

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” — John 10:35



*“According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing
of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...”*

(Titus 3:5b)

From the Editor:

“READ...PONDER...SHARE”

June is subscription month for the *Lutheran Spokesman*. In that connection the usual appeal went out to CLC pastors nationwide, seeking their help in the promotion of the magazine in their respective congregations.

The latest appeal prompted the following response from one of the pastors regarding “disposal” of the monthly issues.

“What to do with copies of the Spokesman and Journal of Theology [the CLC’s theological journal] when you are done with them?” – In a class on personal witnessing, an idea was voiced. Have youth group or auxiliary make a project. Encourage each other to highlight an article that links your thoughts with someone in need of such. Give the copy to that person with a comment to the effect that it helped you....”

There is little if anything new under the sun. Yet the ideas of “making a project” and “linking your thoughts with someone in need” are innovative as far as letting others know how each of us may have benefited from a particular article or articles.

We appreciated the same pastor’s concluding remark too:

“Our Spokesman is a treasure of very well-written articles too good to be left moldering in a literary grave. Read...Ponder...Share.”

So then, in your hands, dear reader, is a Bible-based literary treasure (modest as it may be). God bless your reading...pondering... and then sharing of the magazine with other souls out there who would surely benefit spiritually from its contents.

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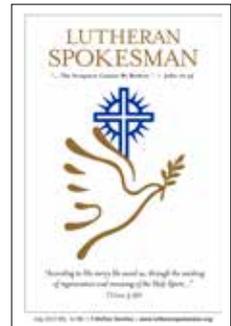
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Baptism: Mere Ceremony or a Sacrament?

Pastor Jay Hartmann • Corpus Christi, Texas

Our title may seem at first to be a silly question, but assuredly it is not.

In the religious world of our day doctrine is no longer a matter of Scriptural integrity but is rather a matter of popular vote. We have seen this for some time and understand well that our Lord says: *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...”* (2 Timothy 4:3).

Human reason is the driving force behind much of modern theology. Because of it, we see all manner of deadly practices and teachings. Dr. Martin Luther said it well when he remarked that we should poke out the eyes of our reason and hear only what God says. Saving faith in Jesus trusts in the Spirit’s clarity, wisdom, and life-giving power. If God says it, that settles it!

Let us then consider what our Lord says on His precious doctrine of Holy Baptism. *“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism...”* (1 Peter 3:21a).

A simple child-like faith accepts the fact that the Holy Spirit works through Baptism as a means of His grace. *“According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...”* (Titus 3:5b). The certain, clear Word of God teaches that the Holy Spirit effects a miraculous change in a sinner’s heart through Baptism. He renews us, makes us spiritually alive by creating saving faith in our hearts so that we trust in Jesus alone for salvation. Through *“the washing of regeneration”* the Spirit gives and seals to us the forgiveness of sins and the full salvation Jesus won for us.

Though we fail our Lord continually, His promise to us never fails. The blessings and promises we were given in Baptism do not expire.

Perhaps the biggest problem for many is understanding that this is an act of God’s marvelous grace—a concept the human mind cannot “reasonably” comprehend. *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Consequently, many think that Baptism is a mere church ceremony or symbolic act; they reject the Spirit’s holy teaching that Baptism is a method by which God actually confers to us the forgiveness of sins.

Our Lord directs us to employ Baptism in mission outreach, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). He also assures, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Nowhere in Scripture does our Savior give a frivolous directive concerning the blood-bought salvation He won for us, and He clearly asserts that Baptism is not a church ceremony but a sacrament through which He grants forgiveness of sins.

As the redeemed of Christ we “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), trusting everything the Savior teaches and leading us to confess, “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism...” God says so, and that settles it!

*He that believes and is baptized Shall see the Lord's salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ, He is a new creation.
Thro' Christ's redemption he shall stand
Among the glorious heav'nly band Of ev'ry tribe and nation.*

(TLH #301:1)

DIVINE CALL

Led by God

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

Moses prayed for it at Mt. Sinai when he said,

“If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.”

Gideon wanted to be certain he had it, so he asked for the signs of wet fleece on dry ground and dry fleece on wet ground (Judges 6:36ff).

King Solomon knew its importance for himself and his kingdom when the LORD appeared to him in a dream (1 Kings 3:5ff).

The disciples knew they had it because Jesus Himself had called them (Matthew 10:1-4).

Joshua and the Children of Israel did not have it when they went to battle against Ai (Joshua 7:1ff).

King Saul lost it when his selfishness overshadowed his love for God (1 Samuel 15:10ff).

What is it?

It is the confidence of knowing that God is leading you through His chosen earthly representatives. Neither Moses nor Gideon nor Solomon nor Jesus' disciples were perfect in their personal lives, in following God's lead, or in their leadership of others. However, each leader and his followers could be confident that God was leading through the man He had called for the task.

Christian congregations—with called servants and those who follow—are able to have this same confidence. This confidence comes from the knowledge that the call to serve in a Christian congregation is a Divine Call, that is, it is call from God Himself.

Our ascended Savior Himself gives gifts to His Church through individuals who are called to serve “*for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12). Jesus said, “*If two of you agree on earth concerning anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*” (Matthew 18:20). Therefore we have the confidence that Jesus is providing individuals to lead His flock on Earth. At the same time He is present and actively guiding the process of calling such leaders.

Every child of God has a call from Jesus to “*make disciples of all the nations,*” but then within Christian congregations particular individuals are called to serve on behalf of the whole. These leaders include pastors, teachers, Sunday School teachers, Board members, Council leaders, and others. Each has a call to serve in a specific office in a specific capacity on behalf of a specific body of believers. These individuals are called by Jesus, and because of Jesus' authority we can be confident that these leaders are called and led by God Himself.

The New Testament Scriptures give examples of this very thing. The congregation in Antioch sent Saul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey but were directed to do so by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1ff). Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city on Crete (Titus 1:5) but certainly not without the Spirit's direction. Paul told the Ephesian elders, “*...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*” (Ephesians 20:28).

If God is the One calling a new pastor, teacher, or other leader,

why doesn't He make His choice more plain? Why does He have a Christian congregation go through a process in calling someone? There are undoubtedly many reasons why God does this, and one of these reasons is, quite simply, trust. God wants His children to dig into His Word to find direction. He wants His children to use the truth He has given and apply it to their lives. He wants His children to turn everything over to Him in prayer and then take Him at His Word, trusting that He will guide and bless the decision. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God's call doesn't always match what human reason might suggest or expect. The prophet Amos was a sheepbreeder of Tekoa when God called him to be a prophet (Amos 1:1). Several of Jesus' twelve disciples were fishermen, and none of them were trained Bible scholars. Had Jesus set up a search committee, hired a "head-hunter," or held an election, none of the twelve would have been chosen. Yet Jesus called each one of them, equipped them, and poured out His Spirit upon them to do the work for which they were called.

David was just a shepherd boy, but God called him to be king of His people Israel. When Samuel went to anoint the next king, he thought that David's oldest brother was prime king material. However, Samuel wasn't making the choice. God told Samuel, *"Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Called servants don't become omniscient. Called servants have limits, weaknesses, and sin. They don't make perfect decisions all of the time, and the same can be said for every one of the individuals they serve. The frailties and weaknesses of the called and those they serve is a reminder of just how much we all need our Savior—equally. It can only highlight the fact that *"we have this treasure in earthen vessels"* (2 Corinthians 4:7) and that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9).

With that knowledge we can go confidently forward. In spite of the weaknesses and shortcomings of sinful human beings, in those prayerfully chosen and elected to be our leaders we are being led by God. Praise the Lord!



“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught...” (TITUS 1:7FF)

Remember Where You Came From

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. (TITUS 3:1-8)

Those who rise to high office, fame, or fortune sometimes forget where they came from. They may act as though they have no connection with—or obligation to—common people, even if they themselves were once poor and of low social standing. For example, a congresswoman who had grown up in poverty was notorious for being demanding, inconsiderate, and downright rude to the members of her staff. A wealthy movie actor who had come from a working class background would instruct his household servants that they were not so much as to make eye contact with him or members of his family.

Believers in Jesus Christ have the very highest standing, for we are God’s own children and heirs. We are the richest of all people, for we have all that we need for time and for eternity. But the Apostle Paul reminds us in our text that we should never on this account adopt a superior attitude toward others.

Instead Paul exhorts us to show humility in our conduct. It is God’s will for us as His children that we are easy to get along with. He wants

us to obey the laws, even when no one is watching; to be willing to lend a hand to those in need; to live peaceably with our neighbors, as much as it depends on us.

It is not easy to live this way when laws are complicated and burdensome. It is hard to help a neighbor who is in need when we have many needs of our own. The people we have to deal with can be selfish, sometimes even spiteful and vindictive. We need God's reminder. We need to remember where we came from.

"We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived..." When we were born into this world, we were no better than our unbelieving and worldly neighbors. (This may be the case even if we were baptized as infants, were brought up in a Christian home, and have lived as Christians all our lives.)

How did we get to be God's children? How did we become people who know the true God and want to do what is pleasing to Him? It had nothing to do with works of righteousness that we had done. It was God's mercy that saved us. The kindness and love of God our Savior appeared; the Son of God came into the world and gave His life for us sinners. God brought this salvation to us in the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the *"washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."* By God's grace in Christ alone we have been declared righteous and have been made heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Is your boss mean? Is your neighbor inconsiderate? Do you have to work with people who use crude and profane language? Do you have people working under you who are lazy and irresponsible?

If any of these are the case for you, do not look down on others. Instead, remember where you came from. Be kind to them as God has been kind to you. Pray for them as Jesus did for His tormenters. Show them the unconditional love of God.

Paul exhorts us to show humility in our conduct. It is God's will for us as His children that we are easy to get along with. He wants us to obey the laws, even when no one is watching; to be willing to lend a hand to those in need; to live peaceably with our neighbors, as much as it depends on us.



“The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me”

(John 10:25)

Mercy and Compassion Prevail

Pastor David Reim • Vernon BC (Canada)

And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, “Step forward.” Then He said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

(MARK 3:1-6)

This episode is one of the few in the Scriptures which tell us that Jesus was angry. His anger was righteous in that it stemmed from His grief over the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts.

The Pharisees had absolutely no compassion or mercy on the man with the withered hand. They were so serious about God's law that they expanded on it, inventing their own notions about when the law was being broken and when it was being kept. Yet they did not have a true love of God in their hearts. They were so hard-hearted that they used Jesus' compassion as a reason to accuse and condemn Him.

Jesus tried to get them to think about the true intent of the Sabbath, when He asked, *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”*

What was the Pharisees' reaction? We are told that *“They kept silent.”*

Were they silent because they were ashamed and realized that of course it is always right to do good and help others in need? Sad to say, that was not the reason for their silence, for they went away more

determined than ever to destroy Jesus. They even joined forces with their avowed enemies, the Herodians, to plot Jesus' death. They were silent because they had no defense.

In spite of their evil hatred and plotting against Him, the Savior had compassion on this man and healed him in the presence of them all.

What joy to know that Jesus has compassion on us, either healing our diseases and solving our problems or using them for our greater good! His mercy and compassion prevail in all our trials.

This miracle foreshadows the time when Jesus' mercy and compassion would prevail over all evil. The Pharisees continued to plot Jesus' death until it was God's time for them to succeed. In His mercy and compassion for the world of sinners—including for the Pharisees and Herodians!—Jesus submitted to His Father's will and allowed those hard-hearted Jews to crucify Him.

In so doing Jesus has truly saved our lives. He has given us the true rest foreshadowed by the Sabbath day—rest from the torment of God's punishment for our sin. He has won eternal rest for us from our own striving and working to please God. By His innocent suffering and death, Jesus has restored our relationship with God forever.

Since Jesus has conquered sin and death for us, He has prevailed over our naturally hard and weak hearts so that, as a fruit of faith in Him, we can use our hands and feet to do the works of God. At the same time, His Holy Spirit makes us bold to use our lips and tongue to proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Jesus' mercy and compassion have prevailed for us. May we show mercy and compassion to all in His name and for His glory!

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"As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to those of his household."

(Martin Luther)

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Professor Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

The recent bombings at the Boston Marathon highlight once again how quickly life can be lost. Even most of the unbelieving world would recognize that this act was wrong. Most would also agree that when the older brother was shot by authorities in a shoot-out, killing him was not murder.

The obvious question then is, "Who has the right to take another's life?"

God Himself most certainly does. He states through Moses, "There is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39). We will also concur with the psalmist David when he says, "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15a).

Life is precious, and the shortening of one's time of grace—the period in which God the Holy Ghost can bring people to faith through God's Word—is serious business. For this

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor's body; but we should help and be a friend to him in every bodily need.

reason God sanctions only His representatives in government to end someone's life. "For he [the governing authority] is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Romans 13:4). After the flood of Noah's time, God made it clear that those who murder have no expectation of having their lives preserved. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).

In His holy Word God does not leave room for exceptions

to this commandment. Suicide, so-called “mercy killing,” and abortion clearly take into human hands what belongs to God. They are murders. Those who felt outrage against a Pennsylvania doctor who allegedly killed newborn babies should have the same outrage against all abortions.

Equally disturbing, and even more deadly, is the court ruling which allows girls as young as fifteen years to abort their babies using the “morning after” pill without the knowledge of their parents. Doing so is murder, for from the moment of conception, babies are not just fetuses or viable fetal tissue but living humans. See God’s Word on it in Psalm 51:5, Psalm 139:13-16, and Jeremiah 1:5.

What about someone who is suffering and no longer wishes to live? Some people wrongly argue that the humane thing is to hasten the death and end the misery of such a person, or give them the means to kill themselves. It’s clear that God does not approve of such “mercy killing.” (Deuteronomy 32:39, Psalm 31:15a)

Our Guilt

Perhaps nothing mentioned thus far condemns you, for

**Those who felt
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you have not wrongfully killed anyone.

However, none of us is guiltless, as our Catechism says, “*We should fear and love God that we do not hurt nor harm our neighbor’s body.*” From the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) we learn that anyone with whom we come in contact is our neighbor, both friend and foe alike. We know too that hatred and unrighteous anger are disobedience. “*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer*” (1 John 3:15). “*But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*” (Matthew 5:22). The root of murder begins in the sinful human heart, just as do other sins.

It doesn’t take much self-examination to realize that we all have wished and/or done

harm to our neighbor through thoughts, words, and actions. We are guilty.

Bullying is an example of such sin in today's world, especially among young people. Loveless words and deeds which flow from an unclean heart can do lifelong damage to others. Then too, today's technology has made bullying all that much easier, and perhaps anonymous. But are we not all bullies at times—putting others down in order to raise ourselves up? Let's remember that God says, "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*" (Matthew 7:31).

Besides the sins of commission against this Commandment, perhaps greater in number are sins of omission. Luther's *Small Catechism* explanation concludes, "but we should help and be a friend to [our neighbor] in every bodily need." Our sinful nature often reacts, "Really?

We should put the needs of our neighbors above our own? We should love our enemies and protect those who wish only harm upon us?" YES, we should!

During earthly tragedies people often risk their own lives to help others (as was the case in the Boston bombings). Let us pray that we might model this selflessness in our daily lives.

After all, we have the best example to follow in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Let love for others be a reflection of Christ's love towards us. "*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44). Jesus loved all, even those who put Him to death. Remember how He prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

Dear God, forgive us all the times we have been hurtful to our neighbor by what we have thought, said, or done. By Your Spirit lead us to show compassion, seeking out ways to befriend our neighbors in their time of need.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.



Missionary David Koenig

SERIES Backdrop

With examples from Holy Scripture we are trying to learn ways and attitudes which will better enable us to witness to our Lord. These examples, drawn from the four Gospels and from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, are by no means exhaustive.

As with the basketball strategy of one-on-one, we are looking at examples of one Christian witnessing to another individual. We are not considering what was said to individuals already in the faith, though that is also applicable. We are not considering what was said to groups, though that also is applicable as a witnessing technique. We will be considering various situations where it was one-on-one, and the one being witnessed to was living in unbelief...

The ultimate goal in all witnessing is to be like John the baptizer and point to Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. While we want to try earnestly to develop our skills in this area, we don't want to forget John's motto, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

No matter what spiritual gifts we have and how we develop them, we are not looking for glory for ourselves. We are looking to have another soul join us in glorifying our Savior-God.

Respect for Religion but with Doubts

(Second of a Series)

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a

sinner.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.” “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

(LUKE 7:36-50)

Many in this life may respect our Christian religion and yet not believe in our Lord. This Pharisee showed respect for our Lord. He invited Him to his house and provided food. There it ended. There was no saving faith. Simon, the Pharisee, even doubted if Jesus were much of a prophet.

The Lord told the story of a creditor and two debtors and applied it to Simon and the woman. Simon had the typical self-righteous attitude of a Pharisee, which inevitably leads to a ‘holier than thou’ attitude. He showed it when he said to himself, “*who and what sort of woman this is...a sinner.*” Our Lord did not tear into Simon. He had his ear. Though Simon was self-righteous, yet he listened to the Lord.

The Lord used what might be called the oblique [indirect—ed.] approach. He did not confront Simon directly with his sin and demand repentance. Instead, our Lord told a story in which Simon must answer a question: Which of them will love him more: the one forgiven fifty denarii or the one forgiven five hundred? Simon was bound to answer “the one forgiven five hundred.”

This brings to mind the prophet Nathan's story to David, by which he showed David his sin (2 Samuel 12). The response of David was immediate, and it was repentance. In the case of Simon we do not have the response recorded. Whether or not Simon at this time repented and believed, he did have a very simple, clear story by which the Spirit could show him the point. (If our Lord had used a more confrontational approach and demanded repentance, Simon would likely have bristled and balked.)

When a prospect is willing to listen and has respect for our beliefs, we might learn to use this less direct approach. It is very true that the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the Pharisee was and is disgusting. Yet why alienate a willing listener by "stomping on his toes" so that he rejects listening to us before we get our point across?

The Lord further got His point across by turning to the woman and making a comparison—between Simon's lack, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the woman's tears together with her wiping His feet with her hair, kissing His feet, and anointing His head with oil. The lesson was well taught—namely, that true love emanates from forgiveness of sins.

As Simon was left with something to think about, we also want to leave others with something to think about. In Simon's case he was left with what was necessary for the Spirit to convict him of sin. He was also left with the gospel in his ears—as it was spoken to the woman.

We want to try to be clear in our witnessing message. As our Lord used His story, we also want to give something simple for a prospect to remember. Besides just thinking up illustrations out of daily life geared to different situations, any number of scriptural illustrations could be used as well.

Finally, it is also true here that practice makes perfect. As the Lord grants us opportunity for spiritual encounters, the more we witness, the more we will feel comfortable in doing so, and the more will be the Bible passages and illustrations that the Holy Spirit will call to our minds. God grant it!



SECURE WEALTH

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

Anyone who follows the political scene knows that the United States, the individual states, and the cities are in financial crisis.

Politicians talk the subject to death but exhibit little fortitude to do the hard things that will balance the books. Instead, many seem to get particular pleasure out of targeting those whose honest labor has been rewarded. They aim particularly at those who (by their definition) are rich, though ultimately everyone from the poorest to the richest pays—at the grocery store and the gas pump.

We recognize that it is not a sin to be rich and to have accumulated goods honestly gained. In Luke chapter 12 the Lord Jesus reveals that the issue was not the wealth which the rich man had accumulated, but rather the attitude of the self-centered man who had no concern for God or his neighbor. *“The love of money is the root of all evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10).

The rich man in the parable is an example of one who in his greediness pierced himself through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). How so? The things that he treasured could save neither his life nor his soul. So it is and ever shall be for those who are laying up material treasures for themselves and are not rich toward God (Luke 12:21).

Let us appreciate the resources with which we are have been blessed by the Lord. Every good gift comes from the Father who knows our need. Jesus said, *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing”* (Luke 12:22, 23).

Every material possession we have on this Earth can be taken from us—if not by natural disaster, then by other means, including excessive taxation. However, anyone who has this world’s wealth is poor if he does not have Christ; conversely, anyone who has Christ is rich if he has little or nothing of this world’s wealth.

In Matthew chapter four Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (v. 4).

Through the Word of God we are brought into the saving relationship with God the Father.

Through the Word we know that as children of God we have the authority and right to approach Him in prayer in every need of body and soul.

Through the Word of God we know that we have eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:11).

Abundant life is found in Jesus Christ *“who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9, see John 10:10). The riches that we enjoy are the forgiveness of sins purchased at great price—the lifeblood of the incarnate Son of God who paid the sin-debt we owed but could not pay to God. As our Substitute Jesus paid it in full when He died on the cross. How eternally rich are all in whom Spirit-engendered faith grasps the assurance of eternal life that was sealed to us through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. In his *Small Catechism* Dr. Martin Luther said that “where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.”

The sheep who hear the voice of Jesus and through their relationship to Him have a relationship with the Father have the precious promise, *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”* (John 10:28).

As we keep the purpose of our life in proper focus, we will agree with the psalmist, *“A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked”* (Psalm 37:16).

Every Christ-believer is rich in the things that count and last. His wealth is secure. No disaster and no man or government can confiscate the riches of those whose inheritance is laid up in heaven. Paul wrote, *“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:8).

May we receive with thanksgiving our material blessings (Fourth Petition), but even more so treasure the riches of heaven with all our heart, and in daily repentance and faith *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal”* (Matthew 6:20).



CLC Teachers' Conference 2012

Douglas Libby · Reporter

The 2012 CLC Teachers' Conference convened Wednesday through Friday, October 17-19, in Hales Corners, Wis., enjoying the hospitality of Messiah Lutheran Church and School. *Masterpieces of Christ* was the conference theme (based on Ephesians 2:10): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Conference chairman Matthew Thurow called the opening session to order at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday. Throughout his devotions, Chaplain Kyle Ochsner, teacher at Immanuel Lutheran High School, Mankato, Minn., called upon his science background and training for illustrations from the natural world to underscore how God has graciously and miraculously called, gathered, and enlightened His people—and how He has equipped His believers to serve as salt and lights in the world as they reflect God's love for mankind through Christ Jesus.

An invitation was received from Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Winter Haven, Florida, to host the 2013 (October 16-18) CLC Teachers' Conference. The invitation was accepted.

An essay, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Giving and Receiving Criticism*, was presented by Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary Professor emeritus David Lau. The speaker reminded us that giving and receiving criticism is at times necessary, but it is an art that can be practiced properly only when it is motivated by Christian love.

"Title 5" presentations—in theory, five ideas in five minutes—closed out the morning sessions.

The Importance of Art in Children's Lives was presented Wednesday afternoon by Mr. Matthew Schaser, Messiah congregation member and artist/designer. Mr. Schaser provoked insight that God's evident design in the created world might inspire students to use the tools (gifts) God has given them to design and create. In a very real sense, he observed, we are all artists/designers.

The remainder of Wednesday afternoon was devoted to break-out sessions considering Art Appreciation and Ideas as well as book review break-out opportunities (*Teach Like A Champion* and *Thrive, Don't Simply Survive*).

Host Pastor, Michael Eichstadt conducted the conference communion service on Wednesday evening.

Thursday morning, Pastor Paul Nolting of Immanuel Lutheran Church,

Mankato, presented an essay entitled *Professionalism in the Ministry*. The following definition was given with the attendees in mind: “The ability to prayerfully approach our work in Christ-centered faith with the skills necessary to teach in an organized environment the academic disciplines entrusted to our care; to do so in love, with self-control and due humility to the glory of God and the temporal and eternal welfare of our students.”

The late Thursday morning and early afternoon time slots were devoted to an enjoyable cruise on the Milwaukee River from downtown Milwaukee into the Lake Michigan harbor area. The vessel was well-captained, and the “seas” were agreeable! Lunch was served on board.

Professor John Reim of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, was given the floor on Thursday afternoon to present his essay *The Benefits of the Study of Music*. In view of the universality of music and its language—as well as its importance in the context of Scripture and our religious heritage—the essayist encouraged that music education be considered a priority among us. Break-out sessions related to *Music Appreciation and Ideas* followed the essay.

On Thursday evening pastors of area CLC congregations led a panel discussion on the topic of *Contemporary Christian Music*. Discussion by attendees ranged from expressions of concern from certain standpoints to appreciation for the proper use of music representing this genre.

On Friday morning, Mr. Norman Mackensen, a member of Messiah, Hales Corners, Wis., presented a *Study on the Decline of Christian Day Schools* in the CLC. Enrollment statistics from 1990-2011 and related trends were discussed. The essayist observed that declining Christian Day School enrollments and Christian Day School closings are realities which will require ongoing discussion in an effort to reverse these trends. For this purpose the study included a number of strategies as well as a suggested pilot program which would improve communication and promote collaboration among teachers and other key participants.

Following the morning break a curriculum review presentation was made featuring *Easy Grammar*.

A continuation of the conference business meeting included motions passed to accept the invitation of Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, to host the October (15-17) 2014 CLC Teachers’ Conference, and to thank the faculty and congregation of Messiah, Hales Corners, to thank Messiah congregation for hosting the 2012 conference.

Chaplain Ochsner closed the Friday session and the conference with a reading of Colossians 1:28 and prayer. The assembly then sang hymn #748 (*Worship Supplement 2000*).

“Spot Your Own Plank First”

Pastor Bruce Naumann • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

I'll never forget the day I was working underneath my rusty, little pickup truck. I was foolishly banging around on the muffler without wearing any eye protection.

When a shower of rust and dust fell into my face, one tiny flake lodged firmly onto the surface of my eye. After a sleepless night of weeping, wiping, and fruitless searching for the offending speck, I finally went to the local eye doctor. He strapped my head into a harness and touched the flake of rust out—with a needle!

I was happy for the doctor's skill and for his own sharp vision.

The Lord Jesus tells us how we can help other people when they have a speck in their eye. Before we can be of any help, He says, we must first look to ourselves: *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?... You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Luke 6:41-42, NIV).

Of course, Jesus is talking about something much more important than just a problem with a speck in a person's eye. He is talking about criticism of others—finding fault with people around you. He says that those who judge others without first coming to grips with their own sins are hypocrites. Such a person is about as much good as someone who tries to help another with a tiny speck in his eye while a two-by-four is sticking out of his own!

Since it's always easier to see the faults of others, it may be helpful to ask: "Who's the worst sinner I know?" Almost anyone can think of people whose outward behavior is worse than his own. Surely there are some whom you know to be more selfish, inconsiderate, mean-spirited, lawless, or vulgar than yourself.

On the other hand, consider that out of all the people in the world, only you and God know, firsthand, the sins and faults that are inside your own heart. Add up, if you can, the wicked actions of any other person, and they still won't outnumber the sins that you know come

from inside you. Others may not see them, but God does. That's why St. Paul, the great missionary of Biblical times, had to confess in 1 Timothy chapter 1: "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am chief [the worst].*"

When a person can say from his or her heart, "As far as first-hand evidence goes, I'm the worst sinner I know," then the gospel of Jesus' forgiveness comes to the rescue.

Jesus came to die for just that kind of person, and by trusting in Him, all these sins are taken away forever. Repentance and faith in Christ—that's the only way that the "plank" can be removed from our eyes.

Knowing this enables us to help others. One who is humbled by his own sins knows "No one needs Jesus more than I do." That same person, having found God's grace and forgiveness, has achieved clarity of spiritual sight and can help other people find the same truth about sin as well as the glorious truth about the Savior.

So, next time you're working in a dusty, rusty environment, wear eye protection. And the next time you are inclined to criticize others, look at yourself first, and then to the Lord for His help.



High school graduates Logan Gerbitz, J. D. Schierenbeck, and Jacob Noeldner with Prof. Joel Gullerud.

“Spiritual Nones”—Some Thoughts

Recently this writer, a pastor, caught some self-described “non-denominational Christians” off guard. In connection with a pre-marriage counseling class, we remarked to the couple: “More and more religious people are becoming Nones.”

“Really?!” “Yes, but the word is spelled n-o-n-e-s.”

“Oh!” came the retort—and everyone snickered. A brief discussion followed on the roles which organized religion, church affiliation, and public worship ought to have in the Christian way of life.

Generally speaking, Nones don’t want to be “categorized” with any particular denomination. While claiming faith in a [generic] god, Nones prefer to be labeled as “spiritual” and/or “religious” rather than as Protestant, Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, or you-name-it.

In recent months our local newspaper carried three op-ed articles which touched on this topic. The headlines read:

- 1) “Church world is a-changin”;
- 2) “Young people fleeing the church, not God”;
- 3) “Religion: Majority is no longer Protestant.”

Yes, you can google the term “spiritual nones.” When we did, a couple dozen insightful articles popped up.

Many polls show that Nones constitute a growing segment in the religious world today. [*“The number of people who say they have no religious affiliation—called ‘nones’ by some—has more than doubled in the U. S. since 1990, to 16% of the population.”* TIME magazine, March 12, 2012] Tied in with this is the fact that more and more “religious” and “spiritual” people are breaking ties with organized religion. [*“For most, they’re not rejecting God....They’re rejecting organized religion as being rigid and dogmatic.”* Same TIME article]

As far as the Nones and public worship are concerned, one googled article reports: “...the unaffiliated [our “Nones”] stand out from other religious groups in the U.S. for their infrequent attendance at worship services. Just 5% of the unaffiliated report going to worship services at least once a week,

compared with about half of Protestant (49%) and four-in-ten Catholics (41%). The overwhelming majority of the unaffiliated say they seldom or never attend worship services apart from weddings or funerals. Fully 83% of atheists and agnostics seldom or never attend worship services, and the same is true of 67% of those with no particular religious affiliation.” (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, October 9, 2012)

This writer sees significance in the fact that Nones are mentioned in a paragraph with atheists and agnostics. We don’t want to be uncharitable, yet it appears that being a None equates with standing for nothing [sounds like atheists to us], or with the related idea that since nobody really knows Truth, it doesn’t much matter what one stands for [as agnostics will claim].

So how can and shall we—who admit to being “dogmatic”—respond to the Nones phenomenon?

First of all, we assert that Bible believers enjoy many, many blessings from their Savior—God within the organized church affiliation and structured fellowship in which they strive to practice the Christian faith they profess.

So, allow us to list a few Bible passages which, if and when the opportunity presents itself, we would like to study and discuss with wanna-be “Christian” Nones.

“Then Jesus said to those Jews 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)

OBSERVATION FOR DISCUSSION:

Contrary to how political correctness would have it in some “Christian” churches as well as in culture and society as a whole, truth, absolute truth, exists.

“And [the early Christians] continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

OBSERVATION FOR DISCUSSION:

Far from being turned off by “rigid doctrine,” members of the early church embraced Scripture teaching within a fellowship of like-minded believers.

“...These things we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man

So how can and shall we—who admit to being “dogmatic”—respond to the Nones phenomenon?

does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

(1 Corinthians 2:13f)

OBSERVATION FOR DISCUSSION:

Being “spiritual” is a desirable and necessary religious trait, yet God-pleasing spirituality calls for Spirit-led discernment.

“And to the angel [pastor] of the church in Philadelphia write, ...I know your [church’s] works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name....” (Revelation 3:7ff)

OBSERVATION FOR DISCUSSION:

Within an organized congregation first century believers were addressed by their one Head—Jesus Christ; in the process of spreading His Word, they were commended for...for doing what?

“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 10:24f)

OBSERVATION FOR DISCUSSION:

In view of the approaching Day of Judgment, what would be some positive reasons for—and results of—assembling together for public worship?

The list could go on and on and on, but these few passages demonstrate how Jesus’ disciples seldom if ever put their religious faith into practice along the lines of “label-less stand-for-little-or-nothing” Nones. Rather, they sought one another out for Spirit-led worship and Godly fellowship around solid (true) Bible doctrine.

Dear reader, when a door opens for you to do so, look to engage any Nones in an objective, Bible-based discussion of the Christian religion and its biblically-based and thus God-given parameters.



Storms, Thunder, and Joyous “Hail!”

That’s not a weather report, but the theme of the *ILC Spring Concert* presented on Friday evening, May 17, 2013, at Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire under the direction of Prof. John C. Reim. This theme was right on target, for choir instrumentalists stormed the audience with brass and percussive thunder aplenty.

The Church’s One Foundation, Easter Triumph, and Great Day were launched with ear-splitting energy, offset with subdued Excerpts from Handel’s *Messiah, What Wondrous Love Is This, and Only God*. Throbbing bongo drums accompanied *Bwana Asifiwe* (Swahili for “Praise the Lord”), counterbalanced by the more somber *Da Pacem, Domine* (Latin for “Give Peace, Lord.”) The entire concert of fourteen selections will probably be available on a CD at a later date.

One beaming visitor noted that the concert made her ears and heart ring!

Commencement

The Immanuel Lutheran College Commencement service was celebrated on Saturday morning, May 18, 2013, in the campus auditorium packed with graduates, faculty, family, and friends.

ILC President Steven Sippert’s message, “Your Immanuel experience is meant to be forever; take Jesus and His Word with you wherever you go” was based on the Spirit’s assurances in His Word of 2 Timothy 1:12b-14. The salvation which the Apostle Paul banked on is reserved in heaven also for us, and Satan’s attempts to rob us of our heavenly deposit can be overcome by taking Jesus and His Word with us wherever we go. This deposit we guard and keep via the indwelling Holy Spirit—until our Ultimate Graduation reunites us with Jesus forever.

The ILC Seminary department provided no graduates this year; in the college department three young men received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Pre-Theological studies, two students received Bachelor of Science degrees in Education, and another two received Associate of Arts degrees.

Thirty-one young men and women received their diplomas in testimony of their academic achievements at Immanuel Lutheran High School.

We thank our Lord Jesus for nourishing these individuals in His Word during their years at ILC and pray that they will continue to bring credit to Him.

*“Upon time’s threshold we now stand,
Not knowing what will be at hand—
But come what may, we known that You
Will be with us, steadfast and true.
Now, lead us onward as Your own
And bring us to our heavenly home.*

(v. 4 of *We Thank Thee, Lord*, by John Pfeiffer)

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch, who resides in Eau Claire, has long been our man on the spot for reporting on ILC events. Specifically, each spring Prof. Koch uses the byline “From the Back Row” under which he gives a first-hand report of the school’s commencement doings. We thank him again this year!



The 2013 graduating class of Immanuel Lutheran High School School, Eau Claire, Wis.



Frank and Sarah Tester

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Cover design by Matthew Schaser

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“ . . . THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN .” — JOHN 10 : 35

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