaven is under *daily* attack! The honor of our Lord and Savior is challenged *daily*! *Good Christians, arise to evangelism!*

It falls upon us who are citizens of the heavenly country to sound the warnings of evil to our fellow sinners. It falls upon us to declare God’s truth in order to expose lies and false philosophies of the world (Colossians 2:8). The blessed privilege of showing that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and thereby bringing others into citizenship with Christ—falls upon us who are already part of Christ’s kingdom.

Patriotism had grown dull in the peaceful prosperity of our country. Now it is awakened . . . *fresh . . . vibrant* once again. In the face of a *daily* need for the gospel among ourselves and among everyone we meet, have we maintained an *awake . . . fresh . . . vibrant* declaration of our love for Christ?

Now in the aftermath of September 11th God is providing a wide-open door of opportunity for you to be active in evangelism. There are many people who are filled with *fear* because of the attack. They are your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors. You’ve joined with them in “American Pride”; now also comfort them with the comfort with which you yourselves have been comforted by God (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:4).

There are many people who are *confused, doubtful*, and in a state of turmoil, because their lives all of a

sudden seem so *uncertain* and are filled with so many *questions*. These are your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, the people you meet. You have the answers to remove uncertainty. People you meet are now ready perhaps to hear the good news of Christ in a way they haven’t been for a very long time! “Walk in wisdom toward those who are on the outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:5-6).

From the Moslems in Afghanistan to the unbelieving neighbor down the street . . . from the well-respected businessman to the terrorist who takes many lives . . . from our fellow Christians to our own selves . . . *We all need the gospel!* We all need to hear the good news that active evangelism brings!

Oh, that the Lord would rouse in our hearts a love for our Savior that erupts into an evangelism evident to all around us!

May our zeal to help the heathen
Be increased from day to day
As we plead in true compassion
And for their conversion pray. . . .

Savior, shine in all Thy glory
On the nations near and far;
From the highways and the byways
Call them, O Thou Morning Star.
Guide them whom Thy grace hath chosen
Out of Satan’s dreadful thrall
To the mansions of Thy Father—
There is room for sinners all!
[TLH #498, st. 5a, 6]

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

First Kings, Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two

Reaching For Forbidden Fruit

My sainted great-grandfather wrote a book entitled “A Christian Physiology.” It has provided some good family entertainment, for he seemed to believe that gluttony was the root of nearly every human physical ailment.

I don’t believe the writer was too far off. After all, gluttony is a kind of discontentment and I do believe the sin of discontentment is a root of nearly all of our problems in life.

Consider the condition of our first parents. Adam and Eve had been truly blessed by God. They were given a perfect paradise to live in and to care for. Each had a perfect partner in the other with whom to share the joys of their world. They also had a perfect, loving Father watching over them.

Satan’s lure of “to be like God” was just too much of a temptation, however. Adam and Eve surrendered to the attractions of pleasure and power—which plunged all mankind with them into a never-ending quest for the next best thing.

Consider King Ahab of the Old Testament. The Lord had blessed him as well. He came from a long line of kings. The Lord allowed him to sit in the seat of authority over God’s people. Ahab would have been able to consult with the prophet Elijah—had he so desired. He had great wealth and command of armies; yet it wasn’t enough.

In 1 Kings we read that a certain vineyard was adjacent to Ahab’s royal property, a perfect spot for the royal vegetables to grow. Ahab sought out Naboth, the owner of the land. Ahab’s intent was to purchase or trade for the parcel he desired. Naboth quickly put the kibosh on the deal by informing the king that the property would never leave his possession, as it was his family inheritance. Ahab then showed his lack of spirituality by going home and pouting over the whole affair, even to the point of not eating.

In stepped the king’s wife, Jezebel. She devised a plan that would not only get her husband what he desired, but would make it “legal” as well. She hired men to bear false witness against Naboth, claiming he had blasphemed both God and the king. It worked; Naboth was put to death. Having left no heirs, his property was left to the king.

Ahab’s gluttony, greediness, and discontent had come to full fruition—bearing the fruits of lying, deceit, thievery, and even murder.

Some Self Examination

Consider yourself. Do you get that “grass is greener” feeling that causes discontent to take root? Things seem to be going along fine in our lives until we see how richly the Lord has chosen to bless someone else. Stirrings begin.

“Why not me, Lord?”

These feelings of dissatisfaction with our lot in life can strike us at any and all ages.

Children often look longingly at the parents of their peers. For guidance against this discontent, our Lord encourages: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).

A student may feel a need to cheat on a test on the excuse that God just didn’t give her the abilities in a certain area. For this temptation our Lord advises: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jms. 5:1).

A married man thinks he can find solace and understanding in the arms of a woman not his wife. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

A Christian may feel a yearning when he sees the power, pleasure, wealth, and influence that the people of

the world enjoy. Yet the Lord reminds him, “In the morning they are like grass which flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers” (Ps. 90:6).

An elderly widow wonders why she must suffer heartache and health problems in her golden years. To this the Spirit assures her, “And the Lord, He is the One . . . He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear or do not be dismayed” (Deut. 31:8).

Our Lord and Savior came to earth to pay our debt, which we could not pay. He earned for us His riches, which we did not desire. Now all of heaven lies before us, and the Lord will provide all that we need for the journey, including contentment.

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31-32)

—*Teacher David Bernthal*



Back in October 2001 Holy Cross of Phoenix hosted the CLC Teachers Conference. This sign was advertising Dr. David Menton’s lectures on creation at that conference

Called home to eternal life—

Waldemar J. Bernthal

September 20, 1924 - January 13, 2002

For the past forty years Waldemar “Brownie” Bernthal was a familiar and dearly loved figure throughout much of the CLC. From his home congregation of Messiah, Hales Corners, Wisconsin to winter homes in Arizona and Florida, to service as a delegate at numerous conventions and conferences, he was a strong and faithful supporter of the Lord’s work among us.

As a gifted artist, he produced many covers for the *Lutheran Spokesman*. In addition, Brownie drew the long, black-and-white picture of the buildings at the CLC’s Immanuel Lutheran College. That drawing (which appears elsewhere in this issue—ed.) has often been used as a kind of logo or letter-



Brownie Bernthal

head for our Eau Claire, Wisconsin school. He also taught drawing classes in the Christian Day School of Messiah church, Hales Corners.

On Sunday morning, January 13, after singing hymns with family members at his bedside, Mr. Bernthal completed his earthly journey and joined

From the Editor:

The masthead of the *Lutheran Spokesman* contains the name of Waldemar Bernthal beginning with the issue of Volume 14, No. 2 (August 1972) through Volume 38, No. 12 (June 1996). In other words, for some twenty-four years Brownie used his talents by contributing covers for our magazine. Though for a few years he shared the cover duty with other artists, most of the time he alone was responsible for them.

Our editorship began in 1984. We can say that Brownie could always be counted on—not only for deadline promptness, but also for a truly Lutheran depiction on the cover.

Perhaps our readers noticed the back-page notation in connection with last month’s cover? Matt Schaser, a relative of Brownie as well as one of our current artists, adapted one of Brownie’s Lenten covers (March 1985) for our February 2002 issue.

In this issue will be found other samples (of necessity, in black and white only) of covers done by Waldemar Bernthal.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

his Lord in glory. He was 77 years old. He is survived by his wife Elaine, five children, 27 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. By God's grace he could say with the apostle: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness . . ." (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

—For the *Spokesman*, by
Pastor Michael Eichstadt

Announcements

50th Anniversary Celebration

In thanksgiving to God for His multitude of mercies for the past fifty years, Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary on Sunday, August 4, 2002.

You are cordially invited to celebrate with us in a day of special services and activities in thanksgiving and praise. The first service will begin at 9:00 a.m.



Dr. David Menton addressing the CLC Teachers Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in October 2001



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE

—W. Bernthal design