

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.**

PROVERBS 22:6



WORD ASSOCIATIONS

Professor Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

If we were to play a word association game using the word *education*, what thoughts would first come to our minds?

Those who live in Wisconsin as I do, would no doubt have fresh memories involving a year of turmoil in our public school system. Words such as *tenure, benefits, contracts, standards, recall, and vouchers* have been bandied about.

But the problems don't stop there. Along with challenging political issues come a myriad of social concerns. Words such as *bullying, sexting, broken families, drug abuse, metal detectors, gay-straight alliances, early childhood sex ed*, have also... and unfortunately... become commonplace when discussing the education of our youth.

What about Christian education? Is it immune to the political and social problems of society at large? Of course not. Both in parochial schools and in our Christian homes children are besieged by the devil, the sinful world, and their fleshly desires (as are their parents and teachers).

Christian parents and children are in danger of falling into the same pitfalls that plague secular education.

Are we not tempted at times to equate a "good education" with one that leads to a high-paying job and financial security, rather than with one that strives to develop talents for Kingdom work and earthly contentment?

Are not also we lured into the popular dogma that all truth is relevant and that to "coexist" (as the bumper sticker suggests) we should remain silent when God's truth is challenged?

Do we model political correctness to our children just to avoid awkward situations and potential ridicule from the world?

Do we while away our time on the frivolities and ambitions of this world instead of spending more time with the "one thing needful"?

Toward a Complete Education!

Whether our children attend a public school, parochial school, or a home school, let us recognize this: without Christ their education will not only be incomplete, but even detrimental to their future.

Though God does not command the specific method by which a child should be educated, He does provide clear guidance.

"Train up a child in the way he should go..." (Proverbs 22:6), and "...bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

What about Christian education? Is it immune to the political and social problems of society at large? ... in our Christian homes children are besieged by the devil, the sinful world, and their fleshly desires (as are their parents and teachers).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

"You shall teach them [God's words] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 11:19)--in other words, whenever the opportunity presents itself throughout the day!

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The Bible also cautions against teaching our children the ways of the world.

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Without doubt the responsibility of educating today's youth in the ways of God is a weighty one, perhaps the most difficult thing for parents and congregations to do.

Yet, let us take comfort in knowing that with God nothing is impossible. His Word works!

And as another school year is about to begin, let us aspire to have words such as these associated with Christian education:

Christ, grace, hope, faithfulness, humility, contentment, and service.

May the Lord richly bless the education of His children, younger and older, through us.

GRANT THOU ME STRENGTH TO DO WITH READY HAND
AND WILLING WHATE'ER THOU SHALT COMMAND, MY
CALLING HERE FULFILLING; TO DO IT WHEN I OUGHT,
WITH ALL MY MIGHT, AND BLESS THE WORK I THUS
HAVE WROUGHT, FOR THOU MUST GIVE SUCCESS.

TLH #395:2



“Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic to the Glory of God”

Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer • Hecla, South Dakota

There is a change that takes place somewhere between 4th grade and High School. When we were young, going back to school was an exciting time—new folders, new pencils, and we got to spend the day with our friends!

But as we grew older, we realized how fun the summers could be and how much hard work came with going back to school. What once was exciting soon became the dreaded return to school after a summer of fun.

The Holy Spirit causes us as redeemed children of the heavenly Father to take a much different look at everything we do—including going back to school. Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth, “*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

When Paul wrote these words, he was dealing with the question of whether or not Christians had the freedom to eat meat which had been offered to false idols.

Did they have the freedom to do so? Certainly. But was it always the wise and loving thing to do? “*Let no one seek his own,*” Paul wrote, “*but each one the other’s well-being*” (10:24). Act in love for your fellow believer, even in your choice of what to eat! Seek to glorify God in everything you do, even at meal time!

Well, if we want to glorify God in our choice of food, how much more would we not want to glorify God as we return to the classroom this fall (or if you are beyond school age, think of your workplace).

That is exactly what Paul is talking about when he writes of glorifying God in “**whatever you do.**”

Glorify the God who “**fearfully and wonderfully**” created your own body as well as the world around you!

Glorify the God who loved you and laid down His life to rescue you from the hell that you deserved because of your sins!

Glorify the God who called you to faith in Jesus, made you His own special child, and through Christ has made you an heir of eternal life!

Glorify the Triune God in whatever you do!

For Example...

But how can we glorify God as we return to school this fall? Examples are countless.

First of all, consider our relationship with our teachers. Martin Luther reminds us that keeping the Fourth Commandment goes far beyond the home. It reaches all whom the Lord has placed in authority over us—including teachers at school. We glorify God when we listen to our

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“Mowing Jesus’ Lawn”

Pastor Bruce Naumann • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

(first written for the pastor’s column of a local newspaper)

When someone speaks of menial labor, he’s probably talking about the kind of work that hardly anybody wants to do.

The word *menial* originally meant *household*, which brings to mind all the chores that get done because, well, *somebody* has to do them. Who, after all, really wants to wash the dishes after a meal? Isn’t it better to have someone else do that while you turn on your favorite TV program? Who really wants to mow the lawn and rake the leaves?

I once met a man who really did want to. The lawn on the property of the church I served as pastor was a lot bigger than it looked and involved some pretty steep hills. One hot summer Sunday as he was leaving church, this volunteer told me how he couldn’t wait to get started on the lawn that afternoon. “You’re joking, right?” I asked him.

“Not at all!” he said. “I love mowing Jesus’ lawn!”

This man had an insight that we don’t think about often enough. Don’t we all sometimes resent having to do menial work? Don’t we often try to avoid playing the servant’s role for people in our family or in the workplace or in our church?

At the same time, isn’t it true that we would be awfully proud to do the same kind of chores if we were doing them for a *king*?

Our Lord Jesus says that we have that very opportunity. It is our honor to be the personal attendant of the King of kings every single day!

In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus declares that at the end of the world He will say to those who believed in Him as their Savior, “*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*”

He Served Us First!

This means that whatever low-down service we offer to others is something that we really do for God’s own Son, whenever it is done because Jesus served us first. It is Jesus, after all, who set aside His heavenly glory and honor to live a life of poverty and humble service—for you!

It is Jesus who took your dirty laundry—all your sins—upon Himself on the cross.

It is Jesus who was punished in your place, and who rose again from the dead so that you are now set free from all guilt and guaranteed the honor and glory of life forever in heaven.

Do you need any better reason to want to serve Him every day? Do you recognize the opportunities to do so?

When you start to fold the next of an endless line of baskets of laundry, you can say, “Yes, I’m doing this for my family, but most of all I’m doing this for my King, because He served me with His life!”

When you put extra effort into a project for a boss who doesn’t appreciate your work, you can say, “This is really for Jesus, because He served me with salvation!”

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Lord, Save My Son!

Pastor David Fuerstenau · Ketchikan, Alaska

Who among us would deny that Hezekiah was a man of prayer?

We recall two incidents in Hezekiah's life that were made memorable by answered prayer. In both cases the answer was clear and immediate.

When Sennacherib of Assyria threatened Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem with destruction, reviled the Lord God of Judah, and boasted that He would not be able to save them, Hezekiah prayed. That very night an angel from heaven strode through the Assyrian campsite and left 185,000 corpses in his wake.

In shame Sennacherib hightailed it home, only to be murdered by his own offspring.

When the Lord through Isaiah told Hezekiah to set his house in order, for he would shortly die, the king humbled himself in bitter tears and prayed. That same day the Lord answered his prayer by adding fifteen years to the king's earthly life.

Surely such a godly man who prayed for his country and his life also prayed for his family – especially for his son.

Manasseh was only twelve when Hezekiah died. Thus Hezekiah never witnessed the wicked and abominable things Manasseh did during his own reign: promoting and practicing idolatry, witchcraft and sorcery, sacrificing his children by fire to the idol Molech, and even placing a carved idol in the temple of God. Manasseh seduced Judah and did more evil than

did the heathen nations. Did Hezekiah know what Manasseh would do, how he would turn out?

Perhaps not specifically, but like any parent, he must have seen portending signs of rebellion and evil character – even at Manasseh's young age. It is hard to imagine that Hezekiah did not pray, 'Lord, save my son!'

Had Hezekiah prayed for his son in vain? Indeed not! The chronicler reports that the Lord first spoke to Manasseh – probably through His prophets – but Hezekiah would not listen. So God sent the Assyrians (feared for their cruelty) who put hooks in Manasseh's nose, bound him with chains, and led him away to Babylon. There, in great affliction, Manasseh greatly humbled himself before the God of his fathers and to Him he cried out. The Lord heard his entreaty and brought him back to Jerusalem. "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God" and responded with personal and national religious reforms (2 Chronicles 33).

"Do you mean to say that if Hitler had repented of his evil and turned to Jesus for forgiveness, he could have been saved?" Such is the skeptical question of many a moralist, who are shocked at the affirmative answer because they do not understand grace. To them it seems quite fair for God to offer forgiveness to the outwardly moral and decent, but how could He offer it to the whole world—even to physical and spiritual mass murderers!?

... grace is all grace for all, or it is no grace at all for anybody!

God's Grace at Work!

Like Hitler, like Manasseh! God does what He does because He is the God who saves by His grace—grace received by the sinner through faith in His Son Jesus.

Either such grace is all grace for all, or it is no grace at all for anybody!

In answer to Solomon's prayer God promised that if His people would humble themselves, seek His face, turn from their evil ways...then He would "*hear from heaven and will forgive their sin*" (7:14).

Jesus Himself invites miserable sinners such as we are to come to Him, assuring that "*the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out*" (John 6:37).

A great flock of wayward sheep have come to the Lord, finding forgiveness in His blood. We are among them, for with Paul we confess: "*By the grace of God I am what I am*" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Do we have a son or daughter who has forsaken the paths of truth and righteousness? Do we see them rebelling against what they were taught to believe and confess?

We are living in an evil time and dangerous place. The idols of mammon, abortion—on-demand, astrology, false beliefs, and lust surround us all. We are tempted to mentally carve out our own gods and give them competing space in God's temple (our own bodies!). At times a case may seem so hopeless that one offers the tepid, rather unconvincing comment, "Well, you can always pray for them."

Pray for them indeed!

We know Jesus prayed for His disciples and us. It seems inconceivable to think that the father in the parable did not pray for his prodigal son(s), just as Hezekiah must have prayed for his prodigal-to-be-son.

So pray, not as a last I'll-give-it-a-try effort, but with full confidence that the prayer of a righteous person avails much (see James 5:16).

But if we so pray for a rebellious daughter or wayward son, be advised. God's answer may not be immediate. If we pray for rescue from evil, also be prepared for God to use any means necessary to bring restoration.

First of all, He will normally speak His Word – condemning sin and calling for repentance. Pride must be broken. Before the sweetness of heaven, God may first send a taste of hell. The prodigal son ate the food of hogs in humiliation. Manasseh was disgraced with hooks in his nose, like an ornery bull is humbled and controlled.

The sinner must first recognize his terrible spiritual sickness and helpless plight. Then God heals; then He forgives and restores with His soothing, comforting, undeserved grace.

As we pray for God's Kingdom and its citizens, for our needs and the needs of our country, may a fervent, faithful cry arise across our land: "Lord, have mercy, for Jesus' sake. Save my child!"



Christian Apologetics

James Arndt • Member at Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church and School - Middleton, Wisconsin

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” 1 PETER 3:15

Morality and Ethics

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)

“If God is all-loving, why is there so much evil in the world?” is a common enough question asked to a Christian. After all, people generally know that God is claimed to be ‘good,’ yet they do see bad things in this world (disease, hunger, war, death, and so on).

How does the Christian respond?

Because we’re learning how to do an internal critique of a person’s worldview, let’s examine the presuppositions of the non-Christian asking the question. He thinks that he can correctly judge between what is good and evil. We can then ask, “If God does not exist, how do the concepts of good and evil make sense?”

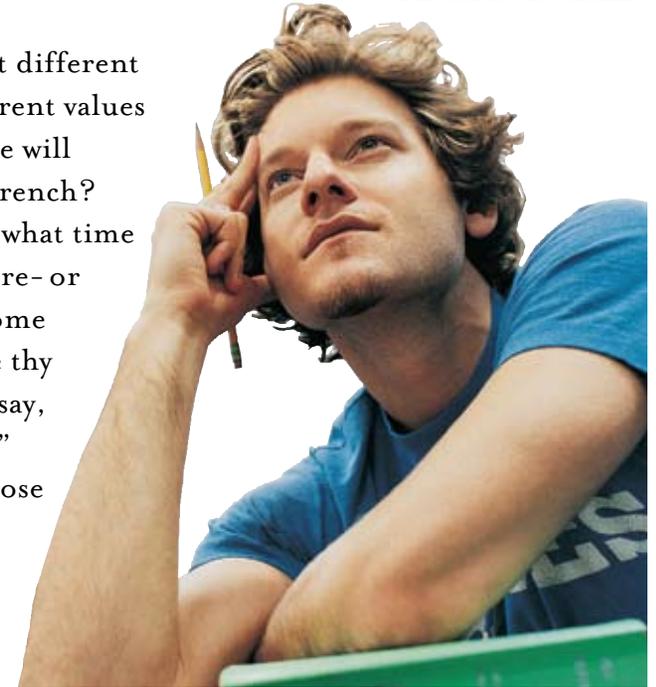
The non-Christian may respond by saying that people can pick their own morality. If this is the case, then why should I listen to someone else if the root of all morality is also based on me? We are told that we ought to respect the ‘rights’ of others, but what if my morality tells me to subjugate others into doing what I want? Would that be okay? If not, then morality cannot be based in the individual.

He may try to base morality in society. While it is true that different societies have different values and laws, which one will you pick? Aztec? French? American? And at what time period? America pre- or post-Civil War? Some societies say, “Love thy neighbor”; others say, “Eat thy neighbor.” Can one really choose moralities as one chooses which hat to wear?

If the unbeliever is non-committal about any of the above, he may retreat and say that he doesn’t need to believe in God to know the difference between good and evil. However, that’s not the question. What we are trying to figure out is why he arbitrarily puts some actions in a category called ‘good’ and another called ‘evil’. By what standard does he make moral judgments?

If there is no objective basis upon which all morality is grounded, then

While it is true that different societies have different values and laws, which one will you pick? Aztec? French? American? And at what time period? America pre- or post-Civil War? Some societies say, “Love thy neighbor”; others say, “Eat thy neighbor.” Can one really choose moralities as one chooses which hat to wear?



all you end up with is subjective human opinion where inconsistencies abound. A person will say that human sexuality is just a matter of taste while he decries the current wars as unjust. But why isn’t war as much a matter of taste as is human sexuality? True, one is about ‘love’ and the other kills people, but why is one placed above the other?

It’s so easy to take morality for granted because it is a part of who we are. That is exactly why we cannot assume neutrality when talking with the unbeliever. We cannot let the non-Christian think that his rejection of God lets him be an authority on morality. Forcing him to critically think about his presuppositions will bring inner contradictions to the surface.

The Christian worldview makes sense of the existence of good and evil. In fact, we can even make sense out of the unbeliever’s anger at evil.

Yet, if God does not exist, not only is the idea of good left to human opinion, so also is the idea of what is evil. If there is no good, then there is no evil, and the unbeliever’s original complaint is really a complaint about nothing.

The only logical way the non-Christian can even evaluate good vs. evil is to stand on the Christian worldview.



(The apologetic method and organization for these articles is taken from the book *Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen*, American Vision, Powder Springs, Georgia, 2007.)

A Winning Team

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, reporting

Christian education is, first and foremost, an activity for the home. God has called parents to train their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) and make them wise for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

A Christian fellowship is able to support the home by providing Sunday School, Christian Day school, Vacation Bible School, and other opportunities. Of these, a school is probably the most recognizable “face” of Christian education; if this is the case, then graduation becomes a visible “sign of success.”

The scope of Christian education is, however, much broader and deeper than successfully completing years

of school. So, while the obvious is acknowledging the Lord’s blessing in bringing students to a graduation milestone, there is also much more to observe in a graduation worship service.

Such was the case on June 5, 2011, when Immanuel Lutheran High School – Mankato graduated its six seniors. Like others before and after it, this graduation was the climax and successful conclusion of time spent in the Christian classroom (which, for some in the class, was 13 years, including kindergarten!).

Speaking on behalf of the graduates, valedictorian Adam Geiger provided excellent reminders that graduation from a Christian high school is just

one small part of the whole picture. He did this by using the analogy of a sports team:

God is the team founder, creator, and owner—The Holy Spirit has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified the whole Christian Church on earth. In addition, God provided the opportunity for Christian education at Immanuel and brought this “team” of classmates together.

Parents and teachers are the coaches and trainers—God uses these leaders to bring children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (parents) and to further the instruction in God’s Word (teachers), while equipping them to stand against temptation (injury) and to grow stronger in faith and Christian living (strength and endurance training).

The members of the congregation are the fans—The members of Immanuel support the school with their prayers and offerings, provide encouragement to the students, and also assist the Christian education through various support roles for the school and congregation.

The class is the team—They trained together, grew together, “played” the game of school together and by God’s grace have reached the end of their playing days on this team. However, they continue in the body of Christ and set out into the world to serve their Lord, giving testimony to His grace and saving Word.

Lane Fischer (Immanuel’s 3rd & 4th grade teacher) delivered the devotional

address entitled, “Following and Leading.” He used Psalm 23:6 as text, correlating it with the seniors’ class verse (Proverbs 2:20).

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:6

“So you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness.” Proverbs 2:20

Going forward, our prayer for all the graduates is that they would follow our Shepherd as they are led by Him and that they also seek to lead others with His Word. There will be highs and lows, successes and failures, but their education in Christ and His saving Word will lead them in ongoing and eternal success.

Through the gospel and the salvation it brings, all graduates—indeed all children of God—are on God’s “winning team” as they cling to His Word, abide in it and follow it. The class hymn echoed the confidence of sheep who hear their Shepherd’s voice and follow Him (cf. John 10:7-18, 27-29, the service Scripture reading):

THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET
AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH.
WHEN I FEEL AFRAID, THINK I’VE
LOST MY WAY, STILL YOU’RE THERE
RIGHT BESIDE ME. AND NOTHING WILL
I FEAR AS LONG AS YOU ARE NEAR.

PLEASE BE NEAR ME TO THE END. I
WILL NOT FORGET YOUR LOVE FOR
ME AND YET MY HEART FOREVER IS
WANDERING. JESUS, BE MY GUIDE AND
HOLD ME TO YOUR SIDE, AND I WILL
LOVE YOU TO THE END.

[PSALM 119:105 — AMY GRANT]



ILHS-Mankato 2011 Graduates: Back: Travis Oslund, Adam Geiger, Andrew Lentz
Front: Jacob Hanel, Kelsey Gibson, Aaron Busse



The Blessing Of Fellowship

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

Just exactly what is "Scriptural fellowship"?

Fellowship may be companionship or an exercise of friendliness toward one another. It expresses what the dictionary defines as a "community of interest." The exercise of such fellowship serves society. But fellowship as society defines it is quite shallow—certainly a far cry from the scriptural concept.

"Fellowship" in the scriptural sense does not revolve around coffee but around the Word of God. A God-pleasing exercise of fellowship is based upon a common understanding of God's Word and a Spirit-wrought acceptance and agreement in all that Scripture teaches.

Anything taught that is contrary to Scripture disturbs this fellowship and makes mockery of the fellowship in Christ. Scripture warns against such sham exercise of religious fellowship when it says, "Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with you?" (Psalm 94:20). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "...the things that the Gentiles (heathen) sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). Again he wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) To the Ephesians the apostle wrote, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:20).

Regenerate people of God are in the

world but are not of it (Romans 12:2). While we frequently rub elbows with the ungodly, the heathen, and the workers of iniquity in our daily exercise of life and work in society, we as children of God will not make common cause with the people or the deeds that disgrace our Lord.

In reality, if we find pleasure and delight in the company of those who mock and ridicule the Word of God or our life in Christ, we have reason to ask whether we are true confessors of Christ.

We will have friends in the world whose company we enjoy in a social sense, and there will be those with whom we work but who do not share with us the same respect for our Lord and His Word or the same confession of faith—but there will be limits to the companionship we enjoy with them. We will not give them the right hand of fellowship in the scriptural sense of that word (we are told that James, Cephas, and John gave Paul and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship" Galatians 2:9).

The fellowship that is enjoyed in the body of Christ is a fellowship in the gospel. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel..." (Philippians 1:3-5). The gospel—the good news of Christ's redemptive love—bound Paul to the Philippians.

The apostle John speaks of that gospel bond when he said "that which we

have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us..." (1 John 1:3). That fellowship is of no small importance, for John continued, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The gospel brings man into fellowship with God and brings believers into fellowship with one another.

Therein lies good reason why Christ-believers will guard the gospel jealously lest they lose both the comfort of the gospel as well as the unifying power of that gospel. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7).

Guarding the Gospel Jealously

The basis of fellowship was understood by the early Church. Of the converts on Pentecost we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Their common fellowship—interaction with fellow confessors of Christ and His Word—was manifest in the life of the Church. "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions, and divided them among all as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2: 44- 47). Theirs was a bond that exemplified their unity in Christ—a bond that could not be duplicated by the world then or now!

In Christianity today the sad reality is that there is an apparent lack of appreciation (if not understanding) for the foundation as well as of the blessing of fellowship in the gospel. This takes on various manifestations—from absencing oneself with regularity from the worship service to preferring to associate with friends in the world rather than with friends in Christ.

The life of a Christ-believer who desires to glorify the Lord and faithfully confess His Word in the world is a lonely life. As the world winds down and evil grows, the Christian life will get lonelier, particularly if one takes seriously the word which says, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" [If sinners tempt you, say no] (Proverbs 1:10).

Whether it is a life of sin or the sin of accepting some false teaching, we are to say, "No."

Like-minded believers need one another for mutual support and encouragement to stand against the evil that threatens the soul. Fellow believers in Christ are strengthened as they gather together around the Word and Sacrament.

It is faith-strengthening to lift up voices together in song and praise to the God of our salvation.

It is enjoyable to share moments together with people of the same faith and confession as we do in our church services and activities, or to comfort or be comforted by one another in time of need.

Scripture teaches us concerning our mutual responsibility in a fellowship—as well as the blessing of active

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“ALL HISTORY IS GOD’S STORY!”

A Deliverance for the Ages

Exodus Chapters II–12

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

Moses was in a showdown with Egypt’s powerful king. Though the king despised Moses, the people of Egypt had come to live in fear and awe of him: “*The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people*” (Exodus 11:3).

As plague followed plague, Moses’ reputation among the people grew quickly, and soon Egyptian magicians could no longer mimic those plagues.

Moses became “very great” in Egypt when the plagues stopped affecting Goshen at all and after their intensity increased. While the people could not ignore that Moses was the agent of a God much different than any of their own, with a hard heart Pharaoh remained unmoved.

The first nine plagues had affected the productivity and well-being of Egypt, her people, property, and animals; but no previous plague would cut so deeply and painfully into the rebellious pride of unbelief as would the tenth and final one.

The killing of the firstborn would affect Egyptian households of rich and poor, slave and free alike; that plague would be the death not only of the firstborn children but also of the animals (some of which were regarded as gods by the Egyptians).

The “*great cry in Egypt*” exceeded anything we have ever seen—even with our large natural disasters and terrorist

attacks—because “*there was not a house where there was not one dead*” (Exodus 12:30). The heart-numbing sorrow, anger, and misery associated with such a personal loss of life was only magnified for Pharaoh since his firstborn was also heir to the throne.

After each of the previous plagues Pharaoh had said “No!” to the Israelites’ departure from Egypt. But after this tenth and most penetrating plague, Pharaoh finally said, “Go!” On their part, the Egyptian people not only said “Go!”, but they even helped the Israelites on their way. “[*They*] urged the [*Israelites*], that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, ‘We shall all be dead’” (Exodus 12:33).

As the Israelites exited Egypt, they followed God’s direction and “*asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians*” (Exodus 12:35–36). God plundered the Egyptians of their wealth in judgment against their wickedness and in order to provide unique “back pay” to the Israelites for their years of slave labor.

Jacob’s family had arrived in Egypt 430 years earlier (as a family of 70, Genesis 46:27). Imagine the joy and excitement of the amazing scene as Jacob’s family left Egypt “*about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children*” (Exodus 12:37)!

That was an amazing deliverance from God, yet it only scratches the surface of the deliverance God revealed in Egypt!

An Even More Marvelous Escape!

In the midst of all the sorrow and pain of the tenth plague, there was a rescue from it all. On that eventful night Egyptian and Israelite alike saw the reality and effects of sin as well as God’s judgment upon it. However, all who heeded God’s Word would be spared, for in the announcement of the coming plague God also provided the escape.

“On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb...your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year...now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it...For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:3ff).

The LORD also gave instructions for roasting the Passover lamb and for how it should be eaten—that the leftovers should be burned and the people should eat it while being ready to travel (cf. Exodus 12:8–11); but it was the blood of that lamb that would deliver the faithful from the sorrow of death and the misery of judgment.

We rejoice to know that the Passover

Lamb is an Old Testament picture of our Savior Jesus. The blood of the holy, unblemished Son of God was poured out on the cross. As the Son of God suffered and the Father forsook Him (cf. Matthew 27:46), we see God’s just judgment against sin—our sin—carried out upon Jesus.

The Passover was to be celebrated and remembered every year throughout the generations. “*So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations...And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who...delivered our households’*” (Exodus 12:14, 26).

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He observed the Passover with His disciples and remembered God’s deliverance from Egypt. Then He provided the transition from Old Testament remembrance to New Testament remembrance by instituting the Lord’s Supper and saying, “*Do this in remembrance of Me*” (Luke 22:19).

As we recount the events of the Exodus, we see God provide deliverance from the tenth plague and the bondage of Egypt, but even more amazing, wonderful, and joyful is the deliverance He foreshadowed in Egypt and accomplished on Calvary.

Our proclamation of the saving gospel and our celebration of the Lord’s Supper remember God’s deliverance accomplished for us in the midst of death, sorrow, and judgment.

The deliverance transcends all space and time!

It is a deliverance of all sinners—a deliverance for the ages!

And it is the central truth of HIS story!

The Beatitudes

Pastor Paul Krause • Markesan, Wisconsin

"1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you..."

Matthew 5:1-12

As my children have been growing up, every so often they have enjoyed playing a game they call "Backwards Day."

On that day everything needs to be done, well, backwards. A shirt will be worn inside out, shoes on the wrong feet, walking backwards, writing with the wrong hand. Word meanings are also turned around. "Yes" will be said when "no" is meant, and vice versa. As you can imagine, it gets to be a rather mixed-up day.

If one looks at our Scripture verses from Matthew 5 apart from their

context, it could appear that Jesus Himself was having some kind of a "backwards day" – because what He says here surely seems to be backwards!

What could be blessed about being poor or in mourning? How can the suffering of persecution be a source of rejoicing and being exceedingly glad? Sure sounds backwards!

To whom did Jesus speak His "Sermon on the Mount"? Matthew records that Jesus saw "the multitudes," and upon seeing them, that "He went up on a mountain." It was there that "His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth

and taught them," so no matter how many people heard Jesus speak, we do know that He was directing His words primarily to His disciples.

Was it "backwards day"? To the world it may seem so, for that upon which God declares His blessing is not at all what the people of this world would consider to be fortunate circumstances. Their idea of being "blessed" would certainly involve being successful in the ways of the world and wealthy in the things of this Earth.

This is the mind-set of our world today too, not just when Jesus walked upon this Earth. The Lord's beatitudes need to be heard and heeded in our believing ears as well, for the temptation to be taken in by the secular seduction of success is still great indeed.

Jesus' opening words in His Sermon on the Mount set the stage for the rest of this section.

Not this: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom." Rather this: "Blessed are the poor IN SPIRIT, for theirs is the kingdom OF HEAVEN."

Being poor in spirit has nothing to do with money, but rather identifies the Christian's view of himself before God. We know that we can bring nothing of saving value before God, for in our sinfulness we are but dust and ashes. It is to those who realize their spiritual poverty that the Lord—out of love, for Jesus' sake—day after day gives His grace, the hallmark of His kingdom.

It is from this spiritual vantage point that children of God are to view the rest of these "blesseds."

I am blessed, not because of what I

make of myself, but because of what God has done for me and what He judges me to be!

I have a Lord who comforts me in my repentant mourning over my sinfulness [v. 4].

God directs the affairs of this Earth for our benefit; we do not wish to be demanding and insist on "our rights" [v. 5].

He satisfies my soul's hunger with His living Water and Bread of life [v. 6].

His great mercy shines upon me—mercy which I will strive to reflect on those around me [v. 7].

Through Spirit-worked faith in His Son, God has made me pure; with my sins forgiven I look forward to heaven [v. 8]!

Any peace-making efforts on my part begin with the peace which the Lord has given in His Son, whose coming brought "peace on earth" (Christmas event, Luke 2) [v. 9].

As for persecution, our Lord Himself "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), and was persecuted for it, even to the point of death. Any persecution His disciples face marks them as being His; and to be identified as Jesus' disciple does fill us with exceeding gladness and rejoicing [v. 10-11].

Was it "backwards day" there as Jesus sat with His disciples on the mountain and spoke to them?

No – only in the sense that the "blesseds" pronounced on us are the opposite of what we deserve. God be thanked for His amazing blessings in our Savior Jesus Christ!



A New Pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church!

(Editor's note: We heartily thank Pastor David Pfeiffer, recent graduate of our Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, Eau Claire, Wis., for introducing himself and his family to us at our request. May God's richest blessings rest upon His children as they together serve Him!)

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

How many of us young people (I think I can still call myself that!) find ourselves finishing high school and simply not knowing what to do with ourselves?

It used to be that a son would commonly follow in the trade of his father who had previously followed in the trade of his father. These days that is not the norm, or at least so I thought.

Some deliberate, some procrastinate, some are three weeks ahead, some are three days behind, yet to some degree we all plan our way.

Having graduated high school at Immanuel Lutheran, Eau Claire, Wis. in 2000, my heart began to plan my way... and re-plan my way... and re-plan my way. I acquired a degree in Actuarial Mathematics, a career in which I would have worked for life insurance companies calculating life expectancy.

Through all this, the LORD was directing my steps somewhere else. He was at work all along using my many diverse experiences at a secular university

to reveal to me how He would use me in His kingdom.

How many of those fishermen of Galilee expected to find themselves being called to be fishers of men?

Since I knew I wanted to work with people, and that my gifts just were not suited for doing math in a cubicle, I entered Immanuel's Seminary program.

And so, following in the footsteps of my father and both grandfathers, eleven years after high school, here I am, pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Batavia, Illinois.

I enjoy golf, fishing, friends, and most of all my family. I was born in 1981 to parents John and Barb Pfeiffer. I am the youngest behind Sara, Nathan, and Rachel. My wife, Deana (nee Johannes), is a full-time mom working overtime to raise our three boys: Samuel (3y), Joshua (2y), and Joel (4m). Samuel likes Toy Story, music, coloring, and chasing his brother; Joshua likes sports, climbing (and falling), and also Toy Story; Joel likes getting tickled.

Let us ever remember that, though we plan our ways, the LORD is the One graciously directing our steps. We might not understand at the moment why things have not gone according to our plans, but we can be assured that things are going according to His plan. He is with us through the difficult and the pleasant, through the confusing and the simple. He will never leave us or forsake us. It is His all-sufficient work as Redeemer that has covered our sinful steps behind and directs our righteous steps forward.



Pastor David Pfeiffer and family



"Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic to the Glory of God" *Continued from Page 4*

teachers and are obedient to them. We glorify God by working hard on our assignments and getting them in on time. We glorify God by not complaining about our workload, by not talking back to our teachers, and by not frustrating or angering them.

But glorifying God at school goes far beyond our relationship with our teachers. It impacts our relationships with everyone else at school.

We glorify God by taking time at the lunch table to say table prayers before eating the food with which He has blessed us. We glorify God when we help our fellow classmate who is getting picked on (5th commandment). We glorify God when we don't join in with the gossipers in bad-mouthing someone else, but rather speak-up in his or her defense (8th Commandment).

We could certainly think of many more examples of how we can glorify God as we return to school this fall.

But the greatest way anyone can glorify God at school or in any situation is to tell others about all that Jesus has done to save us. How He loved us so much that He was willing to die on the cross to save us. How Jesus loves that other person too and died to save him or her also!

There can be no greater way to glorify God at school or work or whatever we are doing than to share the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ!

May God ever help us to let the light of our faith shine by glorifying Him everywhere we go and in everything we do!

Even returning to school!



"Mowing Jesus' Lawn" *Continued from Page 5*

When you don't have time, but you make time to help someone in need (especially when you get nothing in return), you can say, "I already have my return, from Jesus."

You can be confident that the Lord Jesus gladly receives all these services as a "thank you" for His self-sacrifice that saved you.

Is there, then, such a thing as "menial" labor? If that simply means

household chores, of course, we all have those things to do. But for the one who trusts in Christ, there is no such thing as "low-down" service when it's done for the King.

Whenever you are serving "the least of these" brothers and sisters of Jesus, you're doing Jesus' dishes, visiting Him when He's lonely, and mowing His lawn.

It's always an honor to serve Him who came to serve us first!



The blessing of fellowship

Continued from Page 13

fellowship in the Word—when it says, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

May the Spirit of God give us understanding and appreciation of the blessing of fellowship with our own!

People who know that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation will surely want to gather to hear the gospel message of peace and hope in Christ.

They will be excited to have their fellowship with Christ confirmed through the gospel.

They will appreciate and foster the fellowship with their fellow believers as they walk the path to heaven.

Unless unusual circumstances intervene occasionally, they will gather together in worship regularly, for they know “*how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133:1).



About the Lutheran Spokesman Cover

The cover was art directed and designed by Matt Schaser. Send your photos and art (in digital format) 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

Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN 55113 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 2750 Oxford Street North, Roseville MN 55113

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org. Editor: Paul Fleischer, 1741 E. 22nd Street, Cheyenne, WY 82001-4138, E-Mail to paulgf@qwestoffice.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Art Director/Designer: Matthew Schaser; Staff Artist: John Fox, Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Warren Fanning, Daniel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Nathanael Mayhew, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Andrew Schaller, Thomas Schuetze. Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Fleischer six weeks before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Fleischer. Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to BennoSydow@yahoo.com. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$22.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$42.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$62.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00. Cover Art: Nathan Ude • Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org Printed in U.S.A.