

Lutheran Spokesman

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11 NKJV

Left Behind — Third in a Series

Read 2 Kings 2:1-11, Luke 24:50-53, and Acts 1:9-11

What an exciting account the ascension was!

The master's work on Earth had been completed, so there was need of him to enter his glory. At the appointed time he crossed a stream of water. Any who were his disciples followed him to the appointed place. They received his blessing, but did not want to be left behind. They watched and saw him taken into heaven visibly. The mantle of his authority was given to carry on his work on Earth, with the master's own spirit bestowed. (In connection with which, fire was sent from heaven and the sound of a mighty wind was heard.) The master was seen no more.

In this way Elijah was taken to heaven. In some way God had revealed to a whole company of prophets that this would happen, but only Elisha was with Elijah at the place across the

Jordan River when the chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two men, and Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.

When "Elisha saw it, he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!'" Just as horsemen and chariots were signs of a king's strength, so Elijah had been the spiritual bulwark of his people. After Elijah's work on Earth was finished. Elisha was left behind to carry on his prophetic office. Also left behind was Elijah's mantle—a sign to Elisha of God's continued presence with him as he served God's people. This ascension was the second in a series.

We might suggest briefly that the first in the 'left behind' series involved Enoch. Scripture simply tells us that, after 365 years of earthly life, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for

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When Christ who is our life appears,
then you also will appear in glory.

God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

We are not told who saw this happen; neither are we told the details of how Enoch ascended into heaven. God could have sent chariots and horses of fire and a whirlwind, or something else, or nothing else. Enoch was gone, his work finished and his spirit passed on to Noah. Noah was then left behind, but found grace in the Lord's eyes. Noah obeyed God, and became a needed preacher of righteousness and faithful testifier to a most wicked world.

Reigning in Heaven!

Many centuries later Jesus ascended into heaven. He too left this Earth only after His saving, redemptive work was here completed. He had been promised as the Headcrusher, and so had come to destroy the works and the power of Satan. He had been promised as the perfect sacrifice who would offer up Himself as payment for all sin.

And so He died as God's Lamb, innocent, holy and perfect—the acceptable sacrifice. He had been promised as a mighty and everlasting

King. Jesus commanded no chariots and horses of fire (as mere symbols of power, but power He surely had!). When He arose from the dead, He forever broke the bonds of death and removed its terror. He now reigns in heaven with the souls of all the saints for whom He has prepared everlasting and glorious habitations.

His disciples, of course, were left behind—left behind with His blessing and with His own Spirit to teach and comfort them. Their mantle of authority was tongues of fire, power to perform miracles, and the Word of God in their mouths and pens. They were left behind with a great commission of responsibility—to make disciples from among all nations by proclaiming the gracious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some 2000 years later, discouraged Christians may today ask, 'Why doesn't God take me home?' That He surely will, just as He promised. That He will when our earthly work is finished—that also of proclaiming Christ's name as the only name that can save sinners. In that work we have His blessing. We have the promise of His continued presence among us. We have the gracious mantle of authority—the power of the Spirit to forgive or retain sins in Jesus' name, a power greater than any number of horses and chariots.

Indeed, in this continuing "third of a series", we also are left behind—but not alone, never alone! We are left behind, but with blessed work to do. We are left behind, but not for long.

Lord Jesus, send Your angels; we await our own ascension into glory!

—*Pastor David Fuerstenau*
Ketchikan, Alaska

Our Comfort and Joy in Christ's Ascension

"Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49).

What that promise and power would be we find in the words of Christ in the Ascension account in the book of Acts: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Jesus would not leave His disciples alone in that daunting task, for He promised to send them the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Even as Jesus taught His disciples while He walked with them, the Holy Spirit has continued to teach His disciples both then and now. And this is not a different teaching from what Christ had taught—the Lord says that the Spirit "will not speak on His own authority" (Jn. 16:13), that is, He would not speak alone. He would show the unity of the Trinity by proclaiming that same gospel. It would be the same message of salvation in Christ Jesus alone that Christ Himself had proclaimed.

This message the Holy Spirit would proclaim through the apostles and the New Testament Scriptures, even as He had proclaimed the same will of God through the writers of the Old Testament; for, as we know from 2 Peter 1:20f, "...no Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but



holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

And as the Lord Jesus "...opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:45), so the Holy Spirit would continue to do. Still today the Spirit uses the Word to bring sinners to faith—that is, to bring sinners to faith and guide us into all truth through the Word. By that Word we are brought to believe and trust that the forgiveness of sins which Christ won for all people on the cross is ours.

We read, for example, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them..." (2 Cor. 5:19). And "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).

Through that same Word the Holy Spirit guides us into the truth concerning salvation. While the world casts about looking for truth, the believer confidently points to Christ as the one and only Savior from sin and source of Truth, for so it is written in God's own Word. This includes the promise of

eternal life for all who trust in Christ Jesus as their Savior from sin.

Promises Kept!

And as Jesus says, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn. 10:35). He has fulfilled all things up to this point. Surely He will continue to fulfill all things prophesied in the Scriptures. After His ascension He has departed from His believers visibly, yet He is still with them, for He assured His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20).

Until He returns visibly, Christ continues to rule His people, His believers. As our Prophet, He preaches the gospel to us and through us; as our Priest, He intercedes for us before the Father; as our King, He protects our faith from the devil, the world, and our sinful natures.

Thus Christ's ascension provides us with great comfort and joy. We know that our Savior has not forgotten His promises, for He will return in glory to take His children into the eternal mansions prepared for them. He has promised, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a

place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:2f).

When will that take place? Christ says, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Mt. 24:36). Therefore He encourages, "...You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Mt. 24:44).

We trust the Scriptural promise that on that Day, "...the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

For that glorious Day we wait with longing eyes, looking forward to beholding our Savior with our physical eyes, even as now, by the grace of God, we behold Him with the eyes of faith.

—Pastor Joel Fleischer
Marquette, Michigan



"How my heart yearns within me!"

Those familiar words of Job (see Job 19:27) can well instill in us a yearning for heaven. Job was in the midst of his suffering and he contemplated seeing God with his own eyes even after his "skin" was destroyed—in the midst of suffering, the thought of heaven looks really good!

However, even when life is at its best, heaven looks really good, for our life with God in heaven will be far greater than our very best day in this world. The more we see the joy and

glory of heaven, the more our heart does yearn within us to be there. That is good, for then we will cling to God's Word all the more and strive to "make our calling and election sure" (2 Pet.

1:10), for we do not want to lose the inheritance that God has graciously given us in Christ.

As by faith we watch Jesus ascend into heaven, we naturally think about His promise, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

What will heaven be like? Where is heaven? We may not be able to answer all such questions. There is much that we won't know until we are there, yet God does tell us enough to make us long to be there and see it for ourselves.

WHERE Heaven is—whether it is floating some place in the sky or on the new and perfect Earth God will create—is far less important than WHAT heaven is. Let us consider briefly some of the great promises God gives us.

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job. 19:25-27).

Now...but Then!

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

One of the most amazing things will be just to see God—the God who is so glorious that no mortal on Earth can see His face and live; the God before whom even the holy angels cover their faces and their feet. In heaven we will see God "face to face" with our own eyes.

"For our citizenship is in heaven,

from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Php. 3:20-21).

How great that will be—to have glorified bodies just like Jesus' body! What will we be able to do, completely unhindered by the pains and weaknesses of our mortal body? Not just our bodies but everything will be free from the effects of sin. For "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Rev. 21:4-5).

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:3-5).

There is much we don't know, but what is described for us about heaven is wonderful beyond comprehension.

One more passage sums it up nicely: "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).

"How my heart yearns within me!"

—*Pastor David Reim*
Vernon, BC (Canada)



RISE UP AND CALL MOM BLESSED!

When praise and honor are given to anyone in the Bible, they are usually directed toward God. This is certainly proper, since it is the Lord who is the Creator of all things and the source of everything good.

There is one place, though, where the Bible encourages us to give praise to certain important people in our lives—namely, to the godly mothers among us. At this time of year, it is a good idea to get out Proverbs chapter 31 and to hear the Lord's description of what a great treasure we have in our moms.

According to Proverbs, the godly mother is:

- Invaluable—"Her worth is far above rubies."

- Industrious—"She...willingly works with her hands...She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks...She provides food for her household."

- Enterprising—"She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night...She makes linen garments and sells them."

- Wise—"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue."

Those who were raised by such a lady (or are married to one) know that these things are true, and ought to say so to their moms (especially) on Mother's Day. When we thank our God for the blessings that He gives us through our faithful mothers, we are

only doing what Proverbs 31 describes in this way: "Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.'"

You can be sure that many of the moms who read these things are thinking to themselves, "That sounds like a description of somebody ELSE'S mom, not me!" That's exactly where the true strength and beauty of a Christian mother lies. Yes, she knows that she will never fully live up to the ideal picture that is painted of motherhood in Proverbs 31. But she also knows that in the Lord Jesus she has forgiveness for every sin and shortcoming. She knows that, armed with the love of God that has been given her in her Savior, she can extend that same love to her family—and that makes her beautiful!

Again from Proverbs: "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised."

So, when you talk with your mother on Mother's Day (or other days as well), be sure to tell her what she means to you.

If you are remembering your godly mother that day, thank the Lord that, through Christ, you can look forward to seeing her again when Christ shall return to take His faithful believers home to heaven.

—Pastor Bruce Naumann
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota



Old Testament Bible History

All History is GOD'S STORY!

No. 12 in Series: Genesis 24

“The story of Isaac's far-fetched bride”

Please read or keep handy for quick reference Genesis chapter 24.

Isaac couldn't do it on his own.

Couldn't do what? Find the one person who would be his helper and mate, the woman who would augment his strengths and compensate for his weaknesses, a wife who would love him, honor him, obey him, and with him raise a godly family in a godly manner.

Who is sufficient for these things? Isaac knew he was not competent to arrange a marriage made in heaven, so he committed all this into Jehovah's hands and then he relaxed. Oh, that Christian young men and young women would have Isaac's view of life and let our loving, thoughtful, supportive Redeemer-God orchestrate and build their marriages!

What about romance? Love and romance are God's gifts, and we well appreciate the fact! We therefore discount the stinky dalliances and lustful encounters that are paraded before us in all the media, for the Hollywood scene of tinsel-town cheap trash betrays its ignorance of true love, healthy romance, and wedded fidelity.

God not only blessed Isaac and Rebekah but He also went on from

there to enter their biography into this sacred text for an additional reason—so that generations of Christians would receive encouragement from the sacred record of their experiences (1 Cor. 10:11).

Since it's a lengthy chapter, we'll do some abbreviating in order to touch on a few salient points.

First, Abraham did what God-revering people do when undertaking a task as daunting as finding a suitable spouse for a special child. In Abraham's case, nothing less than the future of the human race was riding on the outcome, for Jehovah had spoken, "In your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). Now, since Sarah bore only two children, and God had discounted Ishmael from the parentage of this Seed (21:18-21), there could be no doubt about Isaac's pivotal importance for God's plans.

Abraham dared leave nothing to chance in Isaac's future, and Isaac dared not follow the poor example of his older brother, Ishmael, who had married an Egyptian girl.

...Into God's hands!

What they dared was simple. They

committed everything into God's hands. This would be a long-distance transaction for a far-fetched bride, while Isaac stayed home, content that God's arm would reach across space, select his bride, and bring her to him. When God's child has committed his/her future into the hands of the Almighty, s/he can relax in steady-nerved confidence.

The only person who seems pressured was the trusted servant (Eliezer?) who shouldered the tasks of travel (10), devised a way to recognize the young lady God had already chosen as Isaac's bride (12-14), and secured the supportive confidence of her relatives (22-51).

We enjoy the way this servant conducted himself. As we eaves-drop on his devout prayers (12-14), we relish his conviction that "The Lord has blessed my master greatly" (35), and we appreciate the reverence of his plea, "Let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son" (44). We stand at his side, with bated breath waiting to see who will arrive at

"...God not only blessed Isaac and Rebekah but He also went on from there to enter their biography into this sacred text for an additional reason—so that generations of Christians would receive encouragement from the sacred record of their experiences (1 Cor. 10:11)."

the well. This was not only Abraham's servant but Abraham's friend, and thus he was a friend of Jehovah. Jehovah could work with a man like that.

So that's how the story runs along. Everything went like clock-work as God made Rebekah's heart open to the proposal, as she and her guardian brother accepted dowry gifts (53), as she consented to be Isaac's wife (58), and as the far-fetched bride was brought by camel caravan to find Isaac ready and waiting for her.

The sacred text is spare of extra verbiage, recounting that Isaac "took



Harvesting lumber as the way was cleared for the new ILC Academic Center

Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her" (67). So closes chapter twenty-four of the on-going saga we know as the Plan of Salvation.

Read it and thank God! Think on it for yourself and discuss it with your teenagers! Praise God for marriages made in heaven, lived on Earth, and sanctified by Him who makes all things work together for good to those who love Him!

Is that far-fetched? No, for God easily fetches from afar the blessings we need, and with Him our future is as near as His right hand. May He continue to bring His blessings to the close embrace of our expectant hearts and arms, and may we be truly thankful that He blesses us with our godly spouse! Amen!

—Paul R. Koch
Eau Claire, Wisconsin



PORTRAITS OF CHRIST

from the Gospel of John

Chapter Four - The Soul Winner

Why did Christ come to Earth? Why did the Eternal Son take on human flesh and blood?

One would think that every church bearing the name of Christ in our sinful world would be united in the answer: "Christ came to save humankind from sin, death, and the devil."

Sad to say, the message today is confused by those who proclaim the "social gospel," and who suggest that Jesus came mostly to show us how to right this world's wrongs, to make this world as close to heaven-like as possible.

It is true that Jesus healed the sick and caused the lame and paralyzed to take up their beds and go home. Certainly these miracles were examples of His love and compassion.

However, Christ came to Earth and walked among sinners for a still greater purpose. We don't have to guess why He came, for the Savior Himself tells



us. After visiting the home of the sinner Zacchaeus, Jesus said: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:9-10).

Could Jesus have been more plain about His purpose in coming? He came to save souls—to win souls.

Consequently, it should be no surprise that in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel we find a beautiful portrait of Jesus as the soul winner. He desires to include persons of every nation in His

Kingdom.

Without Bias!

When we consider these words (John 4:7-29), we notice first of all that Jesus didn't share the attitudes and biases of many of His countrymen. He didn't refuse to set foot in Samaria, as did some of the Jews. He didn't shun Samaritans and refuse to enter their cities. In fact, Jesus went out of His way to talk to strangers, whether they were in Judea, Galilee, or even Samaria. He came to win souls. He sought out the Samaritan woman by the well, but not just for a drink of water.

The Samaritan woman didn't expect to be "in the picture." She was surprised that Jesus even spoke to her (John 4:9-10). She was still more surprised that He, having just met her, knew so much about her (vv. 17-19). He didn't send her away after receiving a drink. He offered her the living water—that is, His Word. He gave her that which forever slakes the thirst for righteousness (cf. John 6:35, 7:37). She

came to know that He was the very Christ promised of old (v. 26) and came to believe in Him, along with many in that city.

Jesus, the Soul Winner, came for sinners like her, like you and me. He came to talk with sinners—and He still does in His Word and when His people take up that Word on their tongues. He still invites us to come to Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. He still draws sinners to Himself by that powerful invitation.

Jesus came to save our souls. He laid down that perfect life to atone for us all. We are His children by faith!

The Lord Jesus also implanted in the Apostle Paul that same earnest, heartfelt desire to win souls (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

May the Savior plant and nourish and grow the same heartfelt desire in each and every one of us. Let our goal and focus be to bring others to Jesus, that He may win their hearts also.

—Pastor Andrew Schaller
Watertown, South Dakota



DIVINE LOVE THE GREATEST GIFT DEVOTIONAL STUDIES ON 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13



"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).



Fourth in a series:

(Love) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked...

Whether we live in a bigger city or a smaller town, perhaps we can understand the uproar spawned by the recent

proposal of a local businessman in our small South Dakota city.

A local businessman who currently



A remodeled narthex has this overhead “scroll” to welcome worshipers to Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown, South Dakota.

owns a gas station/convenience store and casino near the entrance to our city has revealed plans to establish a business which sells adult literature. It appears that there is nothing that the city can do (or is willing to do?) to stop this business.

There have been quite a few letters to the editor since the first article ran on the front page of the local newspaper. Those who publicly oppose this establishment are not opposed on the grounds of decency or morality. They are more concerned that such a business would cast a blight on our fair city.

The sad truth is that the majority of those speaking out are in favor of

allowing it. Where is the concern about sin? Where is the concern for our children?

Should we really be surprised? Things once considered indecent are now paraded. Worse yet, many call it "love."

This is the kind of love found in the natural human heart. It is more than capable of being indecent, and it is prone to shame. When sinful hearts seek to satisfy their own desires, the result is shameful sin.

This is the kind of love on display most often in our society—love of self. We are encouraged to think first of ourselves and to "seek our own."

This kind of love (that which is

As worshipers exit Trinity church, another overhead “scroll” sends them on a mission.



turned inwardly) stimulates others to wrath. When we put ourselves first, it is inevitable that we step on the toes of others. Then we also assume the worst of others, even those we "love."

Indecent Love

Our corrupt human natures "love" to think on evil things, to ponder them and turn them over in our hearts. This is the kind of "indecent love" that lies within the old man, the flesh, the human nature of each of us.

Perhaps that's why the love that the Holy Spirit describes through the Apostle Paul here in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians stands out as it does. Divine love is a polar opposite of corrupt human love.

The love that Christ has for us is a love that looks outwardly, not inwardly. Jesus wasn't first concerned about Himself and His personal desires but about our need of redemption. The love of Christ is self-less and self-sacrificing. It is a love that didn't incite wrath but rather pacified God's wrath over sin once and for all (as the propi-

tion for our sins—1 John 2:2, 4:10). It is a love that thinks on good things and provides them.

This love is the type that Christ has for us. It is not a love within us by nature. It is not a love that we exhibit unless and until the Spirit of God implants it within us. This divine love is the kind of love that we as God's believing children desire; we pray that God would create and foster it in our newborn hearts.

Only the Lord Jesus can create in us a love that does not behave indecently, but in faith acts modestly, guided by a deep concern for others. He is the author of a love that does not seek its own, but rather seeks the well-being of others. He enables us to reflect His love—a love that neither provokes to wrath nor ponders evil, but meditates on what is good (see Philippians 4:8).

Lord, grant that we may have and exhibit divine love, not the indecent love of our sinful human nature.

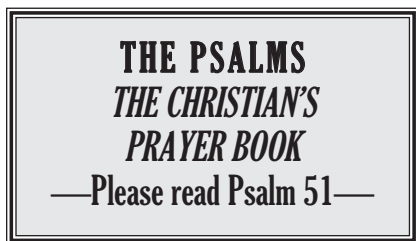
—Pastor Andrew Schaller
Watertown, South Dakota



A Psalm of Repentance

Ever since sin entered the world, a confession of one's sins has been part of the Christian walk.

Holy Scripture contains many different examples of Christians confessing their sins to God and seeking His forgiveness. One such example is found in Psalm 51. It is generally accepted that this psalm—written by King David—was written after the prophet Nathan was sent to show him how he had sinned against God by



committing adultery with Bathsheba.

What follows is an example of how this psalm might be used as a guide for a prayer of repentance. (Please have

your Bible open to Psalm 51 and read the cited verses as an introduction to the paragraph.)

Dear God, my Father and Creator:

(Read verses 1-2) I come to You, ashamed of myself for having disobeyed You. My actions have not been kind. My thoughts have been far less than holy. My words have not been loving. All I have to bring You is my transgressions, my iniquity, and my sin. There is nothing which I have done that would cause You to hear and forgive me, yet I appeal to You on the basis of Your steadfast love, Your mercy, and Your compassion. O Lord, wash me clean from these ugly sins!

(Read verses 3-6) Though I try to ignore and downplay the seriousness of my sin, O Lord, You know my heart better than I know it myself. If I were to claim that I have not sinned, I would be lying to myself and lying to You. You would be right to condemn me because of my sin. My life has been full of sin—from the sin I inherited from my parents to the sins I commit every day. Oh, how many are the ways I have sinned against You! O Lord, I am a sinner through and through, as You Yourself know.

(Read verses 7-9) The guilt of my sin weighs heavy on my soul. It crushes me to think of the ways in which I have sinned against You and broken Your Law. I pray, dear Father, graciously wash me clean in the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. It was He whom You offered up on the cross because I am a sinner. You raised Him from the dead because of my justification. Therefore I pray that You would not look upon my sins, but upon the sacrifice which Your Son made on the cross to take away all my sins.

(Read verses 10-13) I confess that according to my sinful nature my heart is an idol factory. When I listen to the voice of my sinful heart, it seems that one false god after another takes Your place. While this justly deserves punishment and eternal separation from You, I pray You would day by day send Your Holy Spirit to create a clean heart in me. Day by day renew me by Your Spirit that I might serve You and You alone. Through Your Spirit remind me of my new birth in holy baptism and of Jesus' offering Himself as a sacrifice for me. Fill me with the joy in knowing that, because of that sacrifice, all my sins have been taken away. Then use me as a renewed, redeemed, restored, and forgiven sinner to share this good news with other sinners.

(Read verses 14-17) If you wanted great acts of sacrifice, I would do it, but I know You are concerned about my heart. In my heart I know that my sins are great and that they show how I have despised Your will for my life. Rather than offering my own sacrifices, I place my hope in the sacrifice which Your Son made for me and all sinners. I lift up my voice in praise to You for having delivered my soul from hell through Jesus. Praise be to You, the God of my salvation! Even as Jesus did not die for my sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world, use me to tell others of the full and free forgiveness that is theirs through Jesus!

(Read verses 18-19) I pray that through this message of forgiveness, grace, and mercy in Your Son, You would build up Your Church. Fortify the walls against the continual attacks of the enemy, O Lord. Through Your Means of Grace secure our defense against the temptations and entice-

ments of this world. Help me that I and all Your redeemed people may offer our lives as living sacrifices to You, the God of our salvation. Praise be to Your

name, O Father! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

—*Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer*
Hecla, South Dakota



From a Pastor's Desk—

Re: The National Day of Prayer

The first Thursday of May is designated as the National Day of Prayer.

There is no doubt that we should be praying for our country and people throughout the world. As concerned Christians we need to pray that the Kingdom of God would continue to come according to God's will, but the manner in which the National Day of Prayer is being organized—with members of various churches, denominations, and even religions—is not a God-pleasing way to do what needs to be done.

According to its web site, the purpose of the National Day of Prayer Task force is that of "organizing and promoting prayer observances conforming to a Judeo-Christian system of values."

Judeo-Christian is a term used to describe the concepts and values common to both Judaism and Christianity. These concepts include belief in one God (monotheism), the Old Testament, the ten commandments, and the concept of atonement.

But that is not what Christianity is all about. Christianity specifies these concepts as being rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

We live in a society today that stresses "political correctness"—the idea that we should not offend anyone

by what we say or do. By its very nature Christianity is offensive to the world. While it may not be politically correct to say that it is only through faith in Christ that eternal life is received, that is what the Bible clearly declares. In the New Testament Peter says (concerning Jesus): "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Throughout the Bible God calls upon His children to separate themselves from unbelievers in religious matters. In the early New Testament days unbelievers included Jews who refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament (just as does modern Judaism). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6).

The Bible teaches that any religion that does not preach Jesus as the Christ and the only means of salvation is not worshipping the true God.

This applies to various Christian groups in the same way it applies to non-Christian religions. God wants His people to be united. But we readily see that there is no unity within visible Christianity because it is divided by

differences in doctrine and practice.

Beware of the cancer!

Sadly, true Christian teaching is being watered down, and churches are failing to follow Christ's command to teach "them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). The result of not teaching the words of Jesus faithfully is this: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

This is presently seen throughout Christianity! Scripture describes such false teaching within the Christian community as "cancer" (2 Timothy 2:17-18) which spreads quickly and brings with it death.

To combat false teaching that would sneak into the Christian church, the apostle Paul told those Christians who had been given the full truth: "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and

avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Every doctrine God has given us in the Bible is important, and we are commanded to proclaim them all faithfully.

However, many churches within Christianity do not do so. We cannot "agree to disagree" on the doctrines of Scripture and continue in fellowship, ignoring these differences in doctrine. Scripture directs a break in fellowship, not only in connection with blatant unbelievers, but also with so-called Christians who, for example, deny the resurrection, saying it is already past (2 Timothy 2:18); who disregard God's commandments (2 Peter 2:1-3, 13-20); who prohibit the eating of certain foods (1 Timothy 4:3); who quarrel about genealogies and the law (Titus 3:9).

We should not join together in fellowship with those who are not agreed on the teachings of Scripture. We can foster the unity of Christ's Church here on Earth only through faithfully teaching and preaching all things Christ commanded and not through unionistic worship, which will never resolve the doctrinal differences between the vari-



New Academic Center walls went up in spite of winter weather.

ous denominations of Christianity.

Christians who disregard the command of Jesus to "beware of false teachers" (Mt. 7:15) but instead join with them in worship, prayer, and praise, are not glorifying the Lord in any way.

Let us pray for our country, for our society, for unity within the Church, for God to further our constitutional freedoms to gather, worship, pray and speak freely—but let us do so only

with those who are united with us in the teachings of the Scripture.

While we cannot then for conscience reasons participate in the public National Day of Prayer event in our communities, we shall continue to pray for all these things—both individually and corporately with those who share our faith.

—*Pastor Nathanael Mayhew*
Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Georgia



CROSS PURPOSES



"EVANGELICAL COLLAPSE"?

Recently an article appeared (online) entitled, "The coming evangelical collapse."

The composer of the article suggests that within ten years evangelical Christianity in the western world will basically be dead. Christians, he writes, will be living "in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century."

The writer is no more a prophet than you and I are. However, he makes some compelling comments which suggest that he is not far from the truth.

He writes, "Intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels many of us have not believed possible in our lifetimes, and public policy will become hostile toward evangelical Christianity, seeing it as an opponent of the common good." A case can be made that what is said in that statement is already upon us.

It is not clear precisely what the man means with his use of the term

"evangelical." For many, that word has taken on a different meaning than what we Reformation Lutherans understand by it. In much of the church world today the word is used to describe charismatic, millennialistic, moralistic, and "how-to" religions as characterized by the mega churches and many of those who are of Reformed and Pentecostal persuasion.

The writer says—and with this we must agree if for no other reason than that it is already happening—"Look for ministries to take on a less and less distinctively Christian face in order to survive"; and again, "Emphasis will shift from doctrine to relevance, motivation, and personal success—resulting in churches further compromised and weakened in their ability to pass on the faith."

In whatever way the writer understands evangelicalism, on our part we define it and understand it in the sense of C.P. Krauth (see below). The word

evangelical is of Greek derivation and pertains to the gospel—the good news. Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father, and true Man born of the virgin Mary, and His saving redemptive work is the heart and core of the evangel (gospel or good news).

In drawing a comparison between the ritualistic legalism of Rome (with its system of outward ordinances and institutions prior to the Reformation), Krauth wrote: "The grand distinctive characteristic of the Reformation...was that it was evangelical, a restoration of the glad tidings of free salvation in Jesus Christ—and thus it gave to the regenerated Church its exalted character as 'Evangelical'."

Later Krauth said of the true Lutheran Church of the Reformation: "No title [Evangelical] could more strongly express her character, for pre-eminently is her system one which announces the glad tidings of salvation, which excites a joyous trust in Christ as a Savior, which makes the word and sacraments bearers of saving grace" (C.P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology*, pp.114,116).

Hence we are an evangelical Lutheran Church! Yet we will remain so only as long as Christ and the word of salvation remain at the core of our preaching and teaching!

In whatever sense the writer of the article in the *Christian Science Monitor* blog means the term, it is for us a meaningful word. In writing what he did, we suspect that he did not have the Evangelical Lutheran Church in mind. Whether or not he did, however, some observations are made that we do well to take to heart.

We plan to follow this up with more, but let this gnaw on you for the week: "...the billions [*sic*] of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it."

We may not like it, but we cannot ignore it, even in our own "Evangelical" Lutheran Church!

(To be continued)

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas



Toleration—Equal rights—Supremacy

Another article in this issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman* refers to a gentleman theologian by the name of "C. P. Krauth."

Looking back into the history of the nineteenth century Lutheran Church, the accolades for this man are considerable. The *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (Concordia Publishing House, 1975 edition) informs that Charles

Porterfield Krauth (March 17, 1823-Jan. 2, 1883) "helped organize The General Council of the Ev. Lutheran Ch. in (N.) Am.", and was its president from 1870-1880. Dr. C. F. W. Walther is quoted as saying of Krauth that he was "without doubt the most eminent man in the Eng. Luth. Ch. of this country, a man of unusual learning, at home in modern as well as old theology, and,

what is most important, heartily devoted to the pure doctrine of the Luth. Ch." (p. 451)

Undoubtedly Krauth's best-known writing was *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, a book of some 820 pages, the first edition of which appeared in 1871. This pastor—who received the book as a gift from his 1966 Confirmation Class in Marquette, Michigan—has had occasion to refer to it frequently, finding many quotable quotes in defense of the orthodox Lutheran Reformation.

It is from Krauth, for example, that we get the insightful "course of error in the Church." That course, he says, follows the three steps of "toleration, equal rights, supremacy." Here are but a few of his words elaborating on that sequential triad: "When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking *toleration*. Its friends say to the majority: You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others....Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship....From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert *supremacy*..." (pp. 195f).

The FOREWORD to our (1963) edition of *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* says: "Some men move with the tide; others

somehow are able to turn the tide. Outstanding among the latter was Charles Porterfield Krauth. Educated at a time when the Lutheran Church in the United States was in grave danger of losing sight of its heritage, he came to a confessional Lutheran position by careful study and much thought....If any one man can be credited with returning the nineteenth century English-speaking Lutheran Church to the stream of historic Lutheranism, that man was Charles Porterfield Krauth...."

Even casual observers of the twenty-first century Lutheran Church must know that mainline Lutheranism has arrived again at the point where large segments have lost or are losing sight of their "conservative Reformation" heritage—error's "supremacy" now ruling the day after "toleration" and "equal rights" have had their short but all-too-predictable and all-too-effective days in the sun.

An objective look at the history of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) will, in fact, reveal that an awareness and holy fear of the destructive course of error ultimately led to the synod's formation. Some fifty years ago what was discovered as false teaching in the area of the doctrine of church fellowship could not be allowed toleration—and the inevitable equal rights and supremacy—with the truth of God's pure and unsullied Word.

Holy Scripture teaches, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). That passage, in effect, supports Krauth's "toleration, equal rights, supremacy" mantra. As the synod prepares to observe its fiftieth anniversary

continued, p.21

———— SURVEYING CLC HISTORY ————
FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET (1985)
“REFLECTIONS...PROJECTIONS”

Number Five: OUR MISSION EFFORT ABROAD

Some scholars who study the histories of church bodies suggest that those who spend much effort maintaining a correct doctrinal position will have little inclination toward a vigorous gospel outreach. May our gracious Lord grant that our CLC becomes a notable exception to such thinking!

Our statistical reports over the past 25 years indicate that we may not indeed be able to hope for strong numerical growth while working over the gleanings left by others in America’s heavily worked mission fields. But our people have responded well to our Savior’s call to lift up their eyes to fields abroad that are still white and heavy for harvest. When Oscar Erpenstein, a dedicated lay member of St. Stephen’s congregation in California, reported that several Nigerian men to whom he had been sending doctrinal materials were interested in establishing CLC congregations there, our people decided to do all in our power to help them.

This developing interest in the potential of mission work abroad was given a severe jolt when one of the Nigerian members brought to the States to be trained for the ministry did not keep his promise to serve in the Nigerian CLC.

An additional call to share our spiritual treasures came from India through another layman, John Rohrbach, who had come to know V. S. Benjamin, a very zealous independent Lutheran pastor who agreed with our doctrinal position and was soon calling his group of churches the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India. After two visitations, Pastor Koenig was called to become our first missionary to that heavily populated land. He will assist Benjamin in training preachers and developing the orphanage. Scores of our members in the States are now participating in the harvest excitement by writing to Indians who are enrolling in increasing numbers in the Bible Correspondence Course offered in a Madras newspaper.

Our Board of Missions hopes to call a missionary for Nigeria. And now Kenya is calling for our help in spreading the Word about Jesus!

So the Lord has lifted our eyes to fertile foreign fields that we never would have dreamt of entering 25 years ago, and we find that those of our fellowship who worship the Savior abroad could soon equal the number of those in our congregations in the States! Praise Him!



—*Pastor Norbert Reim (1918-2007)*

****EDITOR'S NOTE**

As we reprinted this article (opposite) for our historical review series from twenty-five years ago, there arrived in our snail-mail postbox a package from Missionary David Koenig in India. The package contained 93 typewritten, ring-bound pages, with the title: "God's Grace and Guidance In Our Foreign Outreach." As suggested in the reprint, Missionary Koenig has long been our CLC "on-site presence" in foreign fields as Nigeria and India; he does a wonderful service in preparing a nigh-fifty-year historical review from and with his personal perspectives. Our plan is to print an excerpt and review of the booklet in a future issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

(1960-2010), God grant that it continues to "resist the beginnings" of the course of error in the church.

Visible church denominations are ever in danger. We can do little regarding what happens in the broader Lutheran church. Yet, in our own small

segment thereof, God grant that there continue to be many, in pulpit and pew, who—as C.P. Krauth—"by careful study and much thought" grow in appreciation of the historic conservative Reformation and its theology!

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



The Word From Immanuel!
Chapel Talks to the student body of Immanuel
Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

MEASURING THE VALUE OF OUR NEW ACADEMIC CENTER

Chapel Talk: February 23, 2009

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).

Today we make our first move into the new Academic Center. Many people have been waiting a long time for this. They have waited and prayed and poured out their riches, so that on this day these students and this faculty could reside in this wonderful building.

When phase two is finished and the contractors have moved their equipment away, we will be able to step back and enjoy the beauty of this struc-

ture. What a wonderful addition to this campus.

And yet...and yet, of what value is it, really? Is the value of this building to be found solely in what we can see and feel and touch? There are more beautiful academic centers in this world. There are better-equipped classrooms. Are those buildings of greater value than this?

Of what value is the ILC Academic Center? The value is not in what we see, feel, and touch. The value is to be found in the same source as had been



The new AC rafters were raised and the ceilings were finished.

found in Reim Hall and the Cottage. The value is to be found in what is done within those walls and halls.

No doubt in many ways the new building will excel Reim Hall and the Cottage. But in one way those buildings were just as valuable as the AC.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." If the Lord does not build the house, it can be the most beautiful structure in the world. It can gain the praises of people all over the world and yet be totally worthless.

What do you think is the most beautiful building that you have ever seen? There are probably quite a few mental images in this room. One that immediately came to my mind was the Taj Mahal.

This beautiful edifice was built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The Taj serves as a tomb for the two of them.

Beautiful though it may be to the eyes, to the heart it is a sad, sad place. Why? Because it was dedicated to the glory of Allah, and the two inhabitants worshipped this false god. Therefore, unless by some unknown miracle these two heard about Christ and came to faith before their death, their souls are now in the eternal anguish of hell.

The Lord did not build the Taj

Mahal, and "unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." "In vain" means for no purpose; without value; empty; meaningless. If the end result of the Taj is that a false religion is glorified and many souls are encouraged to believe it, then the Taj was built in vain. For the message of the Taj is a message of death and damnation.

What is the message of the ILC Academic Center? It is a message of life and salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Within the walls of this structure there will be life, for the people who teach and learn here are the children of God. They...we have been saved from death and damnation by the great sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

Furthermore, this gospel message is what will be proclaimed within these walls. Year after year, the young people who come here will hear about the grace of God in Christ Jesus—the grace of God from the moment of creation to the present day.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." The Lord has built this house and it will be dedicated to His glory—the glory of the only real God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In a few days, Reim Hall will be

PRAYER: Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank You from the depths of our hearts for giving us this center for learning. Help us to use it to Your glory. Grant that those who teach here will be committed to You and Your truth. Grant that the students who learn here will receive Your Word gladly and treasure it within their hearts. Grant that those who maintain this building will labor to Your glory and the welfare of our students. Lord, You built this house. It has not been constructed in vain. These things we pray in the name of our Immanuel, Jesus Christ. Amen.

torn down. It has served its purpose and will be taken out of the way. Many students have walked its halls. Now they are pastors, teachers, and laymen in the CLC. In those classrooms their faith was confirmed and strengthened. In classrooms of business, English, fine and applied arts, foreign languages, mathematics, science, social studies and, of course, religion, God was glorified. Today we bid farewell to an edifice which the Lord built and which served His holy and saving purpose.

The day will surely come when the Academic Center also will be torn down, either by men or by God. Until that day, it is our prayer that the Academic Center will serve as well as did Reim Hall and the Cottage. May

the Word of the Lord continue to be taught in its truth and purity as long as those walls are standing. May the souls of our present students and of students in years to come be confirmed and strengthened in the faith. May no false doctrine invade this building to tarnish its walls and corrupt the hearts of its inhabitants.

Even so, let us pray: [See accompanying prayer (top)]

Rejoice then with me and give thanks to the Lord our God who has blessed us far beyond all that we have earned or deserve—blessed us in giving us the gospel message and now in giving us a new house in which this message can continue to be proclaimed.

—Prof. John Pfeiffer



Architectural drawing of the new Academic Center at ILC, Eau Claire

Announcements

West Central Delegate Conference
May 26-28, 2009
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Denver (Lakewood), Colorado

Agenda:

- * Devotional Study of Isaiah 58—
Pastor James Naumann
 - * Comparative Study of another small
Lutheran Church—Lay Delegate
 - * Importance of Corporate Bible
Study—Lay Delegate
 - * Maintaining "mission mindedness"
in well-churched rural communities—
Pastor George Dummann
 - * Blessings on the Faithful—Pastor
Mark Gurath
 - * Comparative Presentation of
Lutheran and Reformed teachings on
the Means of Grace with a slant
toward Evangelism—Pastor Michael
Roehl
 - * Church Fellowship Practice with
special reference to Weddings and
Funerals— Pastor Peter Reim
 - * Community Witness—the Role of
the Pastor's Family in his Ministry—
Lay Delegate
 - * Islam: Part I—Origin, History (Part
II—Teachings)—Pastor Matthew
Gurath
- Chaplain:** Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer
Speaker: Pastor Paul Fleischer

CLC General Pastoral Conference
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
June 16-18, 2009

Agenda:

- * Old Testament Exegesis: Joel
2:21ff—Prof. Paul Schaller
- * New Testament Exegesis: 1
Thessalonians 4:1ff—Pastor Eric
Libby
- * 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, Study what is
the "setting" for this section?
Public worship? If so, how is this
determined?—Professor Paul Sullivan
- * Engaging in Mission Work while
Maintaining Confessional Integrity—
Pastor Luke Bernthal
- * Survey of Millennialism (History,
current state etc.)—Pastor David
Schierenbeck
- * The Need for Balance in our
Pastoral Practice in Dealing With
Applications

of Fellowship/Confessional Principles
(Presentation and Discussion of
Current Issues) —Pastor John
Schierenbeck

Chaplain: Pastor Neal Radichel

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor
Mark Gurath

Communion Service Liturgist:

Pastor Scott Schiermeister

Program Committee: Pastors Robert
List, Jay Hartmann, Norman Greve

Excuse Committee: Pastors John
Johannes, Andrew Schaller

Organ Coordinator: Professor John
Reim

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Secretary

Anniversary Observance

In 2009 Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Coloma, Michigan, is commemorating fifty years of the blessings of God's love in Christ, our Savior. On Sunday, June 14, two special services will be conducted—one in the morning at 10:00 and another in the afternoon at 4:00. A former pastor of the congregation, James Sandeen, will serve as guest speaker in the afternoon service. Following the afternoon service a potluck meal will be served. A short program will be presented in connection with the potluck. Fellow members of the CLC are invited to join us for our anniversary festivities. For more information contact Pastor Thomas Schuetze at 269-468-4368 or tschuetze@sbglobal.net.

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Cover: John Fox