

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

SURVEYING THE WONDROUS CROSS

Pastor David Reim • Vernon, B.C., Canada

We are entering what many consider to be their favorite season of the church year – the season of Lent.

Isn't it interesting that some appreciate the somber season of Lent more than the excitement of a newborn Savior at Christmas? Or the exuberant joy of victory over death at Easter? Without Lent Christmas would be irrelevant; without Lent we would not know the full joy of Easter.

Lent is a season of quiet reflection. Apart from the hype and celebration of other seasons, Lent is an opportunity to focus on the full extent of God's amazing love. As one of our hymns puts it, Lent is a time to "survey the wondrous cross."

To survey something is more than to look it over and get a general picture of it. When we survey something, we measure it carefully to discover the exact length and width, the depth and height of it. We want to know and understand it inside and out.

That is what we Lutheran Christians do with the cross of Christ during the holy season of Lent. At the cross we get a true measure of our own life and worth.

In general, when we measure ourselves, we tend to use an exaggerated measuring rod. We like to compare ourselves with others and usually come out looking pretty good in our own eyes ("I go to church and give my offerings to the Lord." "I don't get drunk or curse or do any of the things that the people of the world do.").

When we have some quarrel with another person, don't we tend to see ourselves as the innocent victim? Or do we feel sorry for ourselves because we have been misunderstood or mistreated and don't deserve this kind of treatment? Do we maybe play through our own words and actions in our mind and conclude that we were right all along?

Well, when (as the hymn puts it) we "survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died," we see the true measure of ourselves and "pour contempt on all our pride." We find that there is nothing in us that measures up to God's glory or that enables us to feel good about ourselves before God.

...we can't possibly comprehend the love of God unless we fully "measure the meaning" of the cross of Christ.

The Full Extent of God's Love

It is at the cross where we see that our lives and our sins were so miserable and such an abomination to God that nothing less than the bitter suffering and death of God's own Son could make up for them.

May we never glory or boast in ourselves or think of ourselves more highly than others; rather, let us glory and boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in the cross of Christ we see the full extent of God's great love.

Have you ever noticed that even people who don't really believe in God like to talk about the love of God? Yet we can't possibly comprehend the love of God unless we fully "measure the meaning" of the cross of Christ.

What an amazing view of our Savior: "See, from His head, His hands, His feet, SORROW AND LOVE flow mingled down"!

See how our Savior willingly went with His enemies, knowing full well the torture they would inflict on Him. He silently endured their abuse and shame.

See how He prayed for His persecutors while the lifeblood was draining from His own body!

Marvel how He bore the full brunt of God's anger and punishment for the world of sinners. Never was a love like His!

So take time to "survey the wondrous cross" during this wonderful season. The cross gives us a sorrowing look at ourselves but it also gives a warm and wonderful view of Christ's love for us. Such a view of the cross gives great joy to the resurrection on Easter and fills us with love and devotion to our Savior, for (as another of our hymns puts it) "love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." †

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” JOHN 1:29

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Pastor Thomas Schuetze • Coloma, Michigan

Of all the names ascribed to Jesus in the Bible, which is your favorite?

That is a tough question, I suppose, because every name given to Jesus shines forth with special beauty: Good Shepherd, Redeemer, Light of the World, the Lord our Righteousness (and dozens more).

How can one pick a favorite from such a list? Each tells something special about our Savior—who He is, what He has done for us, what wonderful reasons we have to love and serve Him.

Yet there is a name we might be encouraged to rejoice in especially at this season of the year (Lent). I'm thinking of the name given to Jesus by John the Baptist: **Lamb of God**.

Consider the gospel comfort contained in this gorgeous name!

In Old Testament times lambs played an important role in the worship lives of God's people. Each morning and evening, at God's direction, the priest took a lamb, slaughtered it, and offered it as a sacrifice.

Through this worship ritual God was picturing for them what the promised Messiah would do. He would offer His sinless life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

And do you remember

the account of the Passover recorded in Exodus chapter 12? God instructed the Israelites to choose a lamb from their flock (a one-year old male and a perfect specimen), bring it home and take care of it for two weeks.

The Passover Lamb

Then they were to slaughter the lamb, roast its meat, and eat it as part of the Passover meal. They were also to take some blood of that lamb and smear it on the top and sides of the doorframes of their homes. This would serve as a sign for God to pass over their homes when He came that night to execute judgment on the idolatrous Egyptians.



Here we have a firm foundation; Here the refuge of the lost; Christ's the Rock of our salvation, His the name of which we boast. Lamb of God, for sinners wounded, Sacrifice to cancel guilt! None shall ever be confounded Who on Him their hope have built.

✠ TLH #153:4 ✠

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).

The meaning of the Passover ritual isn't a mystery to us. It was another way God was portraying the great redemptive work of His holy Son who would allow His enemies to take Him captive, place Him on trial, condemn Him, and cut Him down in the prime of life by nailing Him to a cross.

Because of the blood that flowed from Jesus' nail wounds and the gash in His side inflicted by a spear, God would pass over the sins of the world; Jesus'

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DEVOTION

YOU KILLED GOD

Warren H. Fanning • Pastor Emeritus, Sun City, Arizona

“I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

I CORINTHIANS 2:2

I wonder how many outsiders and non-members read these pages.

I hope there are some, because we have a message for you. And it should offend you in at least two ways.

First, we profess on the one hand that you are a helplessly damned sinner. And on the other hand we profess hope for you from the one and only God who was damned in your stead. He actually volunteered for it — to be caught and executed by you and for you (hard as that might be for you to believe).

If you have trouble taking this in, come to any one of our CLC churches, and the pastor there will be glad to explain the details.

In the meantime, you should realize that the above two offenses have been the core message of Christianity from the beginning.

The great explainer of all this back then was a man named Paul, whose life and writings cover a large section of the Bible's New Testament. Paul, an apostle of the Lord, did not present a “feel good” or moralistic type of Savior. His Christ was a real Somebody—God!

At birth this Somebody was a small Nobody on Earth — a humble life from a virgin's womb on, called in Scripture a “root out of dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2), a “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3), very “acquainted” with sadness and grief

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“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

Isaiah 53:1-5

OUT OF NECESSITY

A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession • Pastor David Lau

Delivered at IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE, EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is fitting that we conclude this series of chapel talks on the history of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) on the day of our Lord's ascension. For just as our risen Lord and Savior at God's right hand has guided us in the past, so our present and our future are in the hands of our Savior who rules over us at God's right hand.

The Gospel of Mark concludes with these words: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."

What does it mean that Jesus is sitting down at the right hand of God? We do not have to figure out the meaning of these words by using our imaginations. God has revealed to us what is meant by His sitting at the right hand of God. Listen to these words from the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power. ...And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church."

On the basis of this Bible passage our catechism says:

"Christ's sitting at the right hand of God means that He rules everything for the benefit of His people. God is a spirit; He does not have a body which has a right hand. Sitting at one's right hand is a picture of a position of honor and authority. Christ rules at God's right hand as our Prophet, High Priest, and King."

Our CLC has officers and boards.

Our congregations have pastors and elders and teachers and committees. It is important that we have these officers so that all things may be done decently and in order, as we are instructed. But the real and only Head of the Church is Jesus Christ at God's right hand. All authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth.

All the blessings we have enjoyed in the past have come from Him. As our Prophet He has taught us through the prophets and apostles in His Word. As our High Priest He made the supreme sacrifice of offering Himself up on the cross to atone for all our sins. As our King He has worked all things together for our good. For He rules over all in the interest of His Church on Earth, that is, His sheep and lambs who trust in Him as their Savior and Lord. He has used His almighty power for our benefit, guiding us, watching over us, keeping us safe.

And now, what about the future?

Back in 1960 the year 2010 was a long ways in the future. Fifty years. The ascended Lord was with us during those fifty years, blessing us in ways too numerous to mention at this time. Will He be with us during the next fifty years? What will our church be like in the year 2060? That is a long ways away, but many of you will probably be living at

"...What will our church be like in the year 2060? That is a long ways away, but many of you will probably be living at that time, if the world lasts that long. We can barely even imagine what it will be like in 2060. Our present and our future are in the hands of the Head of our Church, Jesus Christ."

that time, if the world lasts that long. We can barely even imagine what it will be like in 2060.

Our present and our future are in the hands of the Head of our Church, Jesus Christ. He may decide to wrap things up before that time, bringing to an end this whole world and everything in it. That would be a good thing, would it not? All the Christians who have died from the beginning of the world would then arise from their graves and be ushered into the presence of their Savior, together with the living believers, all of us then to enjoy the presence of our Lord forever. Fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore, as the Bible says.

But if our Lord delays His coming and allows the world to continue for another fifty years, there are some things we can count on for sure. We can continue to count on the assurance given us in God's Word that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Jesus, as our High Priest, is interceding for us at God's right hand as our Mediator, telling the Father that He has already paid for all of our sins. We can continue to count on all of the promises of our God in His Word, for Jesus, our Prophet, has given us His Word in Scripture, and Jesus will continue to see to it that His Word will not perish from the Earth.

And we can continue to count on Jesus as our King in the years to come, ruling over all things in the interest of His people. But we cannot count on ourselves. We cannot depend on the strength of our faith and love. We cannot depend on the loyalty of the Church

of the Lutheran Confession or on its leaders. There have been orthodox, confessional Lutheran church bodies in the past that at one time were faithful in their teaching and practice but now they have fallen away, some of them very far away from where they were. God has not promised anywhere that the CLC will remain on Earth or that the CLC will remain faithful in its teaching and practice. We can't trust in ourselves or in our church body.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God. He is our Head. He is our Savior. May we always put our trust in Him. We sing the hymns stanzas.

*Christ, Thou art the sure Foundation,
Thou the Head and Cornerstone;
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the Church in one;
Thou Thy Zion's Help forever
And her Confidence alone.
Praise and honor to the Father,
Praise and honor to the Son,
Praise and honor to the Spirit,
Ever Three and ever One,
One in might and one in glory,
While unending ages run.*

✠ TLH #466:1 & 4 ✠

“OUT OF NECESSITY” – a book worth reading!

We are a “church in the world”— and how!

Pastor Paul Fleischer • Cheyenne, Wyoming

In this issue we have the last in a series of chapel talks which Pastor David Lau delivered during the 2009-10 school year to the student body at Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. ILC is our synod’s school for training the up-coming generation—pastors, teachers, and lay-people—to be disciples of Christ.

Pastor Lau’s talks on the various chapters of our synod’s history book (which he had written for the synod’s fiftieth anniversary) stressed the importance of upholding a staunchly Bible-based foundation for our “church in the world.”

Yes, our church is in the world, yet—pray God—not of the world, for its members have been called out of the world, as Peter writes: “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

As we serve our Savior in the world, we strive to do so 1) as Christians; 2) as Lutherans; 3) as confessional Lutheran Christians.

1) As Christians

we serve our Savior aright when we do so as those firmly convinced that the God-Man Jesus Christ is alone “the way, the truth, and the life” for, as He Himself taught, “no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

The book of Acts reports how this absolute truth claim was staunchly upheld by the Lord’s apostles even in the face of persecution to the point of martyrdom. While under arrest by the

civil authorities, these “uneducated and untrained men” said, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Earlier they asserted, “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).

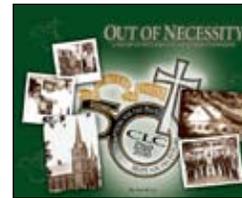
While we in the CLC strive to maintain this absolute truth, many “Christian” denominations today have relinquished it.

2) As Lutherans

we serve our Savior aright when we do so as those firmly convinced that the salvation which Christ provides for sinners can be found only and alone in the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures, which “are able to make you wise for salvation,” for they are “given by inspiration of God and (are) profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:15ff).

We believe—with the sixteenth century Reformer of the church, Dr. Martin Luther—that these Holy Scriptures are all-sufficient, teaching all we need to know about God’s wondrous grace and mercy toward the world of sinners, “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Many “Lutheran” churches today don’t uphold the Holy Scriptures as the objective, all-sufficient, and only source of Truth. The result is that poor



OUT OF NECESSITY –

A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession
by Pastor David Lau

Available at the CLC bookhouse

Web: www.clcbookhouse.org Phone: 715-836-6623

E-mail: Info@CLCbookhouse.org



souls are robbed of the certainty of their undeserved, free, and complete salvation in and through Christ Jesus.

3) As confessional

Lutheran Christians—we serve our Savior aright when we do so as those firmly convinced that there is no license or liberty to tamper with His teachings.

Jesus said to those “who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31f). In His Great Commission the same Lord who directs His disciples to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them...” goes on to say that they should teach would-be disciples “to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19f).

Yet evidence abounds today that large segments of the visible Christian

church in general, and Lutheranism in particular, have jettisoned the “observe all things” directive of the Great Commission. Choosing to be “progressive” rather than confessional before the world, they condone and/or accept abortion, same-sex marriage, women clergy, evolutionary origins, and many other “less obvious” but equally dangerous (Scripture-undermining, faith-scuttling) false teachings.

From this backdrop we say: the CLC history book gives its readers an historical snapshot of one small Lutheran church body’s struggles to establish and maintain a **truly Christian, truly Lutheran, truly confessional** church which, while in the world, is not of it. As such, we recommend it as a very worthwhile resource book for would-be disciples of Jesus Christ in the 21st century.



The Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference last October was hosted by Ascension Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington. (Top) Pastors Doug Priestap, Steven Karp, David Reim, Caleb Schaller, Paul Naumann; (Bot.) Visiting guest Benjamin Reim, Terrel Kesterson, Robert List, Neal Radichel, David Naumann.

By Missionary David Koenig

HUNTSMAN

IT APPEARED TO BE SUCH A SPLENDID DAY.

Light filtered through the overhanging boughs showing well the path I trod. The sounds of the forest held no warning. The cheerful song of birds, the droning of some busy insects, the rustling of branches as a gentle wind came through, but then I heard it though faintly, but with an increasing tenor.

Such is the power of recall. Conscience called them forth and the remembrance of my past sins came on with a daunting swiftness to overtake and encircle me. I heard their baying growing in intensity, making their intent all too clear – to destroy the peace I had, to rip from me any sense and assurance of comfort, just as a wolf tears flesh from the body. At first they'd only stymie my progress forward, though ultimately they would leave me incapacitated like a torn and bleeding body in the road.

Remembrance of my past sins pursued me like a pack of howling wolves. Their screeching accusations assail my mind, for I remember them all right! Looking over my shoulder into those days, I am assaulted in my mind's eye by the sins that I recall. The sweat rolls from my face and my heart races as I try to fend off their remembrance, but to none effect. Nervous exhaustion is all I gain as I by my own efforts seek to dispel what is past.

The One I had forgotten in my panic now comes to my aid – that Huntsman who slew these pursuing monsters and buried them that they might not assail

and tear and rend. Seeing Him and depending on His valorous work for me, I no longer fear the horrible howling.

And with Him beside me, those brutes retreat like mist before the morning sun. The Huntsman's comforting words allay my rising fears. His loving encouragement courses through me and pushes out those so recent, well-nigh overpowering feelings of guilt. My running from those dogged pursuers now turns to a walk through the forest toward my home beyond the woods.

Ah, you say, they who are now gone from sight and hearing were but an illusion. No, they were real enough, for I know me.

I see Him still at my side. How could I have forgotten Him so easily? He had always been there, just as He assured me when He slew my pursuers. Yes, fear had beclouded my vision, and as I turned my head to see them I lost my focus on Him, the strong Protector at my side.

There is much yet to this trek through the forest until I reach that blessedly furnished cottage when I am at last out of the woods. His strong words assure me that as He has in the past, so He will in the future accompany me. If I lose my way, He knows the way, for He has been here before.

While I must truthfully admit the darkness between the trees gives me some pause for worry, I but turn my eyes from the darkness to His presence, and my pace remains firm and steady. I know not what lies ahead on this path through the forest, but I know what lies behind, and above all, I know Him who is at my side. ✨

Dear readers:

The unusual linguistic approach in this article is not common fare on these pages. However, to our thinking it is quite an effective way to convey particular spiritual truth(s)—in this case, godly contrition and repentance.

With the apostle Paul each of us can make the “chief of sinners” claim (1 Timothy 1:15); yet, as Psalm 51 has it, when we acknowledge our transgressions, God's Spirit

restores to us the joy of His salvation so that, in turn, we can teach transgressors His ways, and sinners shall be converted to the Lord (vv. 12-13).

And as far as the article content is concerned, yet another penitential psalm of King David affords enlightening parallels in such words as these: *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am*

feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart....Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long....For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. For I said, “Hear me, lest they rejoice over me, lest, when my foot slips, they exalt themselves against me.” For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

*But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; and those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. Those also who render evil for good, they are my adversaries, because I follow what is good. Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation! **Psalm 38:6-8, 12, 15-22***

—The Editor

(Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)

Pessimism or Realism?

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

As witnesses to the love of God in Christ Jesus and as bearers of the Word of God — the substance of which is the message of that love — Christ-believers can be nothing but optimistic.

In keeping with the Lord's commission, as well as based on His promise sure, the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) declares its "single purpose to be a Christian church that proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible" (*CLC Statement of Faith and Purpose*, p. 5).

In connection with the great commission the Lord speaks of "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:20).

The CLC takes this seriously. In our preaching and teaching we are bound to preach and teach all that is in Scripture, neither adding to it nor subtracting from it! How seriously a church takes the words of the Lord will determine how it carries out the great commission.

Taking the Savior's commission seriously means that we preach law and gospel—the law in its unvarnished exposure of sin and condemnation on one hand, and on the other hand the glorious and unsurpassed message of forgiveness, justification, and eternal salvation through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus.

We will speak in love, bearing in mind the level of understanding of those to whom we speak. But we dare

never speak less than the truth for fear that speaking it will cause people to walk away, as indeed many did because Jesus spoke the truth. The reaction of many to Jesus' teaching was "This is a hard saying" (John 6:60), and many "went back and walked with Him no more" (v. 66).

Jesus sorrowed at their reaction, but the greater loss was not His. It was theirs. And so in our witnessing, we will likely suffer the same sorrow as our Lord did, for we will not tailor our preaching and teaching to appeal to human whim and desire to attract people to our church.

Surely our desire and prayer is that sinners who see their need will identify with and become part of our church family!

Surely our desire and prayer is that sinners who see their need will identify with and become part of our church family! However, as those who are committed to the whole counsel of God, our purpose is not to be driven by a desire to attract people to our church. The evidence is at hand that churches that see "attracting people" as their purpose ultimately give up preaching the whole counsel of God because the truth is not helpful to their purpose and understanding of "growing the church." Such churches put their finger into the wind to determine what to teach. Rather than being teachers of

God's Word, they become advocates of societal whims and individual agendas! If that is a hard saying, so be it!

Only the Spirit Converts...

Nor is it our responsibility to convert people. We cannot do that. Only the Spirit of God converts the heart. Our responsibility is to preach the truth of which the gospel of our Lord is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

We are to preach the gospel, proclaim the truth, and trust that whether individuals join our membership or not, the Word of God will not return unto Him empty handed. He will add to His Church such as are being saved (Acts 2:47). Instead of fixating on visible results, the only question we should ask ourselves is whether or not we are faithful to the Lord in the exercise of our calling as well as faithful to His Word in what we are preaching.

Yes, we would like people to identify with us. However, as a confessional Lutheran church in a pseudo-religious world competing against the devil and "fun-and-games churches" or against those who bear the Lutheran name but have lost the Lutheran character, realistically it is not likely that we are going to see dramatic increases in our church body's membership.

Some may see that judgment as pessimistic and defeatist. We prefer to see it as realism in a day when people with itching ears can easily find churches that will scratch their itch (2 Timothy 4:3)!

We should be so busy studying the Word, teaching the Word, applying the Word — law and gospel — to the human condition and declaring the Word as our Lord has given it to us in the

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Scripture that we have no time to fret about "church growth."

To Timothy Paul said, "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

As we continue to minister in these last days, let us do so with confidence. As we preach the whole truth of God's blessed Word, He will bring to pass through our preaching what He wills. He will gather His elect. We have His promise. Furthermore, it is enough for us that He knows them that are His even though we don't. Let us consider it a privilege to be bearers of His Word, through which He gathers His flock.

To the extent that we feel a desire to make our church attractive to "outsiders," let it be the attraction of truth and steadfastness, together with a life that is adorned with righteousness and joy in the Lord. Let our teaching — as well as our faith active in good works — be a magnet that draws the attention of people yearning for what they have not yet found.

Let them see and hear that we have found Jesus (John 1:45-46) so that, as they ask of the hope that is in us, we may say, "Come and see." †

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

A Faithful God — A Faithful Word

2 TIMOTHY 2:13-18

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

We know that God is almighty and that with Him nothing is impossible. Yet can it be that there is something God cannot do?

Yes, says Paul: “He cannot deny Himself.” And He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He cannot do these things because they are contrary to His nature which is faithfulness and truth. God remains faithful even in the face of human faithlessness. He does not go back on His Word. He does not fail to keep His promises.

Because God is faithful and cannot deny Himself, His Word does not change. It remains forever what Paul calls it here — namely, “the word of truth.”

Paul reminds Timothy that those who teach God’s Word need to be careful how they teach it. It is God’s approval that you want, says the apostle, not the approval of men. Be diligent in your work with the Word; be the kind of worker who doesn’t have to be ashamed of his work.

Be careful to handle — “divide” — that Word rightly. The Greek word that Paul uses here means to cut something straight; it’s a figure of speech perhaps derived from Paul’s trade of tent-making. He knew from experience the importance of straight cutting. Careless and crooked cutting would either waste valuable fabric or it could result in an inferior finished product.

Straight cutting of God’s Word is teaching both law and gospel—teaching it as it is, not perverting or changing it. The faithful teacher lets God speak and resists the temptation to try to make the Word acceptable to human reason or in line with current fashion.

Such warnings and reminders to teachers of the Word are necessary because of the great harm that can be done to hearers when teachers fail to handle it rightly.

A Trust to be Guarded

Timothy is directed to warn others “not to strive about words.” Paul does not mean that we should never make an issue of words used to express the teachings of Scripture. The truth that has been given to us is a trust to be guarded (2 Timothy 1:12-14) and we are to contend for the faith (Jude 3). That means that sometimes words that misstate Christian doctrine need to be opposed.

Paul warns here against striving about words “to no profit.”

This happens when someone out of pride insists that his words and expressions are the only way to express a teaching of Scripture. Or it happens when someone makes an issue of an expression that is not wrong and falsely accuses another of false doctrine. In such instances what often follows is a wrangling that does not profit, does not build up, but rather leads to “the ruin of the hearers.” Those who listen to

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Jesus the Consoler

Pastor Andrew Schaller • Watertown, South Dakota



“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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.” John 14:1-3

All of us have days of sadness and sorrow. It’s a fact of life in this sinful world. Sadness and sorrow are the offspring of sin.

When we are down and out or grieving over loss or in pain, we welcome fellow Christians who bring words of true consolation from God’s Word. The words they speak are very often familiar. They don’t bring new promises but rather direct our hearts and minds back to the promises of our Savior—God, promises that can be lost sight of in the midst of tribulation of body and soul.

Family, friends, and acquaintances may be unavailable or even forsake us, but our God promises, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

On the occasion when Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving their presence and they couldn’t follow, they experienced sadness of heart, soul, and mind. They had been walking in His footsteps for three years but they still didn’t fully understand what it meant to follow Him. The time would come, however, when they would understand that following Jesus would mean persecution and even death.

Yes, they would be persecuted, hated, and even killed. In fact, every disciple of Jesus experiences trouble from other sinful human beings for following the Savior. Jesus said it would be so (see John 15:18-19, Mark 13:13) and so did those

commissioned by the Spirit to write (2 Timothy 3:12).

Jesus’ disciples were about to learn that following Jesus can lead to persecution and death. When they faced those circumstances, they could think back on these words of the Savior and find in them real, lasting comfort.

For, you see, Jesus didn’t offer some cliché as salve for their new wounds. He didn’t tell them that they could find in themselves the strength to stand. He told them—and He tells us—that comfort and strength to stand firm in the faith is to be found in the Father and in Himself. When the going got tough, they were to remind one another of what He Himself had done for them—and had promised to always do for them.

Jesus did more than offer them words. He did something about the fears they would face when confronted with their own mortality.

He took their sins—and ours!—upon Himself and paid for them. In doing so He forever silenced Satan, our “accuser” (Revelation 12:10; see Romans 8:33), and removed the punishment that was otherwise in our future. Jesus rose again the third day, proving His power over death (Revelation 1:18). Jesus’ glorious rising would comfort their hearts and forever remove their—and our!—fear of death. When they breathed their last, still trusting in the Christ, they would

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An "Open Door" in Australia!

For fifty years the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) has existed as a confessional Lutheran Church whose single purpose it is to be a Christian church that proclaims the saving gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. That such teaching may remain unsullied among us, we are bound by and to the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

With respect to fellowship we believe that all forms of religious fellowship are limited to fellowship between such as are in full agreement with the teachings of Scripture and do not by word or act reject any part of God's Word. We are encouraged and heartened by every testimony, written or spoken, that confesses and glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ. In the exercise of our ministry as well as in our fellowship practice we are challenged daily by the weakness of our own flesh as well as by the temptations of the world about us.

We thank the gracious Lord of the Church for keeping us steadfast in our faith and confession through many trials over the past fifty years.

We are encouraged in our confessional stand when from time to time inquiries are received from such as wrote to us in September of 2010. Tim Stiller of Tanunda, Australia, inquired about the confessional position and practice of the CLC.

Mr. Stiller wrote, "I on behalf of my... family am seeking a like-minded, faithfully confessional Lutheran fellowship, as we need help and support to form a small congregation to be served with Word and Sacrament." His family consists of his wife, three children, and his elderly parents. The support being sought is not financial, but moral and spiritual.

The family took the name "Steadfast Evangelical Lutheran Church." Tim (who with his father farms a vineyard) is the lay preacher. He uses sound Lutheran sermons (see SIDEBAR), including some by Dr. C.F.W. Walther, as well as sermons provided by some pastors of the CLC. He has also been provided with sermon books of Prof. Egbert Schaller and Dean Norman A. Madson. Mr. Stiller was already acquainted with Luther's *Small Catechism* edited by Prof. Michael Sydow. His family is acquainted with and has used CLC Sunday School material. They receive the monthly *Lutheran Spokesman*, which is an "official organ" of our church body.

Tim completed his daughter Rebekah's confirmation instruction. For the examination he used questions provided by CLC pastors. Rebekah was confirmed on January 9, 2011. Tim reported that "This was truly a joyous day, for which we give thanks and praise to our Lord, the great Shepherd of His flock."

We would also add that old-timers in the CLC would be very comfortable with the liturgical services used at Steadfast Ev. Lutheran Church, both for the regular Sunday services as well as the communion services. They have been supplied, at their request, with liturgical forms for different services — funeral,



The Stiller family - Standing: Rebekah (15), Tim, Kathy, Jesse (13), Mariah (11)
Sitting: Tim's parents: Wally (86), Jean (80)



A view of the Stiller farm in Australia

wedding, baptism, confirmation — from *The Lutheran Agenda*.

At this writing Tim has received his passport and is planning on visiting in the States in May. He is anxious to meet members of the CLC, as well as visit our Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

The Stiller family has been "Lutheran" since the 1800s and has been active in Lutheran churches in Australia. Tim's father, Walter, has translated old LC-MS German devotions into English. Much correspondence and exchange of materials as well as phone calls have been exchanged between us and the Stillers. The Board of Doctrine has been kept informed. The Spirit has created between us an understanding. They desire fellowship with the CLC. Synod President John Schierenbeck will seek ratification of fellowship with them at the next Convention (scheduled for June of 2012).

Circumstances within Lutheranism in Australia have to a great extent mirrored the deterioration of Lutheranism in this country. There have been divisions over doctrine within Australian Lutheranism. While the Stillers were still members of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), they were disturbed by the "social gospel" preached in their local church, by contemporary worship services as "entertainment," as well as by Sunday Schools being replaced with "Kid's Clubs."

After leaving *Continued on next page*

From the Editor:

* We thank Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer, Oakdale, Minn. for this report; Pastor Fleischer, who pastored a number of CLC congregations from 1963-2010 (and served as CLC President 1982-2002), has been a primary liaison for the CLC with Mr. Stiller, as well as with many other contacts over the years.

* Dr. C.F.W. Walther (1811-1887) was a founding father and prominent theologian of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) in its confessionally-sound early years; Prof. Egbert Schaller (1904-1971) served in the public ministry beginning in 1926; he severed fellowship with the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod in 1959 for confessional reasons and became one of the founding fathers of the CLC in 1960; Bethany Seminary Dean Norman A. Madson (1886-1962) served as pastor and Professor in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) beginning in 1925; for confessional reasons he had become a member of the CLC in its fledgling years before the Lord took him home to Himself. Michael Sydow (1941-2009) served the Lord in the CLC pastoral and teaching ministry beginning in 1965. It was in the mid 1980s that Prof. Sydow published a translation of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*.

* Your editor has also had some happy back-and-forths with Mr. Stiller. After providing him with copies of some back issues of the *Lutheran Spokesman*, as well as our recent book introducing Dean Madson to later generation CLCers, Tim wrote to thank us. Even as he plans to use one or more of Dean Madson's sermons in the future, he adds: "We wish to convey to you our great joy and thankfulness for sending to us some back issues of the *Spokesman*. They reveal how the merciful Lord has provided for His faithful in your country and through the CLC elsewhere. For us they have been a source of encouragement for fellowship and involvement in the CLC, yes, even if God wills it, for myself to study and serve Him in the ministry eventually." — Let our prayers ascend to the throne of God in behalf of this opportunity to share the gospel with like-minded confessors of Christ "on the other side of the world."

the LCA for confessional reasons late in 1999, they joined a small local Lutheran congregation in early 2000. Tim writes, however, that “just recently we had to resign” from the congregation, “because of a lack of church discipline over disunity on closed communion... We were no longer speaking the same thing. We have for some time been living a lie to the oneness of mind and judgment. God’s Word is clear in Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10, Amos 3:3, etc.”

First of all, we thank the Lord for the encouragement given as He shows us

that we are not alone in our concern for the truth and honest fellowship in the Word. Our voice is being heard! We thank Him for the opportunity to encourage people such as the Stillers who feel “very isolated.”

We conclude with recent words from Mr. Stiller: “It is indeed good to ‘visit’ brethren in the faith via the printed medium. It is even better to ‘visit’ the same by phone, real voice-to-real-voice. Even better yet, to in-the-flesh ‘visit.’ But the best for us is still to come — to ‘visit’ at the throne of God for eternity. ✨

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depart to the place He promised to prepare for them in the Father’s House in heaven.

In the same way our comfort for the future is also found in Christ and what He has done and in what He still promises to do. He has redeemed us to God by His own perfect life and death. He rose again the third day, assuring us that one day we will also rise at His invitation, at the sound of His voice (John 5:28-29). He has power over death.

No matter then what the pain or sorrow, we are comforted knowing that He has reserved a place for us. He promises that He is coming back for us. He will receive us to Himself. We will

be with Him where He is. We will then never be separated from Him.

The promises of Christ are better than iron-clad; they are guaranteed by the One who sits at the right hand of God.

Jesus is our Consoler in the face of death and the grave... and beyond!

**When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E’en then this shall be all my plea:
Jesus hath lived and died for me.
(TLH #371:6)**

Christ Jesus is my only plea, my hope, my comfort, my surety. †

“Portraits of Christ” in John’s Gospel (by chapter) :

1–The Son of God	8–The Defender of the Weak	15–The True Vine
2–The Son of Man	9–The Light of the World	16–The Giver of the Holy Spirit
3–The Divine Teacher	10–The Good Shepherd	17–The Great Intercessor
4–The Soul-Winner	11–The Prince of Life	18–The Model Sufferer
5–The Great Physician	12–The King	19–The Uplifted Savior
6–The Bread of Life	13–The Servant	20–The Conqueror of Death
7–The Water of Life	14–The Consoler	21–The Restorer of the Penitent

YOU KILLED GOD! *Continued from Page 5*

(Isaiah 53:3), beaten down for the sins of mankind — not His, but yours! — mocked, cursed, reviled, and abandoned, right to the bitter end.

He actually died, before He revived!

Many people in the world at Paul’s time denied it all as silliness and weakness. But many soon realized that here was an unequalled consistency of depth and truth and satisfaction for starved spiritual appetites.

And why? Because God won!

We profess an executed God who overcame death. He actually planned

both — His death and His resurrection — for you! And He has been alive ever since.

That’s why Christians celebrate Easter at the end of Lent.

Hold on to all this, dear sinner. And come and get more. You killed God! (“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:36)

It’s the most offensive news while, at the same time, the most exciting and comforting news that you will ever hear. ❖

A Faithful God — A Faithful Word *Continued from Page 14*

such useless wrangling or striving may be so put off that they stop coming to hear the Word and start distancing themselves from the fellowship of believers.

Paul also tells Timothy to “shun profane and idle babblings,” and he gives an example to show what he is talking about. He mentions two men who were guilty of this very thing. They had strayed from the truth and were spreading a destructive false teaching. He even names them, because they were to be marked and avoided (see Romans 16:17f).

What were Hymenaeus and Philetus saying that was so harmful? They were saying that “the resurrection is already past,” denying the doctrine of the future resurrection of the body as taught by Christ and the apostles.

Now we might wonder how anyone could be deceived or have his faith overthrown by such an obviously absurd false teaching. But false teachers can be clever. We can imagine them quoting statements from Paul’s writings, such as Colossians 3:1, where the apostle says

that believers have already been “raised with Christ.” These words they would take out of context, misusing them to support their denial of the resurrection of the body on the last day.

They had already done terrible harm. Some had been taken in by their false teaching and had lost the Christian hope of bodily resurrection. Paul warns of spiritual ruin and the overthrowing of faith where God’s Word is misused.

But where faithful teachers handle the Word rightly, the hearers will be blessed. They will be built up and strengthened in their faith in Jesus Christ.

God’s Word remains the word of truth. Though men may be faithless, He remains faithful. His Word — including the law of God which accuses and condemns sinners — is true and unbending. His Word — including the gospel with all His promises in Christ — are sure and certain. All of them have been or will most certainly be fulfilled — every one of them! ❖

What's in a Name? *continued from p. 4*

sacrificial death rescued all from the eternal death they deserve, obtaining for all the gift of a life that never ends.

Moreover, we know from Holy Scripture that the blood of God's Lamb was the only "item" valuable enough to accomplish this ransom. As Peter wrote: "It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

So what is your favorite name of Jesus? It's hard to pick just one. "Lamb of God" would be a good choice. Just as with every other name ascribed to our Savior in Holy Scripture—to name a few more: Friend of Sinners, Prince of Peace, the Resurrection and the Life, our merciful High Priest—the name "Lamb of God" is loaded with gospel comfort for all. ♣

Announcements

Installation: In accord with our usage and order, David Baker, who was called by Redeemer Lutheran Church, Red Wing, Minn., to be its pastor, was installed on December 5, 2010. Professor John Ude of Immanuel Lutheran College preached the sermon for the service. — Pastor Norman Greve



About the cover photo

The photo was taken by CLC member Nathan Voit at the Milwaukee Art Museum's Windhover Hall, that features the Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion as seen from a looking-up point of view.

Thank you, Nathan, for your contribution this month.

Send your photos to mschaser@sbcglobal.net and we'll consider them for use in future editions of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

Lutheran Spokesman

"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

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