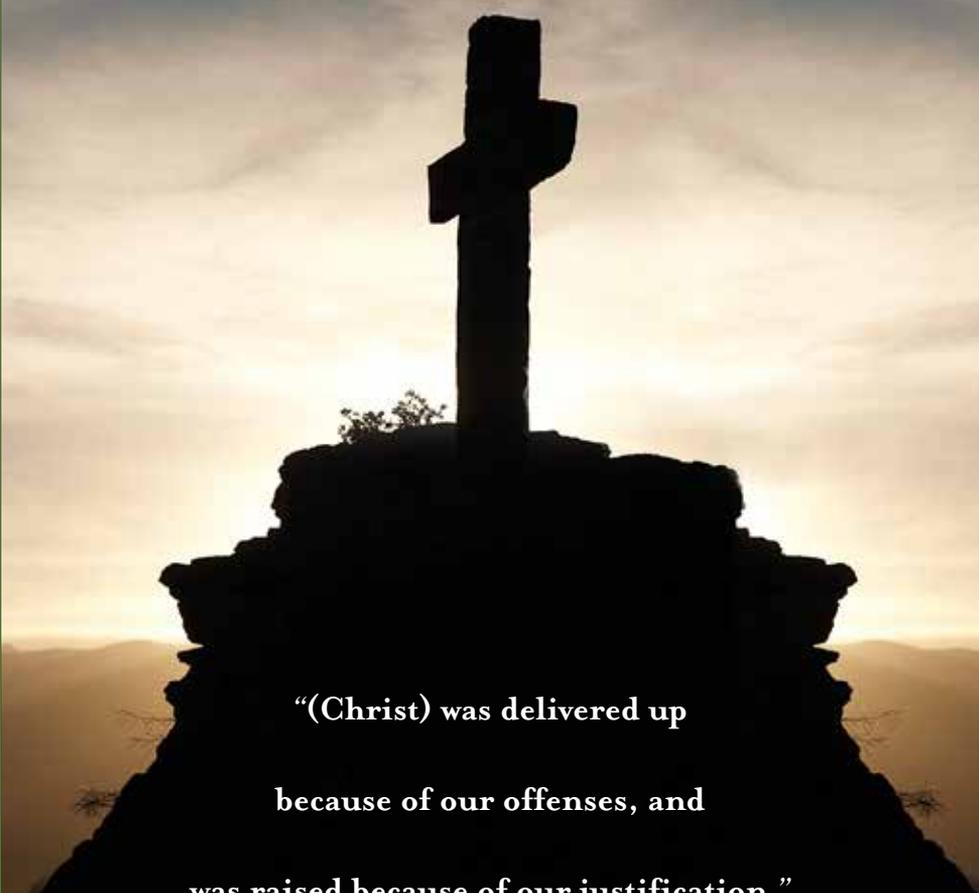


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



“(Christ) was delivered up
because of our offenses, and
was raised because of our justification ”
(Romans 4:25).

FROM the Sunday Church Bulletin of Messiah Lutheran Church,
Hales Corners (Milwaukee), Wisconsin, January 26, 2014;
CLC President Michael Eichstadt is pastor:

REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

The following is from Pastor Jyothi Benjamin in India describing the escalating persecution of Christians in the areas of their ministry:

Still we have been facing some problem in various places of Andhra Pradesh. A group of Hindu activists have attacked one of our CLCI Pastors in Kakinada yesterday. Around 9:00 p.m., a group of six people knocked at the pastor's door and requested to meet pastor urgently and when our pastor opened the door, those people jumped on him and stuffed his mouth with cloth and tied his hands and legs. One of those people sprinkled chili powder in his eyes to blind him and beat him severely. Hearing the loud cries of pastor's wife, neighbors came and those people fled from the scene. Our pastor is admitted in Yashoda hospital, Kakinada. He is OK right now. With this incident now our pastors in East Godavari are little bit shivered. This is all because of the clashes between Hindus and Christians. We regret to inform you that we have been hearing the same attempts on all pastors in and around the Kakinada area. Under these serious consequences, since many of those people are gathering information about our pastors and about our evangelism activities, Rev. Wycliffe from Kakinada suggested that it would be wise to stop our CLCI evangelistic activities for one or two months at Kakinada and its surroundings. Please pray for our CLCI pastors.

FROM THE EDITOR:

The above note is reprinted with permission as a follow-up to our “Three Hammer Blows of Matthew Chapter 10” editorial in last month’s issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. “Let none hear you idly saying, ‘There is nothing I can do...’” Brothers and sisters of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, we can and should be praying for those who are enduring persecution within our international church family.



Visit lutheranmissions.org

What they had not heard they shall consider.

(from Isaiah 52:15)

Christ, the Firstfruits, Is Risen!

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

"Now Christ has risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Three important festivals came together at the time of the Passover, therefore also at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. All three have great significance for our salvation—significance that we do not want to miss.

Together they make up the season of liberation and salvation, showing how carefully God had planned and prepared every detail of our salvation. He pictured it for us 1500 years beforehand so that nothing would be left to chance.

The Passover

The first and most recognizable festival was the Passover itself. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb saved Israel from the plague of death which brought about their freedom from slavery in Egypt, so the blood of Christ, our Passover Lamb, saves us from death and frees us from slavery to sin and Satan.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The very next day the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. Israelites were required to remove all leaven from their homes for eight days. This feast was symbolic of how Christ has cleansed us from the leaven of sin.

Christ's death made full atonement for our sins. He has cleansed our lives of all sin and purified us of all unrighteousness. Now as we turn to God in repentance, the leaven of sin is removed from our hearts and lives.

The Festival of the Firstfruits

The third—and perhaps least familiar to us—festival began the day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was called the Festival of the Firstfruits, celebrating the beginning of the grain harvest.

Barley was the first grain to ripen and was harvested in early spring. Before any of the harvest could be eaten, a sheaf of barley was waved before the altar of the LORD, showing that it was dedicated to Him. This sheaf of barley was brought together with the sacrifice of *"a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD,"* and an offering of unleavened bread and wine as a drink offering (Leviticus 23:12-13).

The offering of the firstfruits was a thankful recognition that all the harvest is the LORD's, for He caused the crops to grow and produce fruit. They gave the very first part of the harvest to the LORD in the confidence that God would grant an abundant harvest for them to enjoy after the sacrifice and offering of the firstfruits was made.

Even as Christ was sacrificed on the first day of Passover when the Passover Lamb for the nation was sacrificed—and even as all the leaven of sin was taken away and buried in the tomb with Christ—so it is no coincidence that Jesus rose from the dead on the Festival of the Firstfruits.

What a glorious picture God gave of the meaning and effect of Jesus' death and resurrection! He Himself was the unblemished Lamb sacrificed for us. He used unleavened bread and wine as the means of giving us His own body and blood which He shed for the remission of our sins, and then He rose from the dead as *"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*

As the firstfruits, Jesus' resurrection guarantees a full and abundant harvest of souls who will also be raised from the dead, as Paul says, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming"* (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

The Festival of the Firstfruits also began the fifty-day countdown to the harvest festival of Pentecost when all the grains were harvested. Even so, we celebrate Christ's resurrection in joyful anticipation, counting down the days to our final harvest when we will be raised from the dead and gathered into our eternal home.

Hallelujah, indeed!



Why Do You Weep?

Pastor David Fuerstenau · Ketchikan, Alaska

The early hours of that first Easter morning found people in various conditions.

Most of Jerusalem slept soundly, while their religious leaders may have had satisfied smiles on their faces. But fear, shock, and confusion permeated the hearts of the Lord's disciples. They were stupefied and in mourning because of His death. None of them believed in His resurrection.

And while they all mourned, John reported the dedicated weeping of Mary Magdalene. And why not? It could be argued that Jesus had done more for her than for the others. Not only was He her Friend, Jesus had also rescued her from a life of slavery to the seven demons that He had cast out of her. The Lord had restored her from a life of shame and helplessness to a whole and healthy life. No wonder Mary loved the Lord very much. We can understand why she wept almost uncontrollably. Not only did she think her Lord was still dead, but also that His body had been stolen by grave robbers.

This fear, mourning, and unbelief should not have existed in them. Jesus had promised and foretold His resurrection on the third day. He then personally rebuked two as being foolish and "*slow of heart to believe*" (Luke 24:25).

And to Mary He asked the pointed question, "*Why are you weeping?*" All of them should have been joyous with resurrection faith, but they were not.

Surely there is a proper "*time to weep and a time to laugh*" (Ecclesiastes 3:4) with joy. Weeping over our sin and beneath His cross—appropriate. And if, as St. Paul argued, Christ is NOT risen, then is the time for some serious, dedicated weeping—for then our faith is futile, and we are yet in our sins. Then our present and future states are hopeless and dreadful.

But the prophets, Jesus, the angels, the historical record, and the report of countless eyewitnesses testify to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That has resounding implications. It opens up a treasure chest of blessings and promises, sparkling as precious jewels—the brightest of which are redemption, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, life, and eternal salvation.

Therefore the entirely appropriate question for us today is: Why are you weeping?

Why are you weeping—over death? Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life...”* (John 11:25); *“...Because I live, you shall live also”* (John 14:19). And if we are bereaved over the death of a loved one, even as Jesus once wept over Lazarus, surely we do not weep for long nor do we *“sorrow as others who have no hope”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Surely not!

Why are you weeping—because of trials? Do you not know that when we pass through the water, God is with us (Isaiah 43:1)? Do you not yet understand our trials are comparatively light and of short duration (2 Corinthians 4:17), and that we simply cannot compare our present sufferings *“with the glory that shall be revealed in us”* in heaven (Romans 8:18)?

Why are you weeping—over loneliness? Surely Jesus promised: *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14:23). *“...I am with you always”* (Matthew 28:20).

Why are you weeping—because of fear? Then say and believe with David: *“This I know, God is for me... Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You”* (Psalm 56: 9,3). *“Perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4:18).

Why are you weeping—over failure, need, disappointment, sickness, discipline, anything? Reach into the resurrection treasure chest and consider God’s stupendous, all-encompassing promise *“that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28). *“Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:24).

When Jesus asked Mary, *“Woman, why are you weeping?”* Mary gave a weeping answer. But when He said, *“Mary,”* her weeping ceased. Her Master had called her by name. Her risen Savior was saying, *“I love you...I am here...It’s all right.”*

“Beauty for ashes...the oil of joy for mourning...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61:3). Of such the prophets had spoken. Of such the Savior gives to us by faith in the power of His death and resurrection.

Let us respond with love for the Lord, for He has declared: *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are Mine”* (Isaiah 43:1)!

Christ is risen! He lives, never again to die! Surely this has meaning! Surely, this is the time to put away weeping and to laugh with joy inexpressible.



From Triumph to Travesty — to Triumph!

Pastor Jay Hartmann • Corpus Christi, Texas

On that first Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a hero, but He would go out in a much different manner. From triumph to travesty may well describe our Savior's entry into the city—until He triumphed for us on the cross.

Yes, our Savior rode into Jerusalem to die the death of the cross. How many of those who gathered that day to welcome the King of Glory would soon turn on Him and demand His death?

Jesus rode into town on “*a colt, the foal of a donkey*” (Matthew 21:5). This is not what one would expect when God comes to town. Where was the ornately decorated chariot drawn by a team of beautiful white horses?

Our Savior's entry into Jerusalem in lowly fashion shows His love and compassion.

Jesus had the spiritual welfare of all people at heart. He came to rule over an eternal kingdom, not an earthly one. Most who were gathered there honored their King, but it was with hearts focused on a king for this life only. Maybe that's one reason so many turned on Him.

From triumph to travesty! This praising and rejoicing would not last long, for soon the Savior would be condemned to death by the very people He came to save.

Yet nothing would prevent our King from completing His work. He was focused, determined, and undaunted, though He knew what lay ahead! The spiritual welfare of all mankind was foremost in His heart. He would soon endure agony and suffering beyond all understanding. He would be forsaken and abandoned. He would be alone while He would bear the greatest burden that could be imagined. No one would come to help—no one could!

Jesus had been among His people for quite a while. He was born among

them. He had lived among them. And during the previous three years He had ministered to them. He had shared with them the Greatest News, teaching them that sinners are “justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
The Father on His sapphire throne
Awaits His own anointed Son.*

TLH #162:4

Jesus had preached, taught, comforted, and helped His people in every way. But on Palm Sunday He came to His people for the last time to give the greatest of all sacrifices—Himself!

Knowing what He was riding into, Jesus rode on in majesty to suffer and die for the sins of the world. By His suffering and death He established His Kingdom—a Kingdom that is not of this world, yet a Kingdom that has conquered this world!

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to face the final battle in the “war” for our salvation. For this reason He came; for this reason He rode on; for this reason He would allow Himself to die the death of the cross.

Rejoice, for Jesus went as our Substitute—to triumph over sin, death, and hell for us. He went in love. He went to make us His very own now and eternally.

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O Christ, Thy power and reign!*

TLH #162:5

“LET US DRAW NEAR...”

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

The words “Let us draw near” are probably familiar to us from hearing them many times at the beginning of the liturgy in the Sunday worship service. The pastor invites us to draw near to God to confess our sins and receive the assurance of forgiveness.

We may not think much about those words when we hear them. We may take it for granted that we can approach God in worship and receive His blessings. We don't always appreciate the fact that coming into God's presence at any time and asking for whatever we need is a privilege.

The observance of Good Friday teaches the greatness of this privilege, for we are reminded of the great cost at which it was obtained for us. Jesus gained access to God for us when He *“bore our sins in His own body on the tree”* (1 Peter 2:24).

One of the events of Good Friday powerfully and graphically teaches that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is what opened the door for us to come into God's presence. It is the rending of the veil in the temple. The Gospels report that when Jesus breathed His last on the cross on the afternoon of Good Friday, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

The veil hung before the most holy place in the temple, the place of God's presence. It was a massive curtain measuring sixty feet by thirty feet and having the thickness of a human hand. It hid the most holy place from human view so that not even the priests serving in the temple were permitted to look into it. Only the high priest passed through the veil. He did it only once each year, on the Day of Atonement, and then only with the blood of sacrifice.

The temple veil was a powerful reminder of human sin that was the

barrier between man and God. Until that barrier was removed, man could not come into God's presence.

With the offering of His body on the cross, Christ removed the barrier of sin. To show that the barrier had been removed, God Himself tore the veil in two. The evangelists clearly intend that we should take the rending of the temple veil as a miracle, as a mighty sign that the way into God's presence had again been opened.

The book of Hebrews adds to our understanding of the meaning of the torn temple veil (see chapter 10:19-22). There we are taught that by shedding His blood Jesus opened for us "*a new and living way*" which gives us boldness to enter "*the Holiest,*" that is, the very presence of God. The entrance into His presence is "*through the veil, that is, His flesh.*"

The body of Jesus, the Lamb of God sacrificed for everyone, is the only means of entrance into God's presence. All who would come before God must come through Jesus, the crucified, and all who come to God trusting in Jesus for their righteousness do gain access to Him and His blessings of forgiveness and life.

God who has opened the way for us into His presence at so great a cost intends that we should make use of it. "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...*" (Hebrews 10:22).

Let us draw near to God

to confess our sins with the confidence that all are forgiven.

Let us draw near to God

in worship with the assurance that He will accept it.

Let us draw near to God

in prayer with the confidence that He will hear and answer.



The evangelists clearly intend that we should take the rending of the temple veil as a miracle, as a mighty sign that the way into God's presence had again been opened.

THIS I KNOW

Pastor Michael Eichstadt • Hales Corners, Wisconsin

“Pastor, I don’t know; I just don’t know,” the elderly congregation member told me as I sat down for a visit.

I had heard it before. This long-time believer had plenty of time to think in the nursing home, and he carried a great deal on his heart. He was concerned about children who had drifted from the Lord and wondered what would become of them. His health was tenuous and his finances meager. He found it difficult to absorb all the changes he had witnessed in ninety-plus years. There was so much uncertainty in his life, so much he was unsure of.

I can relate. Perhaps you can too. There is so much I don’t know. I don’t always know what to say to people who need help. There is much I don’t know about technology and the geopolitical scene. I have no idea what the housing market or the broader economy will do or whether I’m saving enough for retirement. I’m oblivious to the schemes Satan may unleash on me. I don’t know what challenges and opportunities the Lord has in store for my congregation or our church body. As James comments regarding our plans: *“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow”* (James 4:14, NIV).

The Old Testament believer Job had the same uncertainties. The sudden, catastrophic loss of family, possessions, and health left him reeling, yet he held onto one rock-solid conviction. One thing he knew. He was sure of it. Nothing that could happen would ever change his mind. *“I know that my Redeemer lives!”*

And really, in the big picture, that was all he needed to know, for his Redeemer would take care of everything else. His Lord would pay the required ransom to win Job’s freedom from sin and death. He would offer the sacrifice to turn away God’s righteous wrath and establish peace between God and man. Job did not know whether he would live to see another day on Earth, but he did know

that one day he would see his Redeemer with his own two eyes. "I myself will see him...I, and not another" (Job 19:27, NIV).

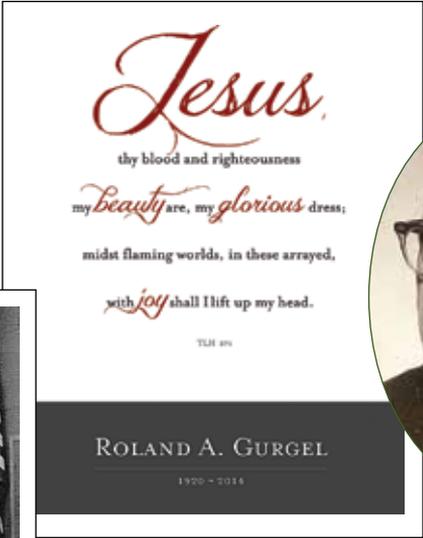
How much do you really need to know? How much do you need to know to get along in this world, to be happy, to be secure?

It is not so much a matter of how much you know, but whom you know. By faith we know Jesus and that He is risen, never to die again. We don't worship a dead hero. We praise the victorious, living Lord of all.

That truth is our certain confidence in every one of life's uncertainties. I don't know how many sins I have committed in my life, but I know that my Redeemer lives and therefore all my guilt is gone. I don't know what joys and trials lie ahead, but I know my Redeemer lives and that we are "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37, NIV).

I have no idea whether I will see tomorrow's dawn, but with Job I know I will one day see my Savior in amazing glory.

This I know. You know it too!



Readers are referred to page 24 for the obituary of Roland A. Gurgel. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

PART THREE OF A SERIES ON THE SECOND ARTICLE

“This is most certainly true!”

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

(TLH, p. 12)

Redeemable, But With No Cash Value

CDS Teacher David Bernthal • Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Coupons. People clip, cut, and save them. They can be redeemed at the participating establishment that issued them. But when you look closely at many coupons you come across, they may read, “no cash value.”

Just as a coupon needs to be brought back to its original issuer, so mankind needed to be redeemed or bought back as well. Although Adam, our first ancestor, was created in the image of his issuer, God, Adam and Eve rebelled against God when they fell into sin. Now, all of Adam's descendants have been born in his broken, distorted, sinful image. We were all under the condemnation of the law and now under the “ownership” of Satan.

God already had a plan in place to purchase us back. There was no cash value or worthiness found in us, but the price would be precious nonetheless. Just what does it take to redeem or buy back a human soul? No doubt a payment must be involved, but at what price?

Luther explains, “...He [Jesus] has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood

The Five SECOND ARTICLE Installments:

- 1) Jesus is true God
- 2) Jesus is true Man
- 3) Jesus has redeemed me**
- 4) Jesus has made me His own
- 5) Jesus calls me to serve Him

and His innocent suffering and death” (Explanation to the Second Article).

God’s holy Law is perfect and unchangeable. He demands perfection: “*You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). He promises punishment: “*The soul who sins shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:20). And He sets the price: “*Without shedding of blood there is no remission [release from penalty]*” (Hebrews 9:22).

Not all the gold of all the Pharaohs could pay the price nor all the diamonds of Africa nor mountains of platinum or silver. Only blood would work as payment, and not just any blood, but only that of an innocent Man.

After keeping the Law of God perfectly in every way, Jesus took our sins upon Himself—He became sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Then He willingly went the way of the cross. Yes, He endured the physical pain of crucifixion—but even worse, He endured the rejection of His Father. God waited for the precious blood and innocent suffering and death of our Savior to complete the payment of our sins. Now each of us can hear “*Paid in full!*” in Jesus’ cry on the cross, “*It is finished!*” (John 19:30)

Better still, our Lord wasn’t content with just leaving us with a washed slate of sins forgiven. He as the unimpeachable Son of God placed His righteousness onto our account! We now have the perfection required to open Paradise for us. It is guaranteed that we will hear that precious invitation spoken to us, “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you...*” (Matthew 25:34).

Even though we may often feel unworthy and of little value, and indeed we find no worthiness in ourselves, yet Christ still felt we were worth shedding His own precious blood. That is something truly worth boasting about! My Jesus died for me—
He redeemed *me!*

THE SECOND ARTICLE

(About Redemption)

[We print Luther’s Explanation only.]

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity. This is most certainly true.

(Martin Luther’s *SMALL CATECHISM*,
Sydow edition, 2000)

MEDITATIONS ON JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
MATTHEW CHAPTERS FIVE THROUGH SEVEN

Our Good Shepherd Warns Against False Prophets

Pastor Thomas Schuetze • Coloma, Michigan

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

(MATTHEW 7:15-20, NIV 1984)

"...Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people" (Matthew 24:11).

Jesus issued such warnings to His disciples in response to a question they had asked about signs that would usher in His return at the end of the world. He informed them that as the time of His second coming drew near, the number of prophets claiming to speak for Him—but promoting their own ideas—would grow and would succeed in misleading many.

Here in His mountaintop sermon the Savior issued a similar warning. And since He knew that the proponents of destructive human doctrines would seem harmless, He gave His disciples instructions on how to recognize them.

He did so by using an illustration from agriculture. When someone walks into an orchard, he can tell from the fruit whether it's a good tree or a bad one, a tree to pick fruit from or to avoid. Similarly, a person who wants to harvest grapes in a vineyard can tell by the fruit whether a particular vine is a good one or is as worthless as a thorn bush.

So the method Jesus teaches us to use to tell true prophets from false ones is: Look at their "fruit." Check what they are producing in their teaching. If it is in agreement with God's Word, you know the prophet is true, someone to listen to and to receive spiritual instruction from. If, on the other hand, what a prophet says contradicts what the Bible

says, you'll know by this "bad fruit" that he's a false prophet to avoid.

Here are some examples of how one might apply the principle Jesus here enunciates.

+ You're listening to a religious teacher who says that baptism saves you and that God wants babies baptized because they are born sinful and need His forgiveness. He says the Holy Spirit possesses the marvelous ability to work faith in the hearts of little ones by the power of the Word. Babies need to be reborn spiritually to enter God's kingdom just as much as adults do.

You compare what the teacher says with Scripture—passages such as 1 Peter 3:21, Psalm 51:5, Mark 9:42, John 3:5—and you discover the man's teachings are wholly in line with what is written there. So you know that the teacher is a prophet of God whom you can listen to and learn from with confidence.

+ Then there's another teacher who says that baptism does not save you. He presents baptism as an act of obedience that we do for God. Little children don't need to be baptized, he says, because they aren't capable of moral action and so they aren't guilty of sin. According to this teacher, baptism must be administered by immersion to those capable of making the conscious choice of dedicating themselves to God.

Comparing these teachings on baptism with Holy Scripture, you discover that they aren't in agreement with what is written there. So you know the teacher is a false prophet whom you don't want to listen to.

+ A pastor is preaching about Jesus' return at the end of the age. He says that the Lord will come unexpectedly as a thief in the night. On that last day He will resurrect everyone in an instant and take those who cling in faith to Him as their Savior into their heavenly home and then consign unbelievers to hell.

You compare this teaching to what Scripture says—Mark 13:32, Mark 16:16, Hebrews 7:28-29—and you find that it is written there just as the teacher said. You gladly listen to that pastor, knowing that he's a true prophet of God.

+ A certain television evangelist claims he is able to predict the exact date of Christ's return. And he adds that when Jesus does come back, He will set up a kingdom on planet Earth for a thousand

years. Some, the teacher says, will be raptured away by the Lord, while others will be left behind till some point in the future.

In comparing such teachings with the Bible, you soon recognize them as "bad fruits" (doctrines not found in the Bible), and you know the preacher is a false prophet.

Those are just a few examples. In the Bible Jesus instructs us to be sure to test whatever teaching a pastor, church, or synod presents. And He has shown us that this testing is to be done by checking the "fruit"—comparing what is being taught with what is written in God's holy Word.

In our day such testing isn't thought to be important or in place. Some think it is unloving to label certain teachings false and certain prophets false. Yet Scripture shows it is the loving thing to do. Every false teaching originates from the great deceiver, Satan, who uses unscriptural teachings of false prophets to undermine faith in Jesus with the hope of misleading and finally even destroying precious souls for whom the Savior died.

May our comfort be that as we use the Bible to test religious teachers, our Good Shepherd will help us recognize His voice and strengthen us to follow Him in faith. He will answer our prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heavenly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.*

*The haughty spirits, Lord, restrain
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign
And always set forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.*

*Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word
We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here,
Receive us into glory there.*

(TLH #292:1,6,9)

The Third Party

(Seventh of a Series)

Missionary David Koenig

And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

(Acts 13:5-12)

This is what could be called a spiritual tug of war—with the Apostle Paul on one end, Elymas on the other, and Sergius in the middle.

It is also confrontational. The confrontation though is not with Sergius, the object of the witnessing, but with the opponent, Elymas. Here Paul must hurl the law at Elymas who is interfering with Sergius who “sought to hear the Word of God.” In a way this reminds one of the Leipzig Debate where Martin Luther was not so much trying to win over his opponent at the opposite podium as he was seeking to influence those observing the debate.

Sergius was a man of intelligence who truly was interested in Paul’s and Barnabas’ message. Elymas tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. We, of course, do not have apostolic power to do as Paul did. But we do have the law of God to refute and condemn any modern-day Elymas. There are those times when in a very small group of three or so we may have one individual to whom we are trying to witness, but we may be hindered by someone else. Then it is that we need to turn to that opponent and direct the Word on what he is saying.

I remember small-group discussions back in my college days when I would

have to refute someone (such as a Mormon) in the discussion in order to get through to another who was listening.

The beauty of this encounter of Paul and Sergius is that the proconsul did believe, *“astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”* It was the gospel of Jesus that Paul then preached that won Sergius over after the interference was eliminated.

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.



CROSS PURPOSES

Fear On the Other Side?

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

Death is the common denominator among all people. Scripture tells us *“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...”* (Romans 5:12). That is an indisputable, observable truth! There is another indisputable truth of Scripture which, however, is not universally accepted. *“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the grave will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28-29).

The rejection of the latter truth speaks to the subject about which we thought after the recent death of a media movie critic. During the

course of his terminal illness he said, “There is nothing to fear on the other side of death.” We do not know what the man’s faith was, or if he had saving faith, so we wondered: Was the comment an expression of unbelief, or of faith in Christ?

The unbeliever may live his life without fear of death but only because he pursues life and all its pleasures with gusto under the delusion that death is the end-all. Unbelief is ignorant of the consequences of dying without faith in Christ. But if there is still a conscience, lack of fear on the other side of death may be a “whistling past the cemetery” in the vain hope that there is nothing to fear if they don’t think about it or can stifle their conscience.

So is the statement about nothing to fear on the other side of death a valid statement? What is the truth?

The catechism sums up Scripture truth when it says, “The unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, to everlasting shame, contempt, and torment in hell” (*Lutheran Catechism*, LC-MS, 1943 p.142). The rich man who wasted his life in frivolity enjoyed his life to the max until he “*died and was buried*” (Luke 16:22) and lifted up his eyes from the torment of hell (Luke 16:23-24). He was “living” proof of what Scripture says, “*For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be abhorrence to all flesh*” (Isaiah 66:24). Jesus, dying in the place of fallen mankind, gave expression to the reality of punishment in hell when He cried out, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matthew 27:46).

They who die in unbelief and ignorance, having rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and His atonement, will have a rude awakening at the resurrection day. They who reject the Savior and His atoning substitutionary death, and consequently die in impenitence, have a great deal to fear, for “*he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:16). That is the truth!

However, our Lord does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23, 33:11). He is not willing that any should perish eternally (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore He has commissioned His children to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations (Luke 24:47). We are to preach the law that uncovers sin and convicts the heart. We are called to share the gospel that wins and heals the smitten heart. Through the gospel—of which Jesus is the focal point—the Lord would have His children know the comforting truth: “There is nothing to fear on the other side of death!”

The catechism also gives voice to this truth. “The believers will rise with glorified bodies to everlasting life in heaven.” Whoever believes in Jesus

shall have everlasting life (John 3:16). On the cross Jesus paid for the sins of the world. His death was also the death of death, as He rose again from the dead. Hence, whoever lives and believes in Jesus shall never die (John 11:26). We have the gracious promise through the pen of John that “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life...*” (John 3:36); and again, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:13). The same disciple/apostle quotes Jesus, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10:27- 29).

We have the Lord’s promise in time, as well as in the moment that we pass from time into eternity, “*But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...*” (Isaiah 43:1-3). Awaiting us “on the other side” is the risen, glorified Savior with the invitation, “*Come, you blessed of My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34).

The Father's promise is Yea and Amen in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). It is sealed to us through the Lord Jesus whose blood has cleansed us of all sin and redeemed us freely by His grace. When He calls, all who are in the grave will hear His voice and come forth. In the midst of the teeth gnashing of those who in unbelief rejected Christ and His atonement, the believer will hear the inviting and soothing voice of the Lord, “Enter into your rest.”

It is true. All who are alive in the Lord when they depart this mortal life in reality shall never die (John 11:25-26)! They can say with confidence, “There is nothing to fear on the other side of death. Thanks be to God!”



***Jesus lives!
and now is death
But the gate of life
immortal;
This shall calm my
troubled breath
When I pass its gloomy
portal!
Faith shall cry, as fails
each sense,
Jesus is my confidence!
(TLH #201:5)***

MARRIAGE PERSPECTIVES (Bible/Christian style)

Pastor Paul Fleischer · Cheyenne, Wyoming

The national (liberal/progressive) narrative increasingly bad-mouths “old-fashioned traditional” man/woman marriage as being stodgy and dull—while promoting the new relationship excitement between people of the same sex “uniting” in marriage. Just this week we learn that *Chevrolet* is using the Olympic games to promote a pro-gay platform, thus “helping drive the crusade to normalize two men having sex with each other as a ‘family’” (cf. *American Family Association* blog, Feb. 14, 2014). One commercial shows a male couple with a son and a daughter.

In the face of and over against these perversions, we have appreciated some fine articles on traditional marriage that we have read lately, particularly from *WORLD* magazine, which unapologetically presents and promotes the Biblical/Christian view.

For example, an article entitled “For better, for worse” (Feb. 8, 2014, *WORLD*, p. 3) appeals to magazine readers not to buy into the “conventional wisdom” that “marriage is OK—but don’t expect too much from it.” The writer deplores the fact that whereas “when we were little kids, weddings seemed mysterious, marvelous, and full of wonder,” by contrast we are taught today to “put away our naïveté, discard our illusions, and grow up to the fact that marriage in the real world involves slogging through a whole lot of disappointment, trouble, and sorrow.”

A few paragraphs later the writer gets to what we would consider to be the bottom line: “[...] too many] Husbands and wives have...bought into the devil’s lie that God’s gifts are phony, and that He didn’t know what He was talking about when He said that marriage is so magnificent that He intends it as a picture of His own relationship to His people.”

That last sentence, of course, is a reference to the Apostle Paul’s familiar blueprint for a God-pleasing—and God-blessed—marriage as laid out by the Apostle Paul in his divinely inspired epistle to the Ephesians (5:21-33).

Then there was an earlier article on Christian marriage entitled “Stretch marks” (July 13, 2013, *WORLD*, p. 71). A by-line gave the article’s thought-provoking thrust: “Marriage isn’t about finding the perfect mate, but rather [about] the process of being perfected.”

We want to quote the writer at some length here, while calling special

attention to the fact that concluding comments refer again to the Apostle's Ephesians blueprint.

We begin with this quote: "...The secret to marriage is related to the secret of the meaning of life. If the meaning of life is to find the way of pleasantness and ease, then try out as many partners as you must to find the one who maximizes your happiness quotient. Lots of luck with that.

"But what if marriage is for stretching, for no-pain-no-gain advance in maturity, rather than primarily for having one's desires met? What if we went into a marriage with the attitude of adorning the other? What a paradigm shift that would be! What if we understood that we are all a work in progress—and what if we were willing for that work?"

As the article winds up, this is said: "What if we counted the ways that godly marriage is a constant reenactment of Christ's relationship with the church (Ephesians 5:32)?"

Yes, back again to God's/our perfect (!) blueprint for marriage!

Even a superficial reading of that blueprint leaves no doubt that the marriage union spoken of is between a man and a woman—each of whom pattern their love for one another after the noble (unconditional) love of God the Father for the world (see John 3:16), leading then to His only-begotten Son's self-sacrificing love for the world of unworthy sinners ("...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...", Ephesians 5:25).

We especially appreciate the godly perspective offered that marriage is for "stretching" rather than "primarily for having one's desires met." We dare to suggest that even our first parents would have benefited from such a long-range perspective.

But the challenge is for us now at the beginning of the New Testament's third millennium. In that regard we say that husbands and wives will do themselves and their relationship a godly favor—yes, they will discover that, according to the previously mentioned "little kids' view," their marriage can still be 'mysterious, marvelous, and full of wonder'—if from the heart they use as one of their daily prayers:

Preserve the vow we two have made, This circle round our life.

This golden ring that none may break Which makes us man and wife. Your daily mercies let us share, All threats of harm destroy;

By this our vow divides our care And doubles all our joy.

[altered hymn stanza, WS 2000 #791:2.]

Pastor/Professor Roland A. Gurgel 1920-2014

Paul R. Koch • reporting

*“JESUS, Thy blood and righteousness My BEAUTY are, my GLORIOUS dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With JOY shall I lift up my head.”*

So begins the service folder for the Victory Service of Roland A. Gurgel, celebrated with family and friends at Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on Feb. 16, 2014.

We thank God for sharing Roland A. Gurgel with us and for giving him the dynamic personality that empowered him to serve for over fifty years in the public gospel ministry. Roland seemed the embodiment of the Scriptural principle: *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10a).

Gardening and cardiovascular walking were among his hobbies, but preaching and teaching were his heart’s delight. He served five congregations as full-time shepherd (1945-59) before becoming professor at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire (1964-86).

Roland’s strong personality traits (dynamic, dedicated, direct) were coupled with a strong work ethic. Permeating all was his God-given dedication to the Truth, which made him a notable soldier among God’s troops.

Roland is now among those saints whose labors have nurtured his heirs and friends, colleagues, former students, and parishioners. *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’”* (Revelation 14:13).

Roland Gurgel was born October 10, 1920 in Wonewoc, Wisconsin, God’s gift to Herman Gurgel and Flora (nee Pohl), the last of four boys who was then followed by three girls. Roland was blessed to spend his grade school years under the guidance and influence of his father, the principal teacher at St. Paul’s congregation. Following his confirmation in the Christian faith, Roland attended the high school department at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, from which he graduated in 1938. He continued his academic preparations for the Lutheran ministry in the college department, graduating with the class of 1942. After an additional three years of theological training in the Lutheran Seminary at Thiensville/Mequon, he graduated with the class of 1945.

Then the Lord blessed Roland with the gift of a Christian wife, Lois

H. Bauer, and in the process of time the Lord added the gifts of nine children (five girls and four boys). Still in their time of grace are his daughter Lois Jean (Dennis Wendland; 5 ch., 6 grd.); son Paul (Barbara; 4 ch., 10 grd.) son John (Cathy; 6 ch., 8 grd.); daughter Kathleen (Omar Olmanson; 7 ch., 17 grd.); son Daniel (4 ch., 6 grd.); daughter Ruth (Mark Bernthal; 5 ch., 12 grd.); daughter Deborah (John Ude; 9 ch., 8 grd.); daughter Bethany (Perry Dauer; 4 ch., 1 grd.); and son, Pastor Roland H. Gurgel. Other surviving relatives include sister Doris Picha, sister-in-law Doris Bauer, and a large number of nieces, nephews, and extended family.

Roland was preceded in death by his wife, his parents, brothers Karl, Herman, and Ernest, sisters Margaret and Marie, granddaughter Heleen Olmanson, grandson Micah Gurgel, and great-grandson Samuel Ude.

Pastor Gurgel began his life-long tour of service in the public ministry as assistant pastor in La Crosse, Wisconsin; next, to a dual parish in the Rib Lake, Wisconsin area; then to St. John's, New Ulm, Minn. (where this writer regularly attended); and then to Trinity congregation of Belle Plaine, Minn.

There it was that the Gurgels in obedience to the Word of God left the fellowship that had fallen into error. They moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he and his wife took up secular employment in order to support their family.

In 1962 the Lord of the Church returned Roland to the pastoral ministry to serve Redeemer congregation, Cheyenne, Wyoming. Then in 1964 the Lord called him to show forth His praises on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary in Eau Claire. His God-given and developed talents as a teacher of the Word inspired many young people during his twenty-two years in the classroom.

During his tenure at ILC, Roland also served as interim pastor at Trinity of Millston (three sessions) and at Messiah of Eau Claire (twice), with numerous Sunday preaching engagements elsewhere in the CLC sprinkling his calendar.

After he retired from ILC in 1986, he and Lois moved to Mankato, Minnesota, taking membership in Salem Lutheran Church of Eagle Lake. During his retirement years Roland served as interim pastor in fourteen different CLC congregations (twice/three times for some).

Roland spent the final year of his earthly pilgrimage in the care of a

nursing home in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, from which the Lord took him to his heavenly home on February 6, 2014 at the age of 93 years, three months and twenty-seven days.

Following the February 15 funeral service in Mankato with Pastor Norman Greve officiating, Roland's earthly remains were committed to the grave in Pilgrim's Rest Cemetery of Mankato, where they await renewal and reunion with Jesus, who blessed him with Life both here and hereafter.

As we have it in *TLH* #616:1: — "Forever with the Lord!" Amen! So let it be. Life from the dead is in that word, 'Tis immortality.



CHAPEL TALK

God's Affordable (Free) Care Act

Prof. John Pfeiffer • Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Lord God, teach us to leave all our worries in Your hands, for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

ObamaCare—the Affordable Care Act: have you heard anything about this? It is a government-regulated program for health care in this country. There are those who strongly support it and those who strongly oppose it. Some say it is good for the country; others say it is bad.

Furthermore, there have been some real difficulties in getting this huge program off the ground. The TV and radio pundits are talking about the difficulties people are having trying to get into the program, and the difficulties others are having who are losing their present health insurance, apparently because of the program. On both sides are people who are worried about their need for health insurance. Who is going to take care of them? How are they going to survive if they do not have insurance? What worries people on both sides is that they may not have access to modern health care because they have no insurance.

What about us? Should we be worried about this? Will there be no one to care for us? Will there be no insurance plan for us?

Well, I have learned about an insurance plan that has been in place for a long time. It is a plan that the government can neither give us nor take away from us. It is entirely independent of government control. It is called "God-care": "*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your anxieties upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

What wonderful words: "*He cares for you.*" God cares! Can there be any doubt about this among us? What does God have to do to prove that He loves us?

How about being willing to give up the one thing that is most important to Him and to do this just for us? If He would do this, then will we believe that He cares?

You know the answer. *"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him"* (1 John 4:9). If God didn't care about us, why would He have made such a great sacrifice? There should be no doubt about His love, His concern for us. God-care is the only insurance plan that is truly built upon the Rock. All problems in this life are a direct result of sin. Some of them may be the result of particular sins that we commit, but many of them are simply the result of sin being in the world.

God's care for us has taken care of the cause of our problems. Therefore we can expect that God-care will extend to the problems themselves. It will be as He says, *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32)

Yes, God-care covers all our problems. It is the best insurance that we can have. In fact, without His blessing, every other form of insurance is of no value. With His blessing, all will go well even without any man-made form of insurance.

Having said this, we need to realize that divine solutions to problems are not always agreeable to our human desires. A man may say, "I prayed to God, but He didn't do anything about it." What the man really means is that God didn't do what that man wanted Him to do.

In such situations, we need to *"humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."* We need to acknowledge that we do not always know what is best for us. Under God-care, we have no guarantee that life is going to be comfortable for us...no guarantee that every illness will be cured...no guarantee that every financial difficulty will be resolved with an outpouring of money... that every human conflict will end in everyone loving us. In fact, we are told that *"we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).

On the other hand, we do have better guarantees. God-care assures us that whatever God does will be exactly the right solution to our problems. You know the passage: *"All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28). What man-made insurance policy can claim this?

But once again, we must humble ourselves under His mighty hand, never telling God what has to be done, always laying forth our desires but then saying, "Your will be done." He who sacrificed the One He loved the most just for you will make everything work out for your good.

You know, of course, that the final solution to your problems will not be in this world, but in the world that God has prepared for those who believe in Jesus Christ. There all the sufferings that have been brought about because of sin will be gone, never to plague us again.

What insurance program can make such a promise? Only God-care. He alone will exalt you in due time—and oh, what an exaltation it will be!

Father in heaven, we know that You love us, for You gave Your own Son for us. Strengthen our faith, so that at all times we cast our worries upon You, knowing that You care for us. Hear us for the sake of Your Son. Amen.



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

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