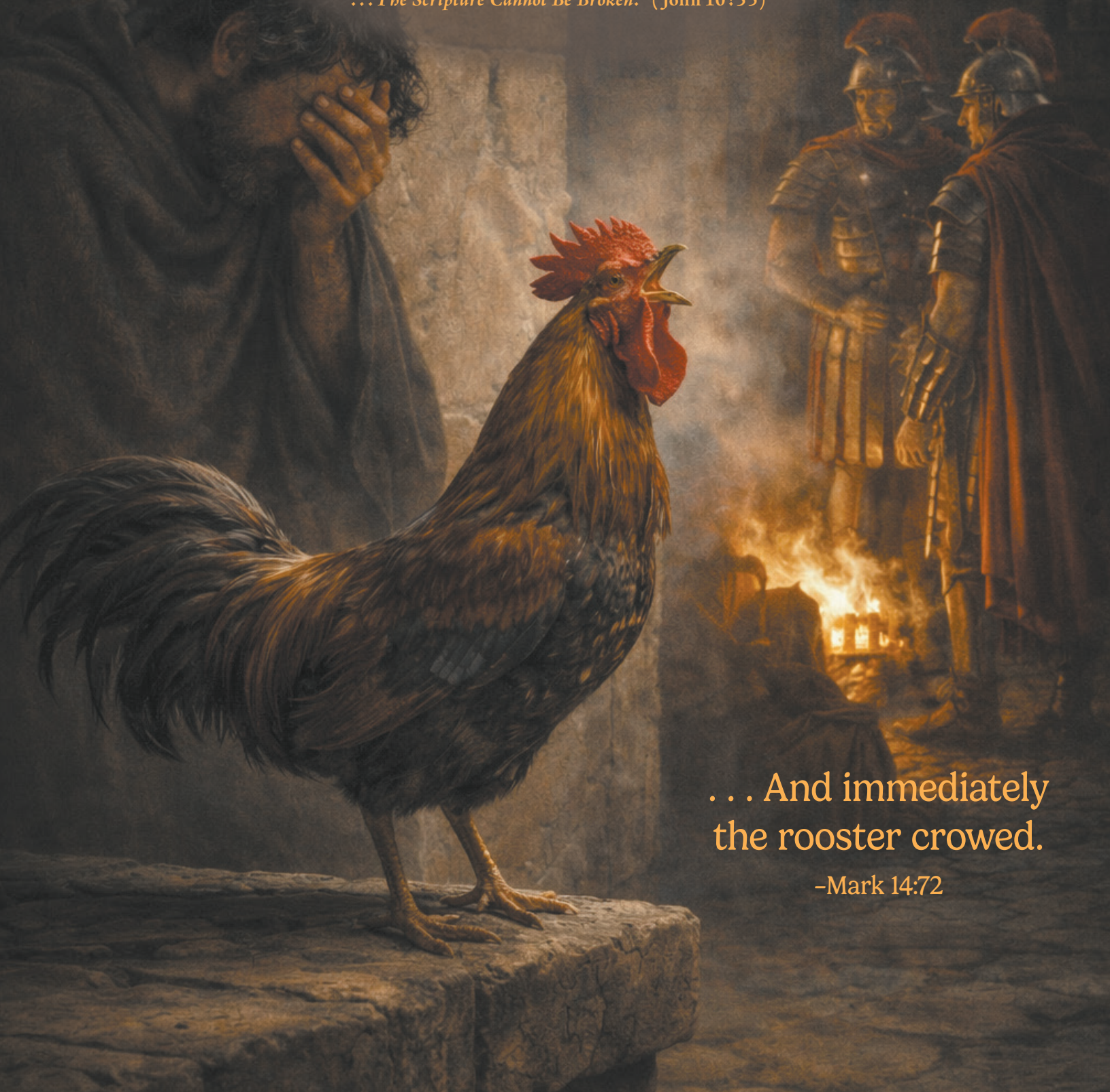


FEBRUARY 2026 VOL 68 NO. 8

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." (John 10:35)



... And immediately
the rooster crowed.

—Mark 14:72



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The Lutheran Spokesman (USPS 825580) (ISSN 00247537) is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org

Periodicals postage paid at Eau Claire, WI and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701-7134

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, art direction & graphic design by Pipestone Publishing Co.; Proofreaders: Vance Fossum and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Michael Eichstadt, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Nathanael Mayhew, Drew Naumann, Karl Olmanson, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauers, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, Mark Weis.

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann three months before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann.

Business Manager: Steve Lentz, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu. Subscription Manager: Jessica Lau. Individual subscriptions \$23 for one year, \$44 for two years, and \$60 for three years. Group subscriptions through congregations: \$20.

Send address or payment question requests to: lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org
Printed in U.S.A.

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Repent and Believe

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (Acts 3:19 NIV84)

The speaker (if you want to call him a speaker) at the very first Lenten service (if you want to call it that) delivered only a brief message. He had to repeat it, but it was effective. More on that in a moment.

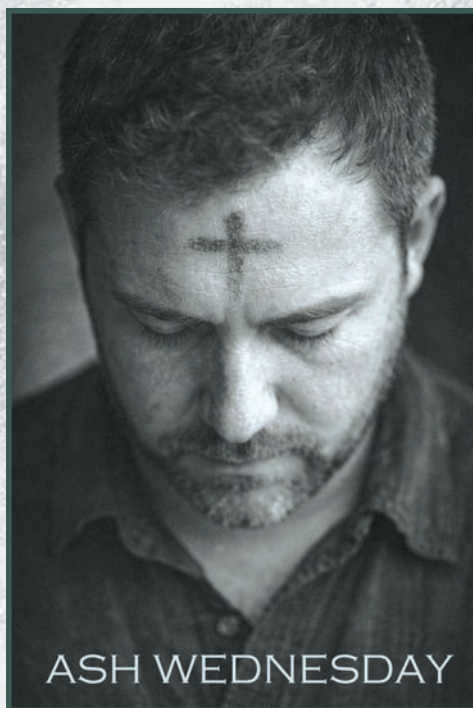
Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten season. Neither Ash Wednesday nor Lent is mentioned in the Bible. We know that Lent has existed for over 1,700 years because it was acknowledged by the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. Roughly three centuries later, Pope Gregory established Ash Wednesday, placed it forty-six days before Easter to begin Lent, and excluded the Sundays involved to keep Lent at forty days—forty days because that’s how long Jesus fasted in the wilderness. More important than the origin details, our Lenten services provide us with valuable opportunities for spiritual preparation.

Now, about the aforementioned speaker: His only purpose was to remind the listener that he, the listener, was a sinner. Similarly, our Lenten services remind us that we are sinners—and we are, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) Hearing these reminders leads us to examine our lives, experience godly sorrow over the sinful paths and impulses we’ve followed, and repent.

The speaker, uttering his brief message in a dark and chilly courtyard, accomplished his purpose when he famously crowed. Yes, he crowed! The “speaker” wasn’t really a speaker (nor was this a church service of any kind); the “speaker” was a rooster—the one that Jesus had prophesied would crow twice.

Mark 14:72 gives this account: *“And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.”*

The crowing rooster proved to be an effective reminder of what Jesus had told Peter, and more than likely, Peter remembered



his own bold, yet failed, proclamations as well: *“Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”* And, *“Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!”* (Matthew 26:33,35) Remarkably, it wasn’t years or months after Peter made these statements that he denied being a follower of Jesus; it was just hours later. That sounds like something we’d do, doesn’t it?

There’s more that happened in the courtyard that night: We see in Luke 22:61 that when the rooster crowed a second time, *“The Lord turned and looked at Peter.”* This must have been with an all-knowing look, one that pierced Peter, but at the same time, a look filled with compassion—the compassion of a Savior Who would soon be crucified to give Peter and all mankind everlasting life, and Who desires that everyone know and believe that *“If we confess our*

sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

On Ash Wednesday and throughout the Lenten season, you’ll hear Scripture readings, liturgy, hymns, and sermons that will cause you to remember and ponder your sin. Hear the courtyard rooster just as Peter did, and weep over your trespasses. Then repent, and turn to God for forgiveness and salvation through Jesus. These Lenten preparations lead to refreshing Easter joy.

*Lord, in loving contemplation
Fix our hearts and eyes on Thee
Till we taste Thy full salvation
And Thine unveiled glory see. Amen. (TLH 155:5)*



Karl Olmanson is a retired teacher. He lives in Kasota, Minnesota.

Use and Abuse of Prayer

The message of our salvation is simple and pure. Jesus died on Calvary for *my* sins. He took upon Himself *my* guilt. He gave to me *His* righteousness. This changes everything. All is new. In fact, we ourselves are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). This message of grace, given in Word and Sacrament, is the power that creates, builds, and strengthens faith in Christ. Next to these means of grace, prayer may be the most precious implement in the Christian's toolbox. Prayer is our direct line of communication with our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter God.

God invites us to use this tool of prayer, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden." (Matthew 11:28) He encourages us, "Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer." (Psalm 32:6) He even commands us, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Although we have designated times of organized prayer—mealtimes, church services, and so on—our private use of prayer is often neglected, or worse, used inappropriately.

In Matthew 6:8, Jesus says, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." This may raise the question, "Then why do we have to ask? Can't God just give us what we need?" Answer: we ask because God asks us to! He wants His children to come to Him with their wants, needs, and desires. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8) Do you recall looking at your offspring or another individual and asking with exasperation, "Why didn't you just ask?" Imagine God's frustration as we fumble about for solutions and answers without coming to him in prayer! He is waiting to shower you with his blessings—ask! "You do not have, because you do not ask." (James 4:2)

Then again, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." (James 4:3) This passage brings us to the misuse of prayer. We are flesh and blood creatures living

in a very material world. As earthbound individuals, it is difficult for us to focus on the intangible and spiritual. Food, clothing, home, job, and family are things we can easily wrap our minds around, and frequently our prayers will focus on these aspects of our life. The trouble is these prayers are usually self-centered and

feed into our passions for this life. When Jesus gave his disciples the Lord's Prayer as an example, He set priorities for the things for which we are to ask (Matthew 6:9-13). Out of the seven petitions given to us, six deal with our spiritual relationships with God and our fellow man. Only the Fourth Petition asks God to give us our daily bread (earthly needs). In fact, just after the Lord's Prayer, Jesus reemphasized this priority by stating, "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or

'What shall we wear?' . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

We are often desperately in need. We need forgiveness and spiritual blessings, and we need the necessities of this life. God has given us the great blessing of prayer. Better still, He has given us a prayer Helper. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

Once you are well-prayed, don't forget to look for God's answer. He will answer you in His time every time, but He has also given you insight into His divine will for you in His Word. Search the Scriptures. In them He shows the solution to our most important need—forgiveness and salvation. He will surely show us the answers to our prayer needs as well.



David W. Bernthal is a retired teacher. He lives in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

HEARTS IN HARMONY— PROFILES OF THE HYMNWRITERS WHO SHAPE OUR WORSHIP

Each month we highlight a hymnwriter who authored one or more of the well-loved hymns that we sing today.

Johann Heermann "O Dearest Jesus"

After losing four infants to the grave, Anna Heermann vowed to dedicate her sole living child to the public ministry. The poor family sacrificed much for his education, but the Lord bridged their social gap through several notable sponsors. Young Johann Heermann stood out among his classmates as a poet laureate of imperial class.

He first served as a teacher as he prepared for the pastoral ministry, but sickness regularly interfered with his studies until an eye disease forced him to return home in 1610. His obvious and superior gifts gained him a call as assistant preacher regardless, and not long after as regular preacher in Köben.

Then the Thirty Years' War broke out. The imposition of a Catholic ruler over Heermann's homeland Silesia ignited a firestorm across Europe. Up to eight million lives were lost to warfare, pestilence, and famine. One year, Heermann presided at five hundred funerals. Catholic forces resorted to terrorist tactics, and even some "Lutheran" defenders engaged in pillaging and other unchristian behaviors. Heermann narrowly evaded swordsmen and crossed rivers beneath bullet-fire. Catholic propaganda intimidated his son Samuel into conversion.

Swedish military intervention and his son's return to the Lutheran confession offered some relief in his final days. But through it all, he longed for an eternal hope only his Savior could grant.

Heermann lost his voice in 1623. No longer capable of preaching the Gospel, he turned to expressing it through musical composition. Among his four hundred hymns, "O Dearest Jesus" stands out. J. S. Bach uses it in both his St. Matthew and St. John Passions. Its tune echoes a then-familiar setting of the 23rd Psalm:

*What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!
The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,
Who would not know Him. (TLH 143:4)*

The daily terrors of 17th-century Europe are simply incomprehensible to us today. Without our life of ease, swooning guitar ditties would hold no appeal over hymnody truly tried by fire:

*There was no spot in me by sin untainted;
Sick with sin's poison, all my heart had fainted;
My heavy guilt to hell had well-nigh brought me,
Such woe it wrought me. (verse 6)*



Johann Heermann 1545-1647

Modern "woke" anxiety yowls at the mildest inconvenience. Heermann's solace to every unfair treatment of life was Christ and Him crucified:

*Whence come these sorrows, whence this mortal anguish?
It is my sins for which Thou, Lord, must languish;
Yea, all the wrath, the woe, Thou dost inherit,
This I do merit. (verse 3)*

Who could compare the hardships of Covid to the Thirty Years War? Yet despite horrific personal loss, Heermann upheld public worship and found retreat in Word and Sacrament:

*Whate'er of earthly good this life may grant me,
I'll risk for Thee; no shame, no cross, shall daunt me;*

*I shall not fear what man can do to harm me
Nor death alarm me. (verse 13)*

Little did his mother know that her vow would bless Christ's church for centuries to come:

*But worthless is my sacrifice, I own it;
Yet, Lord, for love's sake Thou wilt not disown it;
Thou wilt accept my gift in Thy great meekness
Nor shame my weakness. (verse 14)*

May we so boldly dedicate our children and ourselves to Christian education as the greatest endeavor this side of glory:

*And when, dear Lord, before Thy throne in heaven
To me the crown of joy at last is given,
Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee,
I, too, shall praise Thee. (verse 15)*

Spend some time with Johann Heermann's works in our English hymnals:

TLH: 143, 144, 265, 268, 269, 375, 395, 417, 512, 659

LSB: 421, 439, 568, 696, 774, 839

ELH: 198, 213, 221, 292, 293, 374, 470, 475, 550, 559



Timothy Daub is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla and Aberdeen, South Dakota, and Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bowdle, South Dakota. He also serves on the CLC Board of Missions.

Synchronize Your Watches!

“But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Peter 3:7-9)

Peter continues to confront scoffers who in arrogance were blasphemously asking, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Apparently, such scoffing was starting to create doubt in the hearts and minds of believers. Peter explains that just as scoffers had deliberately overlooked the facts of creation and the flood, so too did they overlook the fact that God’s Day of fiery judgment is certain. Peter then lovingly explains to his readers that God’s “not yet” concerning Judgment Day does not mean “never.”



children simply because they forget. God says, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.” (Isaiah 49:15 NKJV) In other words, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness.” Any appearance of “slowness” on the Lord’s part is really His merciful patience giving sinners time to repent and believe in Jesus as Savior. Just as God waited for the perfect time to send Jesus to earth to be our Savior, so too will God’s timing be perfect for Jesus’ second coming as Judge.

Next, Peter emphasizes the eternal nature of God. While man is bound by time, the eternal God is not. While man must live every day one moment at a time, the eternal God of heaven can see all moments of time at once. Therefore, it’s altogether foolish for the sinner to think that the immortal, eternal God of heaven, Who has infinite wisdom, must operate in the same way as a finite, time-bound mortal.

The word for “slow” that Peter uses in our text is the same word Paul uses in his letter to Timothy when speaking of the possibility of “delay” (1 Timothy 3:15). Sometimes unforeseen circumstances cause delay. For example, one morning I promised my children we would get to school early. While driving to school, we came upon a five-car accident on the highway, causing significant delay. There was nothing we could do. It was out of our control. But God is the One Who created and controls time itself. He cannot be delayed against His will!

Sinful parents may also delay in keeping promises to their

A fairly well-known expression used in several movies, TV shows, and books over the years is the line, “Let’s synchronize our watches.” Typically, the protagonists of such stories need to synchronize their watches so that each part of their complex plan can be executed with utmost precision to be successful. Sinners want to force God into synchronizing His clock to their timepieces so that God might quickly solve their complex problems in life according to the sinner’s timeline. Peter shows that it doesn’t work like that. The sinner must synchronize his watch to wait on God’s timing instead. Thankfully, God’s timepiece ticks to the perfect rhythm of grace, mercy, forgiveness, and patience for the sinner’s blessed benefit. May God the Holy Spirit help us to synchronize with that!



Chad Seybt is pastor of a quad parish that includes four western Wisconsin congregations: Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska.

Rizpah, a Mother's Love

Have you heard of Rizpah? It would not surprise me if you haven't. She is mentioned on only two occasions in Scripture. Not a single word is attributed to her, only actions. She was a concubine of King Saul (2 Samuel 3) and was likely also used as one by Saul's general, Abner, after Saul's death. As you may know, a concubine was a wife of secondary status in a polygamous marriage. As God so often does, He used Rizpah, an unlikely choice, to accomplish His will for His people.

King David, Saul's replacement, faced many challenges during his reign. One was a famine that lasted three years. David inquired of the Lord as to why He was allowing this suffering. In this case, there was a very specific cause. The Lord told David it was because Saul had broken a long-standing covenant with the Gibeonites, made by Joshua when he entered the Promised Land. According to the covenant, the Gibeonites were to be protected and their lives spared. In spite of this promise, Saul had many of them murdered. Now aware of the cause of the famine, David quickly arranged a meeting with the Gibeonite survivors.

David wanted to know what they wanted in order to make amends for Saul's behavior. The Gibeonites did not want monetary compensation, but instead asked David for seven of Saul's descendants to be given to them to be killed and their bodies exposed in Saul's birthplace of Gibeah. David agreed to their wishes.

Whom would David choose? Perhaps because they were involved in the slaughter of the Gibeonites, or for some other reason, David chose to give them five sons of Saul's oldest daughter, Merab, as well as Armoni and Miphibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine. The Gibeonites publicly hanged all seven men together on a hill outside Gibeah, their remains exposed to the

elements and the animals.

Rizpah's response to the death of these men, especially her sons, is both understandable and relatable. What words can describe the pain of a mother at the loss of her children? Rizpah spread sackcloth on a rock and made her home by the dead bodies. For months she kept guard of the bodies day and night to prevent scavengers of air and land from disturbing them. Her loving vigil was witnessed by many. Word of it got back to King David.



David was so moved by these actions of Rizpah that he decided to give a proper burial not only to these seven men, but he also procured the remains of King Saul and his son Jonathan, David's loyal friend, from Israel's enemies, and had them buried in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father. This was David's last act of kindness to Saul, a king anointed by God, and his family. It was only after David did these things that

God opened the heavens and the rain came to end the three-year famine in the land.

It is hard to imagine what it must have been like for Rizpah to keep vigil day after day as the bodies of her loved ones went through the process of decay. She was already in a vulnerable position in society as a concubine whose husband was dead and whose sons had both been killed. It would have been easy to have given up in despair. Yet her quiet vigil was used by God to move David's heart.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
(Matthew 5:4)



Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

In this series we offer brief introductions to the books of the Bible, including background, authorship, content, and application to the lives of today's Christians.

The Epistle of James

"Of Diamonds and Straw"

A perfect diamond is flawless on every facet and from every perspective that it is viewed. That does not necessarily mean that every perspective will always hold equal appeal in every setting. The bottom of a perfect diamond cut for an engagement solitaire will typically not have the same appeal as the side meant to be displayed. That does not make the diamond flawed or imperfect.

God's Word is a diamond, perfect and flawless in every respect and from every possible perspective. That does not mean that every part of the perfect whole will hold equal appeal in every situation. While Jesus' prolonged condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 was absolutely appropriate and flawless, that's probably not what crushed and repentant sinners long to hear. There are other facets of God's diamond that bring peace and joy to the sinner's heart. Yet for the Word to be perfect, the sinner must be shown both Law and Gospel.

Though Martin Luther clearly regarded God's Word as perfect, he is often quoted as referring to the Epistle of James as "an epistle of straw." What is seldom quoted is the phrase that follows: "compared to the others." Luther was consumed with the struggle against Roman Catholicism and its heretical teaching that man is saved by his own works added to what Christ has done, and not through faith alone in the payment Christ made on Calvary's cross. Twisting the message and quoting phrases of the Epistle out of context, Luther's opponents frequently used the Epistle of James against him. Luther himself once lived under the torment of work-righteousness. Is it any wonder then that he longed to view a different facet of God's diamond, the Gospel side that assured him that his debt of sin was paid in full by his Savior, not by what he himself must supply?

The author of the Epistle identifies himself as James. Evidence from God's Word strongly suggests that this James was not only the brother of Jesus, but also the head of the church in

Jerusalem. As the leader of such a large and disparate group, it is hard to fathom the magnitude of the problems James must have encountered. In his Epistle, James addresses several of those problems, chief among which was likely the notion that saving faith could exist in the absence of all fruits or works—which is something akin to saying that fire can exist without

producing heat. As heat proves the existence of fire, so also works prove the existence of faith. As true fire will produce heat, so also true, saving faith will produce works. It is in this context that James wrote, "Faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26) Luther's enemies accurately quoted James, but out of context, when they cited James 2:24, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." James' whole point was that true, saving faith is never "alone." It always produces works. Our works do not save us, but they will be present.

**God's Word is a diamond,
perfect and flawless in
every respect and from
every possible perspective.
That does not mean that
every part of the perfect
whole will hold equal
appeal in every situation.**

Whether he recognized it or not, this "epistle of straw" helped to keep Luther from the opposite ditch into which at least one of his allies steered, opining that "good works are detrimental." While his enemies insisted on the other ditch (that "good works are necessary for salvation") James helped to steer Luther to the solid, Scriptural middle that "good works are necessary"—again, since the faith by which we are saved will always produce works.

Examine the myriad facets of this jewel (The Epistle of James) for yourself and you will learn about the power of prayer, how to gain wisdom, the dangers of the tongue and temptation, the value of listening, and more. If this Epistle is straw, it is priceless straw!



Michael Roehl is pastor of Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Maynard J. Witt
1913-1992

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Pastor Maynard J. Witt (1913-1992) was a leader in the formation of the CLC. He served parishes in Palouse and Spokane, Washington. He was synodical vice president for a time, and a longtime member of the Board of Doctrine. He also served on the committee that oversaw the purchase of the current ILC campus in Eau Claire, and the “transplant” of that institution from its original home in Mankato, Minnesota. This article appeared in the Lutheran Spokesman of March 1963. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

Count the Cost

Scripture advises us to count the cost when we build a tower. This is what the CLC did at the special convention, January 9-10, 1963, at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The tower was the Ingram estate at Eau Claire, which was offered to us as a permanent site for our Immanuel Lutheran College at a cost of \$85,000. Beside this initial cost there would be the expense of modifying existing buildings, of providing adequate classrooms, and of moving the faculty and school equipment. So the question was: Could our young church body of approximately 5,500 communicants make this gift of God her own? We deliberated; we counted the cost.

Our educational institutions were born out of the conviction that our survival and the good of the church make it compelling that the future workers in our midst be trained by teachers who agree with the purpose of our existence as a Church body. There was also the conviction that our minimum obligation to our young people is to give them maximum Christian education within the means which God has given us. We did not want to slight this gift of Christian education which God gave us.

History, however, has taught us that great difficulties arise when churches establish and then try to maintain educational institutions which involve costs beyond the means of the congregations. It is clear that under such circumstances not only the educational institutions themselves suffer, but that a crippling effect is also evident

in all other efforts. Besides these matters, the effect on the congregations, the faculty, and the student body of transplanting the educational institutions deserved our attention. None of us would want to bring about harm to another institution or gift of God by the transplant, and no one would want to hamper mission opportunities by a top-heavy budget of the educational institutions. We weighed; we deliberated; we counted the cost.

It was concluded that the opportunity to purchase the Ingram estate as a permanent site for our Immanuel Lutheran College was a gift of God. Together with this opportunity God indeed gave us not only the time and season but also the means to make this gift our own so that possession of it need not hamper or hinder our work in our home congregations or in the mission fields. Truly, He who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, has with Him freely given us all things. God the Father is such a generous merciful Provider for us because of His Son who died for us. This is the source of our trust and confidence by which God's gift shall become our own.

To make God's gift our own was the unanimous and joyous resolve coming from gratitude. We set our goal at \$100,000 by August. So now, having considered the cost, the blessings, and the opportunities, we will all set out to possess the gift that God has given us.

Morning Star Lutheran Church

Fairchild, Wisconsin

Much has happened for Morning Star congregation since the "Slice of Life" article appeared in the *Lutheran Spokesman* ten years ago. A new pastor, Chad Seybt, was installed in 2020 as Morning Star united with Peace with God (Onalaska, Wisconsin) and Trinity (Millston, Wisconsin) to form a tri-parish. In 2021, the tri-parish welcomed a brand new CLC congregation, St. Paul's of Melrose, Wisconsin, to form a quad parish. Since 2023, a voter/council member of Morning Star attends a quad parish meeting at St. Paul's in Melrose each year.

Recently, there have been some important updates and improvements made to the church building. In the sanctuary, new flooring and carpeting were laid down, and a fresh coat of paint applied to the walls, including an accent wall where large banners are hung. Many of these banners were hand-me-



down gifts from Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire. In addition, several Morning Star members have purchased and donated smaller banners to further beautify the sanctuary during appropriate seasons of the church year.



Other recent church building updates include new carpeting in the Sunday school room, an upgrade from electric heater to natural gas, a new-to-us organ (a gift from Carol Sandeen, member of Messiah in Eau Claire), an electric keyboard/piano, and new audio/visual equipment for Bible class/Sunday school use. As for future improvements, there are plans to update both bathrooms, and there also has been talk of paving the church parking lot. A few years ago, there was even discussion at one point of a building expansion for school classrooms, but that had to be placed on hold due to various reasons, including financial constraints.



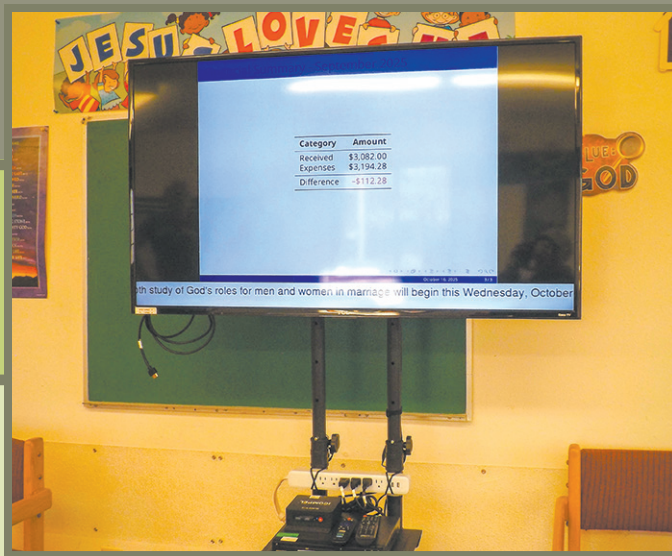
New organ and electric keyboard

Many of these church building updates were completed in time for a special anniversary service held on June 22, 2025. This service commemorated the formal establishing of Morning Star as an organized congregation in the year 2000. Former Pastor Richard Kanzenbach returned to serve as guest preacher for the occasion, preaching on the Aaronic blessing recorded in Numbers 6:22-27. There were sixty-three in attendance, and a time of fellowship and a meal were enjoyed by all after the service.

New opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth in the faith have arisen at Morning Star as well. In 2024, the Immanuel Lutheran College Tour Choir came to Morning Star for the first time, presenting a few hymns of praise during the Bible class hour. Since 2023, the congregation has enjoyed a time of fellowship after the Easter service with an Easter breakfast potluck. Once a month, a group of mothers in the congregation gather at a member's house to let the little ones play while the moms enjoy a time of fellowship together.

Beginning in 2024, every fifth Sunday of a month has a Bible reading service. For these services, instead of a typical sermon, a whole book of the Bible (or portion thereof for longer books) is introduced and then read through, interspersed with appropriate hymn verses. The books covered in this manner so far have been 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and Colossians. At the request of a few members, a midweek Bible class was started in the fall of 2024. Although the first year saw only a few in attendance (three to five members per class), the midweek Bible class on marriage in the fall of 2025 saw a dramatic increase (eight to fourteen members per class).

Of course, Morning Star's "old" ways of growing in the faith remain too. The summer vacation Bible school program has been running strong with the past few years seeing attendance in the teens, often with nonmember visitors. There has been a steady stream of youth confirmation students, as well as an average of one new adult instruction confirmand per year.



New audio-visual equipment

The Sunday school, now composed of grades pre-K to 3rd, has several young souls in attendance each Sunday, while older students in grades 4-8 attend Bible class with the adults. Whereas midweek Bible classes have been topical in nature, the Sunday Bible class has been slowly working through the Gospel of Mark, chapter by chapter and verse by verse.

In the fall of 2025, Morning Star began having lay services again when Pastor Seybt is absent. This was made necessary when, in the spring of 2024, the Lord called home His faithful servant David Lau who, along with his wife Susan, was a longtime member of Morning Star and served the congregation faithfully in various capacities. David served Morning Star in many pastoral functions prior to it being an established congregation. Afterwards, David was the go-to preacher when the called pastor had to be absent. He also served as full time organist for many years. Since his call to heavenly glory, Carrie Seybt now serves as organist.

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (2 Peter 1:19 NKJV) The members of Morning Star Lutheran Church give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for all that He has done for us as a congregation over the years, but especially that the pure proclamation of His Gospel is still in our midst after these twenty-five years as an organized congregation. We praise Him that His Word brings forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to our hearts Sunday after Sunday. When you're in the area, join us for worship on Sundays at 8:30 A.M.



Chad Seybt is pastor of a quad parish that includes four western Wisconsin congregations: Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

In this series, those involved with CLC foreign missions profile one aspect of our overseas endeavors.

“Liko Lango Moja Wazi” **There is One Open Gate!**

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” (John 10:9 NIV)

Wittenberg Lutheran Seminary in Arusha, Tanzania shares its campus with Ambureni Lutheran Church, our local TCLC congregation. Recent improvements which are funded by the congregation include a new driveway gate and the completion of a wall around the property.

The gate is helpful for the security of the church and the on-site seminary students. It's also a good reminder, when rolled open wide, of our mission for Christ. He is the “one open gate,” the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). We welcome all, through this open gate, to weekly worship.

We welcome men who wish to prepare for the pastoral ministry to come and train in our four-year seminary program. We trust that, through these efforts, many more souls in Tanzania will be saved by entering through the open gate of faith in Christ.

During the past few months Pastor Jeremia Issangya and Missionary Naumann were able to visit various TCLC congregations in Tanzania. These included the Tanga and Ruvu districts to the southeast of Arusha (September 19-22), the Karatu district to the west (October 10-12), and the Himo area to the east (November 15-16). In each place we presented the “Jesus Film,” the story of the life of Christ according to Luke’s Gospel, using a battery-operated projector and overdubbed in the Swahili language. We also preached the saving Gospel at each congregation during the Sunday worship service.

On November 30, 2025, Wittenberg Seminary opened its gate for our graduation service. One man, Amos Otiendo, graduated from the seminary department and will serve at Holy Cross Lutheran in Moi’s Bridge, Kenya. Three men graduated from our first-year evangelism program, and intend to continue their studies in the seminary this January. We have eight new men who have expressed interest in enrolling next year, and we pray that the LORD will

bring them to us.

Meanwhile, work continues in our sister churches in Uganda and Kenya. As of this writing, the Confessional Church of the Reformation in Uganda (CCRU) will have its annual conference in Iganga January 12-14, 2026. The Kenya Church of the Lutheran Confession (KCLC) will meet January 19-21 in Moi’s Bridge. Missionary Naumann plans to attend both. During this time, retired Pastor Paul Nolting will be the guest professor at Wittenberg Seminary, and will also be a participant at the annual TCLC conference



New gate at the seminary compound in Arusha

January 26-28.

Here in East Africa, we have different locations where we serve, with different languages and customs than the church members and pastors we work with. Yet we have the most important thing in common, namely JESUS, the one open gate. Please pray that our Lord will bring forth many fruits of faith through our seminary and conference studies, and success for His kingdom work, to His glory!

Lango ndiye Yesu Bwana – Wote waingie kwake.

Lango, lango, lango! La Mbinguni ni wazi!

The gate is Jesus the Lord – let everyone enter into it.

The gate, the gate, the gate! The way to heaven is clear!

(You may see the seminary students singing this hymn and additional photos by scanning this QR code.)



Bruce Naumann is a CLC Missionary to East Africa. His home is in Arusha, Tanzania

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS FEBRUARY 2026

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; LSB = Lutheran Service Book, 2006

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
February 2	TLH 19 / LSB 819	Jeremiah 44	Jeremiah confronts the Judeans who have fled to Egypt about their continuing worship of false gods.
February 3	WS 782 / LSB 726	Jeremiah 45	The Lord promises to protect Baruch and to preserve his life during the continuing war.
February 4	TLH 517 / LSB 758	Jeremiah 46	The Lord declares that Babylon will defeat Egypt, but that Egypt will survive. Similarly, the Lord will discipline, but not completely destroy, the Judeans.
February 5	TLH 137 / LSB 938	Jeremiah 47	The Lord declares that Babylon will defeat the Philistines.
February 6	LSB 751	Jeremiah 48	The Lord declares that Babylon will defeat Moab.
February 7	LSB 432	Jeremiah 49	The Lord pronounces judgment on the Ammonites, on Edom, on Damascus, on Kedar and Hazor, and on Elam.
February 9	TLH 237 / LSB 947	Jeremiah 50	Finally, the Lord pronounces judgment also on mighty Babylon.
February 10	TLH 451 / LSB 660	Jeremiah 51	The Lord condemns Babylon for having destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, sentencing Babylon to utter destruction.
February 11	TLH 236 / LSB 500	Jeremiah 52	Jeremiah records the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, the exile of the Judeans, and the later release of King Jehoiachin from prison.
February 12	TLH 480	Psalms 84	When we experience temporary separation from congregational worship, we long for fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the faith, and we long for the strengthening of Word and Sacrament.
February 13	TLH 351 / LSB 700	Psalms 85	When we suffer fears and insecurities, we find true comfort and peace in the Lord.
February 14	LSB 911	Psalms 86	David petitions the Lord for protection from enemies, expressing also a firm confidence that the Lord will deliver him.
February 16	TLH 536 / LSB 868	2 Kings 3	King Jehoram leads the Edomites against Moab, with unfavorable results.
February 17	TLH 483 / LSB 682	2 Kings 4	Elisha performs miracles, helping those in need and displaying the power of the Lord.
February 18	TLH 149 / LSB 435	2 Kings 5	Through Elisha the Lord heals Naaman of leprosy. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, attempts to use the situation as an opportunity to acquire wealth.
February 19	WS 764 / LSB 850	2 Kings 6	Elisha performs a miracle in order to save a son of the prophets from debt. Through Elisha the Lord settles a war between Syria and Israel. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, sieges Samaria.
February 20	TLH 659 / LSB 774	2 Kings 7	During the siege, Elisha prophesies that the Lord will feed the people. The Lord accomplishes victory over Syria.
February 21	TLH 394 / LSB 702	Kings 8	King Jehoram restores to the Shunammite woman her land. Hazael murders Ben-hadad and becomes king over Syria. The inspired writer summarizes the reigns of Jehoram and of Ahaziah over Judah.
February 23	TLH 231 / LSB 768	2 Kings 9	Jehu becomes king over Israel. Jehu assassinates Joram and Ahaziah.
February 24	TLH 151 / LSB 420	2 Kings 10	Jehu kills the descendants of Ahab. Jehu kills the prophets of Baal, ending the worship of Baal in Israel. Worship of other false gods, however, continues.
February 25	TLH 354 / LSB 427	2 Kings 11	Athaliah violently claims the throne of Judah. The Lord preserves the line of David by protecting Joash. Joash becomes King of Judah at the age of seven years.
February 26	TLH 179 / LSB 422	2 Kings 12	During his forty-year reign, Joash (Jehoash) repairs the temple of the Lord. Joash is assassinated by his own servants.
February 27	WS 721 / LSB 428	2 Kings 13	Jehoahaz reigns over Israel for seventeen years and his son Jehoash reigns over Israel for sixteen years. Elisha dies (and performs a miracle even from the grave).
February 28	TLH 178 / LSB 429	2 Kings 14	Amaziah reigns over Judah and Jeroboam II reigns over Israel.

New Preaching Station Established in Des Moines, Iowa

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11)

This past year, the Board of Missions has been engaged in a concerted effort to better serve our “scattered flock”—those CLC members living at a distance from an established congregation. Spearheaded by Pastor Tim Daub’s efforts to build a comprehensive Diaspora list, the Board has been looking for “pockets” of believers where scattered members might gather together for worship.

One such pocket was recently identified in the area surrounding Des Moines, Iowa.

Pastor Paul Krause was eager to assist when Pastor Daub approached him about the potential in Iowa, noting that a family from his own congregation was residing there. He began by reaching out to the broader CLC clergy, asking for names and contact information of members living in central Iowa.



- CLC - Austin, MN 2.5 Hours Away
- CLC - Okabena, MN 4 Hours Away

The response was significant. It quickly became apparent that there was a sufficient number of members in the area to justify an exploratory service. Lucas and Sarah Wiste, members of Trinity, Watertown, South Dakota, who live in Des Moines, graciously offered to serve as local contacts. With their help, plans were set in motion.

On Sunday, November 9, 2025, the inaugural service was held in a meeting room at the Hampton Inn in Ankeny, just north of Des Moines. Despite some snow on Saturday and a cold, windy Sunday morning, the turnout was excellent.

Pastor Krause reports that twenty-nine souls were in attendance. The group was composed of CLC members living in the area who hold membership in congregations in Sleepy Eye, Mankato, Okabena, and Morris, Minnesota; Valentine, Nebraska; Eau Claire,



Attendees at an exploratory mission service in Des Moines Iowa November 9, 2025

Wisconsin; and Watertown, South Dakota, along with a handful of non-member visitors and friends.

Pastor Krause noted that it was a “shot in the arm” to see the group gather around the Word, and expressed that the group has a unanimous desire to continue meeting. Plans are already underway for a second service in the middle of January 2026, with the hope of holding a handful of services throughout the coming year.

Pastor Krause plans to work closely with this group and the Board of Missions as the opportunity develops.

A Request to Congregations:

This endeavor in Iowa highlights the importance of coordinating our mission efforts. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to continue sending information regarding their distant members to the Board of Missions.



Robert Sauers is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Installation. In accord with our usage and order, **Michael Gurath**, who was called by Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church in Middleton, Wisconsin, to be their pastor, was installed on December 21, 2025. Participating in the service were (photo, l-r) Pastors Chad Seybt, Mark Bernthal, Michael Gurath, John Schierenbeck, and Drew Naumann.
-Pastor John Schierenbeck



ILC Mass Choir Christmas concert December 19, 2025