

CHRISTIAN LOVE

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



*"...God demonstrates His own love toward us,
in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

ROMANS 5:8

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An adjective is a word which describes a noun and modifies our view of the noun. A specific adjective will set its noun apart from others of the genus.

When the word “love” stands by itself, our initial idea and definition of the word may run from one end of the spectrum to the other. We may think of any number of songs which offer definitions or concepts of the word. We may think of Hollywood’s version of love. We may even think of the philosophical ideas set forth by worldly philosophers and psychologists as to what love is or may be or should be.

Love—standing alone and unadorned by any adjective—is open to subjective interpretations. Add the correct adjective, and our idea and concept of love is removed from the banal and worldly to something that is concrete and glorious.

“Christian” love—that adjective describes what *kind* of love we are speaking of. It is that adjective which

removes the word from an indiscriminate emotion into a divine reality. Such love is seen every day in the lives of those who—by the grace of God the Father in Christ Jesus, through the Spirit—believe.

Christian love is not just a concept or an idea. It is real and solid, even as Jesus Christ was and is real, living and breathing. Jesus was not and is not an idea of God the Father. The Father really did beget His Son. The Son Jesus really did live here on this Earth. He spoke, He ate, He walked, He grew, He learned, He obeyed the will of His heavenly Father by His obedience to the Law. He actually performed miracles, preached, and ultimately He gave up His body and shed His blood on the cross for the salvation of all mankind.

This was as real as you and I are real! There in the reality of Jesus on Earth is the love of God *demonstrated!* So the apostle Paul writes, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us,

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in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

God’s Love Demonstrated

As it applies to us, Christian love demonstrates God’s love.

In *reality*, we are imitators of Jesus—what He did, we do. What He preached, we preach. As He trusted in the Father to provide all things, so we trust. As He had faith in the Father that all things were and are for the good and glory of God the Father, so we have the same

faith. As Jesus gave of Himself, so we give. As Jesus the King of kings humbled Himself and served humanity, so do we. As St. Paul reminds us, we are confident that these earthly afflictions are light; they are as nothing compared to the glory which will be revealed in us and which glory we shall share in for eternity—all because of Jesus!

Christian love is real! It is not just a concept; it is not just an idea, because the love of Christ abides in us and because we are real, living beings separated from mere worldly love unto the love of Christ and all things which pertain to God and His glory.

“Christian” is a good adjective to describe “love.” May the Holy Spirit change both the adjective and the noun into a verb in our hearts and lives!

—Pastor Roland Gurgel



THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

The Christian life is a progression, but not a “progress” in the sense of man-made inventions and developments. We are talking about Christ and our movement towards eternity with Him.

The Sunday of the Transfiguration of our Lord focuses on that notion and motion.

Maybe some of you had the kind of grade school teacher I had, who taught us this little ditty about life: “Good, better, best; never let it rest, till the good is better, and the better best!” It’s sort of like “practice makes perfect,” which is not a bad idea. But we can do something else with it as Christians.

Good!

It is good that Christ is the focal point of all Scripture. The Bible is cre-

ated by God, and to borrow Genesis words: “God saw that it was good”—because everything in Scripture revolves around Christ’s saving work.

Moses and Elijah, appearing in the Transfiguration accounts, are mentioned in the last verses of Malachi as summing up the whole Old Testament witness to Christ. This witness overflows into the New Testament where the focus, now greatly expanded, is still on the same Christ—law and gospel, faith, justification, and all good things in Him, whose departure from this life would be by means of cross

and tomb.

This is so good for us to learn. No one on Earth could have dreamed it up. It is not some clever man-made invention. No one may interpret it as he pleases. It is pure gift, inspired by the Spirit, interpreting and explaining itself. And we have this sure prophetic Word in our hands and hearts!

And what makes it good, lest we forget, is that the whole conversation within that Book is about Jesus Christ and His love and actions for us sinners.

Better!

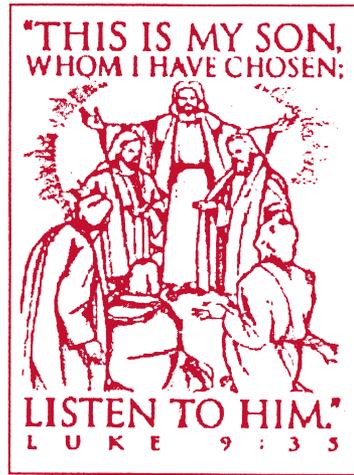
And it gets better. The Word of God doesn't just sit there. By its very nature it moves, grows, progresses. It gets up from the pages and makes its way into the hearts of millions, down through the ages. It is meant to be taken up—to be read, marked, learned, inwardly digested.

God's voice from heaven there on the mount roundly approves of His Son and His work (like at His Baptism!). The Father's voice, together with those of Moses and Elijah—and later Peter, James, and John—make up the conversation that lives on in the history of the Church.

These representatives of Old and New Testaments fill hearts and congregations with repentance, faith, and joy over the procured precious pardon. It is just so much better that these words are used—in our lives, in our preaching and teaching, in our praying and communing, in our mission outreach and instruction classes—down here “on the plain.”

Best!

But the best is yet to come! Like the lady who told her pastor that, in her



coffin at her funeral, she wanted her hands clasped around a fork. Why? Because at every potluck she could remember, someone from the kitchen always shouted out (referring to dessert): “Hold onto your forks! The best is yet to come!”

The Transfiguration of our Lord surely points to a marvelous change in life's circumstances—to a change from this life, to one ahead. The New Testament uses different words to describe that change. Luke says that the appearance of Jesus' face “was altered”—became something else, something different. Matthew and Mark speak of a “metamorphosis.” Luke adds that Moses and Elijah also “appeared in glory.”

This makes it all very exciting. Paul says in Philippians 3:21 that Jesus will change the arrangement of our lowly bodies, now deformed by sin, so that they will be fashioned like His glorious body. He uses another Greek word to say the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:52: “We shall all be changed.” We cannot even imagine how “best” the best will be!

The Transfiguration conversation spills over into the last Bible book with its focus on the victory won for us by Christ. The conversation is now a

melodious one—of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

—Warren H. Fanning,
Pastor Emeritus



“Tears in a Bottle”

Having a little trouble heading off to the daily grind? “Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me” (Ps. 56:1).

Are things a little ‘edgy’ lately at the job (school, home...)? “My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High” (Ps. 56:2).

David, the author of Psalm 56, was clearly no stranger to a world of jealousy, back-stabbing, and workplace paranoia. In fact, we’re told that he composed this psalm when he had fled to the Philistine city of Gath (former home of Goliath).

It might seem a little odd that Goliath’s killer and enemy of the Philistines would attempt to hide there, but the reality was that things were even worse back home, where Saul, who still occupied the Israelite throne, was using every resource available to try to eliminate David. David, after all, had been anointed by Samuel as the next king of Israel.

Still, it didn’t take David long to be recognized in Gath, and he only escaped by acting insane when they showed him to Achish, the king. Achish figured he had plenty of madmen around as it was, and threw David out of town. Still, the experience for David was one of jumping out of the

frying pan into the fire. “They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life” (Ps. 56:6).

We live and work in a fallen world; we make our home under the leering eyes of Satan and his minions. Not only do we often endure the mean-spirited and unscrupulous around us; we also face the danger of becoming like our foes and descending to the level of those whom we ourselves find offensive.

The worst thing we can do is to forget how things stand with God’s children of faith. “You number my wanderings; put my tears in Your bottle” (Ps. 56:8).

What good are tears in a bottle? God knows the troubles of His own people. He may bear long with the wicked in this world, but the sorrows of the righteous are never forgotten.

Contemplating God

David’s words were not just some kind of therapeutic rant. He had more on the mind than “poor, poor, pitiful me.” He knew where to go for help and comfort. In contemplating God, David knew that his faith, courage, and conviction would be strengthened: “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?” (Ps. 56:3-4)

As a relative youth David had already faced many challenges. But he had no inflated opinion of his own abilities. He knew that the Lord God—who came through the prophets and made a covenant of salvation with His people—would stand up for him, and for all who believed as David did.

If David had reason to believe, we have doubly so. For David looked for a Savior to come. That was at the heart of God’s promises to mankind. We, on the other hand, have seen those promises fulfilled. The Son of David now sits on His everlasting throne (Promise fulfilled!). He has borne the burden of our sin and reconciled us to God (Promise fulfilled!). He has crushed the head of the Serpent (Yea and Amen! Promise fulfilled!).

Certainly we still bear the hostility of the world, and it shows in many ways. Certainly Satan would still try to get us to forsake the way of life

everlasting. But Jesus, David’s Son and Lord, reminds His followers, “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Mt. 6:26)

What a value the Father puts on our heads—the price of His own Son’s life! The Son who overcame the world! “For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” (Ps. 56:13)

We might get up every day and walk through the valley of the shadow of death; but through our faith in the living God, we walk in the clear and joyous light of the children of God.

There is no safer place to be: “In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Ps. 56:11)

—Pastor Peter Reim



Studies in First Thessalonians—

“...(We) wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10).

Chapter 2: 13-16

THE EFFECTIVE WORKING OF THE WORD

As Paul addresses the Christians of Thessalonica, talking about the gospel ministry which he had conducted in their midst, he notes how they responded to this gospel message.

Their response of faith incited Paul

(with his coworkers in the gospel, Silvanus and Timothy) to “thank God without ceasing.” They thanked God because it was the work of the Holy Spirit which had brought about this response of faith. What Paul—and so

also the Holy Spirit—would have us note about their response was that when Paul spoke to them, first in the synagogue or in the home of Jason, they did not regard Paul’s message as something which he had devised or imagined. They heard and understood that the message which Paul spoke to them was the Word of God. It was God’s truth. Because it is God’s truth, it has authority and power to work effectively in hearts and lives.

These facts remain true today. Many consider the words of Paul—in this, as well as the other divinely inspired epistles—to be something less than the Word of God. Many regard Paul’s writings to be his own ideas, reflecting his own individual prejudice and cultural bias. For reasons such as this, many refuse to recognize the truth, the authority, and the power for faith and life that is found in Paul’s epistles as well as in the rest of Scripture.

But by the grace and power of God, the Christians of Thessalonica did believe the words of Paul; they did receive them as they are in truth, the Word of God! These words did work effectively in those who did believe, some from among the Jews, many more from among the Greeks of the city.

The evidence of the effective working of the Word came through the experience of persecution. Paul speaks of how the Thessalonian Christians were subjected to persecution by the Jews, just as the Jerusalem Christians had been persecuted.

In Acts chapter 17 we read how the Jews responded in a jealous rage to the success of Paul’s preaching of the gospel. They sought out evil men from



the market place and, gathering a mob, they descended upon the house of Jason. They dragged him and some of the other brethren before the magistrates, accusing them of treason and of being troublemakers in the city. All of this was indeed very similar to the way in which Paul himself had once persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem.

The Thessalonian Christians imitated the believers of Jerusalem and remained steadfast and true, drawing strength from the Word of truth. The Jews didn’t like the fact that Paul preached to the Gentiles. Not believing the gospel themselves, they also opposed its proclamation, even among the Gentiles.

No Different Today!

And so, that is the way of the world. It is no different today. The Word which we know to be God’s Word is discredited by the world, by the very society in which we live. The world is hostile to the gospel, preferring the ideas of human righteousness to the wonders of justification by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

Consequently, those who do believe in Christ alone will endure persecution. Even if they are not hauled before the civil magistrates, they will be labeled as troublemakers.

When the gospel is shared with others, that activity will be opposed as being bigoted and culturally damaging. Those who do the sharing will be told that they are too strict, that they are against everything in society, when in fact they are only for Christ and His gospel.

The work of Christian missionaries is still accused of many great evils. Mission work that actually ministers to the soul is characterized as cultural genocide. Yes, the forces of evil are gathered together to oppose the gospel of God's love and forgiveness. Those who proclaim this message of God's incomprehensible love towards sinful mankind are oppressed and persecuted.

May we not be intimidated into silence! The gospel works effectively in us who believe. Even when we must endure tribulations and persecutions, the gospel itself works powerfully within our hearts to keep us steadfast in true faith in the face of oppression.

Yes, enemies are out there—outward enemies of the gospel, but we have enemies in our own souls as well. Our own natural human inclinations are sinful. Our flesh rebels against the statement of our own sinfulness and

guilt. At other times our own hearts would accuse us of sin, and of being the hypocrite (but God is greater than our heart, see 1 John 3:20).

Against all this, we have clear statements of gospel truth as presented by Paul, who declared, “When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4); and “By (this) one man's obedience (the) many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19); and, we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

This is the Word of God that works effectively in hearts oppressed by sin, keeping us in Christ Jesus unto eternal life. For this Word and its effective power, we praise and glorify God all our days.

God's special Gift of the Savior born to us still echoes in our hearts. Let us demonstrate our appreciation of the Word and our Savior by seeking His strength, hearing the Word every Sunday and living in the Word day by day. Through this Word we are continually brought the Gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

—*Pastor Theodore Barthels*



On August 14, 2005, Grace Lutheran Church and School, Valentine, Nebraska, welcomed its new teacher. James Arndt (right) is with Pastor James Naumann.

“One Thing Is Needed”

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” What a glorious and simple proclamation of the gospel! Hasn't this passage been called the “gospel in a nutshell”? Isn't this a precious passage that even our children know and understand?

We should be reminded that the Bible, the Word of our God, was not intended to be a Book that only the clergy or spiritually elite could figure out and understand. The Bible was written for you and me and all people. It is not a deep, dark, mysterious book that takes years and years of training to understand. It is the Word of our God. It is the way our Lord speaks to us and guides us.

Our Lord tells us, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31f). Our Lord also tells us, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It is that simple, because it is the Holy Spirit Who works through the Word, guiding us and giving to us understanding, thus strengthening and building us up in the Christian faith.

“These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13). There is only one Spirit-intended meaning of the Bible—one reason why our Lord gave us His Word—that is, to reveal to us our Savior Jesus Christ and thereby show

us the way of salvation. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (Jn. 5:39). “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (Jn. 17:3).

That is what is revealed to us in the Word—our Savior Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness and life He offers to all. That is the precious message of the gospel—salvation by grace through Spirit-worked faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Remember when Jesus spoke to Martha and reminded her of the absolute importance of the Word? Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Lk. 10:41-42).

Let us as God's children take a lesson from Mary and sit at our Savior's feet, diligently and faithfully hearing His Word. It is the One Thing needed!

We are not to put our trust in man or ourselves but in our Savior and His Word. People are fallible; the Word of God is not!

—Pastor Jay Hartmann



The Discourses of Christ

The Father Revealed—John 14:7-14

Seeing God

A philosophy professor who was an agnostic was asked to consider the prospect of dying and finding himself before God. What answer would he give to God for refusing to believe in Him? The professor answered that he would say, “You didn’t give me enough evidence to believe in you.”

Atheists and agnostics have always claimed that since they haven’t seen God, they can’t be expected to believe in Him. But they have no excuse for their unbelief. God has given ample witness of Himself, as Paul said to the people of Lystra, “He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:17). God’s eternal power and Godhead can be seen in the things that He has made (Rom. 1:20).

Yet God’s creation does not tell us everything we need to know about Him. The starry heavens, the majestic mountains, the vast oceans reveal a Creator who is powerful, wise, and good. Yet they do not reveal the love of God, nor do they tell us of His gracious desire to save us from our sin and death. These things can be known only through His Son Jesus Christ whom we come to know in the Holy Scriptures. It is in Christ that we see God.

In the hours before the beginning of His passion, Jesus spoke of these



things to His disciples, for they did not yet understand that in coming to know Him they had come to see the Father. Philip asked, “Lord, show us the Father.” Jesus told them, “You have seen Him.” In seeing Jesus they had in fact seen God. “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” How? “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.”

Jesus here expresses the unity of the persons in the Godhead. This is more than just that Jesus knows all about the Father and so is able to tell us all about Him, though that is certainly true. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in the man Jesus (Col. 2:9). He is God’s Son, “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3).

Divine Authority

Jesus also speaks with divine authority. He showed this by His divine works. “The Father who dwells in Me does the works,” He said. Jesus

gave sight to the blind, commanded wind and waves, raised the dead, rose from the dead Himself. These works set Him apart from all self-styled prophets.

Pascal, the 17th century philosopher and mathematician, well summed up the difference between such men and Jesus, when he wrote, “Anyone could do what Mohammed did, for he was not foretold and did no miracles.”

Jesus did many divine works which, as He says, ought to be enough for anyone to believe in Him: “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”

Like the first disciples we might think it would be beneficial for us to see God now in the same way that the disciples saw Jesus. We might say what Philip said, “Just let us see God with our own eyes and then we won’t have

any trouble believing.”

But God has His own better way for us to see Him. He has sent His own Son to reveal Him to us. Jesus made God known as a God of love and grace. He did this by coming into His own world and taking on our human nature. He did it by laying down His life for us and for all people to free us from sin and death.

When Jesus rose again and ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has opened our sin-blinded eyes to Jesus as our Savior. Seeing Jesus, we have seen God. And having seen Him now by faith, we will see Him with our eyes when we are raised to eternal life.

We can say as Job did, “In my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another”(Job 19:26,27).

—Pastor John Klatt



The Christian Citizen —Seventh in a Series—

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ISSUES: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

A common scene unfolds at the site of many criminal executions that take place in the United States: Protesters line up outside the penitentiary gates, carrying signs that say “Thou shalt not kill.”

Many people feel, with good intent, that God would never be in favor of anyone intentionally taking a human life. God’s commandment is misquoted, however, when people fail to recognize

whom the Lord means by the “thou” in “Thou shalt not kill.”

God makes it plain that it is the individual, who takes it upon himself to end a human life, who is guilty of murder. “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6).

Because human beings are made in God’s image, God alone has the ultimate

authority to end a human life. Yet, this passage also shows that it is God's will to delegate this authority, when He says, "By man his blood shall be shed."

Just who is it that is given this authority? In Old Testament times, the Lord empowered the government of Israel to inflict capital punishment on those who were found guilty of murder (Exodus 21:12), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), sodomy (Leviticus 20:13), rape (Deuteronomy 22:25), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), witchcraft (Exodus 22:18), teaching false doctrine (Deuteronomy 13:1-10), and other crimes. In those days, it was God Himself who governed Israel directly, giving them not only moral laws to live by but also their civil laws over property, crime, punishment, and even diet.

Today we are not bound by these Old Testament civil laws. Instead, the Lord has delegated these civil matters to earthly governments, as Paul relates in the book of Romans: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Romans 13:1,4).

Thus, the Bible unmistakably gives to government the authority to punish evildoers, even to the extent of putting them to death.

Our Lutheran Confessions weigh in on this matter. In Luther's discussion of the 5th Commandment we read: "Therefore neither God nor the government is included in this commandment, yet their right to take human life is not abrogated. God has delegated His

"...Because human beings are made in God's image, God alone has the ultimate authority to end a human life. Yet, this passage also shows that it is God's will to delegate this authority, when He says, 'By man his blood shall be shed.'"

authority of punishing evil-doers to civil magistrates...Therefore what is forbidden here applies to private individuals, not to governments" (Large Catechism I, 180 to 181, Tappert, p. 389)

But the question arises—do the Scriptures require governments to enforce the death penalty, and if so, for which crimes?

Based on Biblical principles, a strong argument can be made that it is wise for our government to do so when the nature of the crime is heinous. When justice for horrible crimes is exacted fairly and swiftly, there is the beneficial effect of deterrence, that is, obedience to the law because of the fear of punishment.

The Bible describes this in the case of a man who gives false witness against his neighbor in court. He is to receive the punishment that would have been inflicted on the one who was falsely accused, "And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you" (Deuteronomy 19:20).

Nevertheless, since the Bible does not require the practice of capital punishment for our civil governments, the state is free to enact it or not.

If capital punishment is practiced, is it possible that at times an innocent person might be put to death? Sadly, yes. Our judicial system is far from perfect,

and there are times when the guilty are acquitted and the innocent are condemned. We must remember that there is in heaven a true and righteous Judge who someday will make right all that is wrong (see Luke 16:25 for an example of this).

The greatest example of an innocent man being put to death is that of the Lord Jesus Himself, “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His

mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). The only sinless Man who ever lived was condemned to death by crucifixion!

As we think about Christ’s death, we must remember that it was for our sins that He suffered and died. We are the guilty ones who deserved the death penalty (Romans 6:23), but Jesus paid it all. He died so that we might live (John 5:24)!

—*Pastor Bruce Naumann*

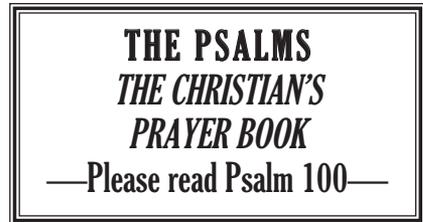


A UNIQUE KING/PRIEST

During the Reformation there was the need to find ways in which to teach God’s Word to common, everyday people. Martin Luther wrote the Catechism not only as a way for pastors to be educated in the six chief parts of Scripture, but also as a way for fathers to teach their children. The Reformers also found hymns as a vital way to teach the doctrines of God to children and adults of all ages. This is part of our Lutheran heritage that we continue on to this day.

This is nothing new. The psalms of the Old Testament not only served as songs of praise but also were songs of teaching. Psalm 110 is a prime example of this. Its importance in demonstrating the role of the Messiah is underscored by the fact that it is the psalm quoted most often in the New Testament—several chapters in the letter to the Hebrews are devoted to its content.

We find value in this psalm—as did the Old Testament people of God—because it tells us of the unique nature of the office of the Messiah. The Messiah would be both King and



Priest.

As 21st century Americans, we have no first-hand knowledge of living under a King, and very few understand the role of a priest. Old Testament believers, however, had intimate knowledge of both offices. A king would rule his people in complete authority. No one could question his decisions. He would lead his people into battle, protect them, and act as judge and jury for them. The priest had the role of mediator, going between God and the people, making sacrifices and offering prayers on their behalf.

Just as in the United States we know that the President cannot simultaneously be Senator and Supreme Court justice, so also the Jews knew that it was impossible for one man to be both king and priest.

Kings came from the tribe of Judah and—even more narrowly—from the line of David. Priests would come only from the tribe of Levi. (There is an interesting account in Zechariah chapter 6 of how a high priest named Joshua was given a temporary crown, but this was only a symbolic rule, foreshadowing Jesus Himself.)

Like Melchizedek

The only other time there was a King/Priest was before Levi and Judah were even born. Melchizedek was a King/Priest in the days of Abraham. Melchizedek is a mysterious person who suddenly appears on the scene (see Genesis 14:18). He who suddenly appears on the scene (see Genesis 14:8), is labeled as the King of Salem, as well as a priest to whom Abraham

gave tribute. In our psalm we are told that the Messiah would be “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” We also read in Hebrews chapter 7 that Jesus, like Melchizedek, would be a King of righteousness and a King of peace. He would have no beginning or no end. He would deserve honor and glory and be unchangeable.

Jesus would not be like the Levitical priests who repeated sacrifices year after year, and who were replaceable. He would be a Priest forever who needed to make only one sacrifice for sin—Himself. We sing in the Hymn (TLH, #307): “Offered was He for greatest and for least, Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest.”

Jesus continues on to this day as an Advocate between believers and the



Bible School children from St. Matthew's, Dallas, TX display their theme: "The Armour of God." Matthew Hanel is pastor. (July 2005)

Father. It is a role that continues and is superior to the role of any others that God used as mediators. Truly, we are blessed to have such a One as our Mediator!

As a King, Jesus would “rule in the midst of [His] enemies.” At the same time He would have volunteers who would willingly serve Him. No one besides Jesus can bring greater terror as an enemy, and no one can bring greater comfort as an ally!

Thanks be to God that we know the Messiah as our Friend. We find ourselves benefiting from the King’s reign, instead of feeling the outpouring

of His anger. The One who will “judge among the nations” has already given His flock a “not guilty” verdict because of the fact that He also served as High Priest.

Just as the Old Testament people of God were given a preview of a unique King/Priest, so we as the New Testament people of God do well to review the role of Jesus as our Ruler and Intercessor.

We are reminded that only Jesus could fulfill the requirements as the Messiah and that we find salvation only in Him.

—Pastor Michael Schierenbeck



Second in a Series

The Gospel Seed is Planted

Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas

Three apostles are mentioned in traditions in connection with India. In writings in the seventh and tenth century, Bartholomew is said to have gone to “India Felix,” which may not necessarily be what we consider India today. The term “India” was at times used in a vague or very broad way. This could have covered a wide swath of territory. Bartholomew may have gone to as near as the Arabian Peninsula. Tradition has him as the founder of a Christian com-

munity at Kalyan, near Bombay.

It appears that Matthew did make it to India—in book form. In a visit to India shortly after A.D. 190, a noted Christian teacher of Alexandria named Pantaenus is said to have found a Gospel of Matthew which was supposedly left there by Bartholomew.

The apostle who is claimed on both the east and west coast of South India is Thomas. Tradition has Thomas arriving in India in A.D. 52 north of Cochin and preaching first to a Jewish community. On this west coast he is said to have founded seven congregations. In four of

these places, Syrian Christian churches still in existence lay claim to Thomas. After this work, he is said to have gone up the east coast.

In the area of present-day Chennai, Thomas is said to have been martyred with a spear. As you go through one of the main highways in Chennai (which is named Anna Salai), some still call it by its old name of Mt. Road. Mt. Road leads to the hill where it is thought Thomas was martyred. The year of his death is claimed to be A.D. 72. If it is true that he reached India, his labors there were not insignificant, since he continued twenty years.

The apostles took very seriously the Lord's directive to preach to all nations. After Christ's resurrection these were different men, bold in the Lord. It is exciting to think that God would have had at least one of His apostles go as far as India. The city of Chennai today has over seven million people, with "Christians" as nearly ten per cent of its population.

Syrian, Jacobite, and Nestorian

Beyond the rule of the bishop of Rome in the western Roman Empire and also of the patriarch of Constantinople in the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, the gospel advanced to India. After A.D. 226 there was a new Persian Empire to the East through which the gospel speeded on by means of merchants and missionaries—through concerted efforts and through natural everyday witnessing. Also in the Persian Empire persecution at times drove Christians into India where they proclaimed their faith.

In Paul's day we know that Antioch in Syria was a vibrant center of outreach to Gentiles. It also gave its name and zeal to



later Syrian churches further east in the Persian Empire. Churches that grew up in India under this name had their headquarters for a long time in the Persian Empire.

Jacobites or monophysites disagreed with the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) on the two natures of Christ (among some other things). These two groups opposed each other in the Persian Empire but did not embroil themselves in fighting to such an extent that they did not reach out. Even today there are Jacobite churches in India.

The Nestorians were condemned at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) over their terminology on the nature(s) of Christ. These also headed East—and I mean way East, as far as China! Nestorius' followers were very mission-minded.

The doctrinal difference between the Nestorians and monophysites is over how our Lord is both God and man. Nestorians emphasized the difference so as to give the impression that in the incarnate Christ there are two persons, man and a divine Being indwelling Him. Monophysites emphasize Christ's divinity so as to give the impression that the incarnate Christ is purely God, the human nature being swallowed up by the divine.

Between these groups there have been some changes and variation over the

years. Yet despite all of this, they did reach out. In India today there are literally hundreds of thousands of those who came from the Syrian and Jacobite backgrounds in Kerala State. And in history they give evidence that God uses even such cracked vessels of clay as these to

transport His gospel.

To God alone belongs the glory, for He can get His truth into a person's heart despite the preacher's errors, and souls are saved despite false teachers, too.

—Missionary David Koenig



WHAT IS WRONG WITHIN LUTHERANISM?

It is a sad commentary on the state of the church in general, and Lutheranism in particular, that on this day when we celebrate the restoration of the pure gospel to the church (*written on the occasion of the Lutheran Reformation, 2005 —ed.*), we must ask, “What is wrong within Lutheranism?”

To be sure, the Turkish or Muslim scourge was threatening the church at the time, but it was the abuses of the pope and the Catholic Church which inspired Martin Luther to take a stand. Luther, an instrument in the hand of God, stood up for the purity of the gospel. Initially he did not nail the 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg because he desired to free himself from papal control. His desire was “to liberate the Gospel of free grace in Christ.” He said, “We are asking for nothing more, nor have we ever asked for anything more, than the free Gospel” (*What Luther Says*, III:3778, p. 1184). However, it became clear very quickly that a “free Gospel” was not possible without breaking with the pope.

The heavy hand of papal heresy has not changed in our day, but Protestant heterodoxy, which reared its head dur-

ing and shortly after the Reformation, has spread like a ground fire to envelop even the Lutheran Church. It is a threat to us all! The more we try to ignore or deny the possibility of heterodoxy rearing its ugly head among us, the more susceptible we are. Fewer and fewer within Lutheranism can honestly make the claim today, as Luther did, “Not from men have I received my Gospel, but from heaven alone, through my Lord Jesus Christ” (III:3767, p. 1179).

In our church let us state unequivocally today: If we cannot honestly say what Luther said, we have no right to call ourselves Lutheran, much less exist. Luther said, “The perfectly pure, the only, and the certain Word of God must be the foundation of our faith” (II:2693, p. 863). Already in his day, Luther saw “that as time goes on, more and more sects and erroneous opinions arise and that the frenzy and the fury of the devil know no end.” He was concerned that, during his lifetime and after, some “future heretics” would “assume the sanction of my name and falsely quote my writings in support of their errors” (III:4436, p.1375). Fortunately, Luther left behind copious

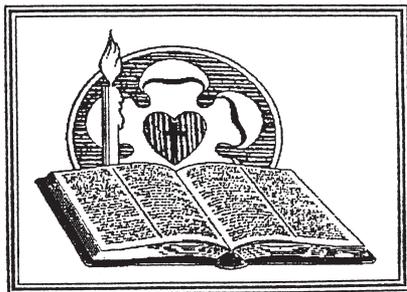
writings, so that honest students can refute the heretics.

At the center of Scripture and therefore of true Lutheran teaching is Jesus Christ and His cross. What does not revolve around Christ and His cross and the central teaching of the cross—justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—is hay and stubble. How much hay and stubble there is in Lutheranism today!

One of the problems within Lutheranism today is that many who decry the slide of their church into heterodoxy cannot and do not themselves take the decisive action that is commanded by the Lord through the apostle (Romans 16:17-18) for the protection of the faith, and the glory of God. Thus while they wring their hands, they stay in their heterodox church and start splinter groups within.

We do not know exactly to what they are moving, but the *Lutheran Commentator* (published by a dissident group within the ELCA since 1999) is giving up. In the latest issue we read, “Reform is no longer realistic...Therefore we are moving on...Our next issue, October-December 2005, will be our last issue” (August/September 2005). They have grown weary and discouraged with a church in which a female (!) bishop who led a homosexuality Task Force said that within its report “the ambiguity was intentional, to give discretion to local congregations.” The presiding bishop said, “We can live with ambiguity around these questions...It’s a way not to make sexuality a church dividing issue” (Ibid).

Apart from the issue (which to us is itself hay and stubble), the bishops are trying to stave off a split by officially



sanctioning sin! Luther said at Worms: “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.” The working principle in the ELCA is ambiguity!

This is Lutheran? No. It is unbelief!

The same issue of the *Lutheran Commentator* suggests the need for a “Centrist Lutheran Future” (whatever that means). The very suggestion underscores what is wrong within Lutheranism! For one thing, we of the Church of the Lutheran Confession are “too far out” for these handwringers. The *Lutheran Commentator* says, “The ELCA has left the Reformation for unity with the hierarchical, gay Episcopal Church. The Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod is caught in a wooden Biblicism, including among other things refusing to ordain women.”

LC-MS caught in “a wooden Biblicism”? Tell that to the liberals in the LC-MS!

The *Lutheran Commentator* goes on to say, “The US needs a seminary and a church that stands with Luther in the radical center.” — May I remind the reader what Luther said about future heretics assuming the sanction of his name?

The emphasis on all the issues in which the church involves itself today, together with the debates and arguments, is itself a clever ploy of the evil

one to steer people away from the gospel and the message of justification by grace through faith. The devil will not attack Christ and the gospel directly, but gains his end by introducing hay and stubble into the life of the church.

The Church Growth movement with all its schemes and programs, the introduction of social programs into churches, the feeling that church has to be made more attractive by introducing gender attractive programs (or more attractive to youth or the elderly by introducing age appropriate programs and enticements)—all this carries with it the distinct risk to which many have succumbed: Christ and His cross is no longer the center of the church's teaching. What you end up with is an emphasis on emotion, feelings, fun and games—none of which lead people to ask "How am I saved?" Even less does it answer the question!

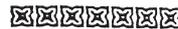
Finally, the problem within the church in general, and Lutheranism in particular, is far deeper than individual errors. The problem lies in the denial of Scripture! Until there is a return to the principle of "What saith the Lord?", there can be no change. Jeremiah says, "Stand in the way and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls." Yet all indications today are that the response will be the same as Jeremiah heard, "We will not walk in it" (Jer. 6:16).

Luther said, "I have lived to see the greatest plague, to wit, the contempt of the Word, the most extreme and godless misdeed of the world, upon which must necessarily follow as punishment whatever is horrible in the world..." (*What Luther Says*, III:4813, p. 1489)

What is wrong in Lutheranism can

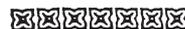
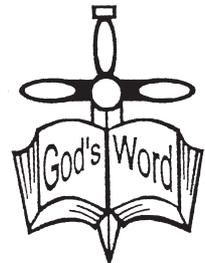
be avoided only if we follow the advice of Luther, who said, "It is the duty both of preachers and of hearers first of all and above all things to see to it that they have clear and sure evidence that their doctrine is really the true Word of God, revealed from heaven to the holy, original fathers, the prophets and apostles, and confirmed and commanded to be taught by Christ Himself. For we should by no means ever let doctrine be manhandled according to the pleasure and fancy of the individual who adapts it to human reason and understanding. Nor should we let men toy with Scripture, juggle the Word of God, and make it submit to being explained, twisted, stretched, and revised to suit people or to achieve peace and union. For then there could be no secure or stable foundation on which consciences might rely" (*WLS*, III:4770, p. 1475); and finally, "Learn, yea, learn, I say, what a treasure you have in the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ: that there is no other help and aid against the devil, sin, and eternal death than to cling to the Word of Christ, that is, to believe His promise and to make bold to take Him at His Word" (III:4763, p. 1473).

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



**"PUT ON
THE FULL
ARMOR OF
GOD... AND
TAKE THE
SWORD OF
THE SPIRIT,
WHICH IS
THE WORD
OF GOD."**

EPHESIANS 6:13 & 17



CLC EXPLORATORY SERVICES

Last revised: December, 2005

This is a list of "start-up" congregations who are being served by an off-site pastor. Some meet in homes, others in rented facilities. Visitors are warmly welcomed. Those who are considering a move, or are just traveling through the area, are encouraged to contact these groups and worship with them.

LOCATION	PASTORAL CONTACT	LAY CONTACT
Alaska, Fairbanks	Rev. Jay Hartmann 907-452-1236	
Alaska, Anchorage	Rev. David Fuerstenau 907-225-2842	
California, Pasadena (L.A. area)	Rev. David Povolny 650-964-5915	Mr. Mike Collins 818-883-1749
California, Modesto	Rev. Nathan Pfeiffer 510-581-6637	Mr. Roy Cameron 209-772-0934
Florida, Orlando	Rev. John Schierenbeck 863-299-4084	Mr. Paul Kuehne 407-568-9213
Florida, Coral Springs (North Ft. Lauderdale)	Rev. Paul Larsen 941-423-1822	Mr. Bob Doriot 954-429-0063
Iowa, Sioux Center	Rev. James Albrecht 507-853-4417	Mr. Roger Ver Mulm 712-722-2805
Michigan, Cadillac	Rev. Tim Holland 616-532-0198	Mr. Bob Remus 231-832-2097
Minnesota, Chaska (SW Twin Cities area)	Rev. David Schierenbeck 651-454-1915	Mr. Adam McLaughlin 952-445-7317
Missouri, Missouri City	Rev. Todd Ohlmann 636-225-3458	Mr. Jim Priebe 816-781-4702
New Mexico, Albuquerque	Mr. Robin Vogsland 505-892-6934	
Ohio, Cleveland	Rev. Walter Schaller 248-457-0682	
Tennessee, Monterey	Rev. Nathanael Mayhew 866-962-9034	Mr. Wayne Everhart 270-618-4387
Texas, Austin	Rev. Luke Bernthal 281-353-2533	Chuck Kurth 512-794-8991
Virginia, Fairfax (Washington DC area)	Mr. Glenn Oster 803-926-0603	Mr. David Loop 703-250-2020
Washington, Withrow	Rev. Terrel Kesterson 509-327-4203	Mr. Ray Lillquist 509-683-1192
Wisconsin, Green Bay	Rev. Michael Schierenbeck 920-398-2778	



*Saints of God, the dawn is bright'ning,
Token of our coming Lord;
O'er the earth the field is whit'ning;
Louder rings the Master's word:
Pray for reapers, pray for reapers,
In the harvest of the Lord!
(TLH #502:1)*

—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions

March, 2006

The Lenten season serves the Bread of Life in smaller slices from the Minor Prophets, followed by larger slices from the Gospel accounts. Daniel himself is a type of Christ, and we begin with his book..

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Thought gleaned from the text</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	Dan. 2:28-45	God will set up a kingdom forever	158
2	Dan. 3:19-30	God's Son shows up amid a fiery trial	427,1-5
3	Dan. 4:18-27	Earthly kingdoms are under God's control	17
4	Dan. 5:1-31	God has cancelled empires before this	19
5	Dan. 6:18-23	and has shut the mouths of lions, too.	428
6	Dan. 7:9-14	The Son of Man's everlasting dominion	476
7	Dan. 9:8-19	Repent! Confess! Beseech the Lord!	318
8	Dan. 9:20-27	Messiah is cut off, but not for Himself	156
9	Dan. 12:1-13	We shall arise with Daniel at the End	603
10	Hosea 14	It's always the right time to repent	279
11	Joel 2:28-32	Wonders in the heavens and on the Earth	604
12	Amos 5:18-24	The temple services are displaced in Christ	144
13	Jonah 3:1-10	Heathen repent and are spared disaster	140
14	Micah 5:2-5	From Bethlehem to the ends of the Earth	647
15	Micah 7:14-20	The Shepherd serves His sheep	153
16	Habakkuk 3	You went forth for salvation of Your people	571
17	Zeph. 3:8-20	The King of Israel is in your midst!	160
18	Zech. 9:9-17	Behold, your King is coming to you!	56
19	Malachi 4:1-6	Behold, the Day is coming!	338

The Spirit has served the Bread of Life throughout the Old Testament, and we now enter the great banquet hall of the New Testament.

(We make the adjustment of starting at Advent—even during Lent.)

20	John 1:1-5,14-18	The eternal Word became flesh	508
21	Matt. 1:1-25	with a family tree like none other.	274
22	Matt. 2:1-23	Four prophecies were easily fulfilled	129
23	Matt. 3:1-17	The Father assures us Jesus is authentic	63
24	Matt. 4:1-25	Satan gets nowhere with his tactics	270
25	Mark 1:21-45	Eyewitnesses testify of His divine powers	557
26	Mark 3;1-35	The Master of the universe at work for us	44
27	Mark 4:1-41	His parables are more than "story-time"	49
28	Mark 5:1-20	Jesus does not give up on Satan's victims	39
29	Mark 5:21-43	Jesus can handle sorrow and scorn, too	593
30	Mark 6:1-13	He faced rejection without flinching	157:4-7
31	Mark 6:14-29	He endured humans who had no humanity	470



A new addition in Middleton, Wisconsin—

Dedication at Peace Thru Christ



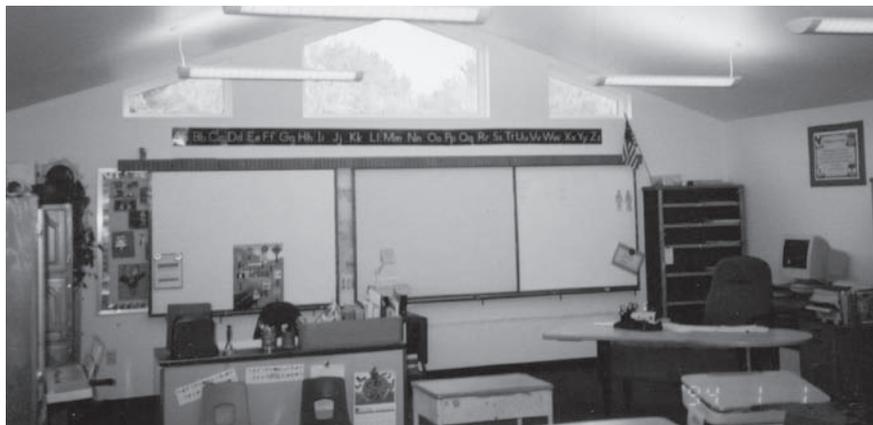
Exterior of the New Addition

In early fall of 2003, Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wisconsin established a Building Concept and Feasibility Committee (BCFC). The BCFC recommended that the congregation complete an addition of approximately 2,400 square feet to the existing building. The addition was to include a classroom, fellowship hall, bathrooms, storage and office space. Plans were also to include additional parking lot space and the retaining of

an architect.

The congregation's BCFC also recommended that a "fund raising" campaign be completed—with a goal of \$60,000 to be raised over a two-year period—to educate members and generate excitement about the proposed addition. The campaign should include an emphasis on Christian stewardship.

The congregation embarked on Sunday morning Bible studies of Christian stewardship. Pastor Bernthal



New Classroom



Kitchen & Fellowship Hall on Dedication Day

made family home visits with a Bible devotion entitled “Family Finances under Christ.” Commitments were received totaling \$48,000. Within a month almost \$23,000 had been received. At this writing the Building Fund total stands at \$56,600, with another \$5,900 given for the resurfacing of the old parking lot.

Pastor Bernthal writes: “We praise God for this amazing outpouring of His gifts upon our members. As King David said when he saw the people of Israel respond to his request for offerings for the temple: ‘Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given you’ (1 Chronicles 29:13-14).”

On November 14, 2004, the mortgage burning and groundbreaking ceremonies were conducted. Though various postponements occurred during the project, the construction continued throughout the winter months. The weekend of May 13-15, 2005, saw many members of the congregation—as well as of area CLC congregations—



John Ude, Matt Ude, Mark Bernthal

tackle the hanging of the sheet rock. Members gave many, many hours of time to help paint, stain, and install the flooring. While some other problems arose to set things back, yet the fellowship hall and schoolroom were used for VBS sessions July 25-29. Work proceeded in order to achieve readiness for the opening of the school year on August 29. In mid-September the parking lot was paved and striped; also, finishing touches were done to the kitchen area and outside landscaping.

The members of Peace Thru Christ congregation give all glory to God alone that all was ready for Dedication Day, Sunday, October 2. A father-son team preached the sermons for the special day: Seminary Student Matt Ude, son of the congregation, preached for the morning Mission Festival service;

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