

Lutheran Spokesman



Surely,
He hath
borne our
griefs and
carried our
sorrows.

The Right Scent

I have an old shepherd in my congregation. He and his wife spent their younger years tending sheep out on the rolling prairies of eastern Montana. When I stop in for visits they often speak of those days. I'm all ears. For not only are their insights and stories interesting in themselves. They often provide me with illustrations for when I preach those texts which speak of the shepherd relationship the Lord has with us, His sheep.

One of the more amazing tidbits I've picked up from them has to do with how shepherds care for motherless lambs. Among those who care for sheep, it's common knowledge that you can't bond an orphaned lamb with just any ewe. Every lamb has its own unique smell. A ewe recognizes her lamb by its scent. If it doesn't have the right scent, she'll reject it. This is quite a predicament for a hungry orphaned lamb. But shepherds know how to remedy the problem. What they do is skin a dead lamb and fit its coat around an orphan like a sweater. Then they pre-

sent the orphan to the mother of the dead lamb, whose skin the orphan is now wearing. Because it smells like her own lamb she will accept and nurse it.

Born in sin and belonging to Satan, we humans don't have the right scent as far as God is concerned. We give off a spiritual stench which Holy God can't stand. In God's nostrils we stink like a rendering plant on a sultry summer day. We reek with sin. And God, according to His holiness, doesn't want to go anywhere near such a smell. "Your sins have separated you from your God" says the prophet Isaiah (59:2).

To be rejected by God means death for sinners. It means eternal banishment in hell. Talk about a predicament! But God knew exactly how to remedy the problem. Not only that—God wants to save us orphans from our just desserts.

The Lamb Of God

Enter Jesus, the Lamb of God!

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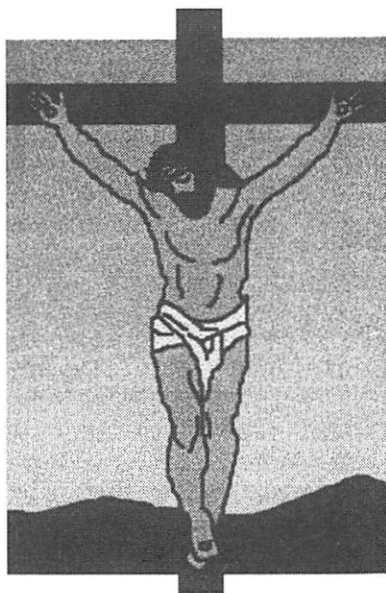
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Jesus is the sinless Lamb whose heart and life are a sweet savor to God. Of Him the Father says: "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17).

Jesus is the Lamb led to the slaughter. On the cross He took upon Himself all sin. The world's sin was so tightly

wrapped around Him that it actually became His sin (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). What happened then? God smelled the rot and was repulsed. He turned away from the foul stench and gave Jesus what sin merits: wrath and punishment. As a result, all sin has been atoned for.

But that's not all. God then took the perfect life of Jesus and dressed us in it. He clothed us in the unspotted wool of His own dear Lamb. So now we have a different scent, the right scent, the scent of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15). Now God accepts us as His very own. By faith in His Son He adopts us into His flock. No longer orphans with no future, we are the people of God's pasture with a guaranteed place at God's side, now and forever!

Endless praise to Jesus for making us poor sinners acceptable to God! Let us join heaven's chorus which sings: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" (Rev. 5:12).

—Pastor Michael Wilke

Lent Is The Signal For Victory

There's a story about Christians in a cell awaiting their doom—to be fed to hungry lions. With only minutes left to live, they sing joyful hymns! A Roman guard pokes his head into the cell and asks: "What's the matter—don't you have a sense of the situation?"

These Christians were convinced of Jesus' victory. Yes, they had a sense of the situation.

God knows all Christians need that victory. In a world full of losers. Losers who think they are winners. Many

young people lose their virginity and think they have won something. People lose lots of money gambling, and oddly enough become more convinced than ever of greater chances of winning! People lose their health to drugs, yet keep on doing drugs. People lose themselves in sleaze and corruption, and think it to be gain in honor and prestige. People take courses on self-assertion and self-promotion and lose their modesty and self-respect. People run with worldly crowds, and lose

heavenly gifts and favors.

People think they are winning, yet like all sinners can't help but operate at a loss. Pretending to win, they do not even know what victory is, or even where the battle is.

Christ The Loser/Victor

Christ knows both. He is the authority on victory, and battles.

But note how He uses His authority—to serve.

To serve the distressed, the helpless, the hopeless, and the losers. He even looks like one of them! Not handsome in a worldly sense, He is non-assertive, quiet, obedient, faithful, not exploiting fame from His deeds. He often pulls back from His destroyers, is contradicted and rejected, finally caught and killed. A loser!

He knew how to wait it out, to want for victory in good time. Atonement time. And it came! The downward path of humiliation and betrayal, interrogation, torture, cross and death, is His finest service—victory service.

And on the third day the Father proves and approves it. Jesus descends into hell, rises from the tomb, ascends on high, rules in power, and is certainly coming again in ultimate, shining victory. Victory for us. For you. And it's all a gift.

Mission

We have struggles and challenges in order to exercise this victory. That is why Jesus gives His victory-believers a mission.

His disciples needed it. He tells them to let the net down again, in Luke 5. The net strains to breaking point, loaded. Then the author of victory ties two things together — fearlessness and winning: "Don't be afraid — from now on you will be catching men!"

That's the victory road for us: winning people for Christ and heaven. Out of a world of losers.

So we go. The one with all authority in heaven and earth says so. The bait is already cut.

—*Pastor Warren Fanning*



Chapel Talk, Immanuel High School, Mankato, Minn.—

Lessons From A Sports Saying

A volleyball team I saw had the saying "there is no I in team" printed on their warm-up shirts. What they meant by this was that selfishness is not part of being on a team. You shouldn't keep track of individual statistics, and you should help out your teammate by covering for her when she leaves her spot to help out another

teammate.

There Is No I In Jesus

I thought about this sports saying and decided that the same thing could be said about the relationship between sin and grace, and between me and my fellow man. There is no I in Jesus. Philippians chapter two tells us: ". . .

Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

Jesus was totally selfless in His life. If Jesus would have been selfish, He never would have died on the cross, because there was nothing to be gained for Him. If He would have been selfish, He would have been like the disciples and fought about His place at the table, or His position in the heavenly kingdom. But Jesus was not this way. He washed the feet of the disciples; He innocently suffered death. He did this all because there is no I in Jesus.

God tells us to live our lives according to the way Jesus would have us go. So we also are to live selflessly and not selfishly. That passage in Philippians is preceded by these words: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

When we live a selfless life, Jesus’ light is shining through us, and people can tell that we are different. When we follow the commandment parts that tell us what we should do, in each case the reflection is of selflessness.

There Is An I In Sin

Paul tells us in Romans 7: “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am

doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” When we look at ourselves, all we see is our sin—as well we should because there is an I in sin.

Left to ourselves, that’s where it would end—dead to sin, no hope, and only despair. This despair is felt throughout the world. Everywhere Christ is not dwelling people can only feel the burden of sin. If this is where it ends, then our lives are empty. But—

There Is A U In Jesus

God in Eden recognized the sinfulness of man. Because of His selflessness, He sent Jesus, because there is a U in Jesus. Jesus was born for you. Jesus lived a perfect life for you. Jesus died for you. Jesus rose again for you. And finally, Jesus is preparing a place for you. This objective justification is one of our greatest comforts, especially when we are burdened with sin.

How can we hear that message of grace and not want to tell others about it? If what we said about Jesus’ selflessness is a model for our selflessness, then Jesus’ care for man should be a model for our care for our fellow man. The Sermon on the Mount is full of ways we can practice this service to others. Two summary passages come to mind: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” If all people kept this in mind, then all could live more peacefully.

There Is No U In Sin

One of the things that gets us into the biggest trouble is worrying about the sins of others. There is no U in sin.

God didn't write the law so we could walk around accusing other people of sin.

Jesus asked in the Sermon on the Mount: "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" God tells us that even looking around at the affairs of others is sinful. The explanation of the eighth commandment is clear. We should interpret all our

neighbor's actions in the best possible way.

If we keep these four things in mind, we will live more peaceably here on earth. But more importantly, if we believe in the promises these sayings reflect, then the gift of eternal life is ours, and we will always be with our brother Jesus in Paradise.

—Teacher Kevin Hulke

Savior Or Slogan?

The beginnings of the new professional football season are underway. Soon enough, fans across the world will excitedly greet the much anticipated TV commercials of Super Bowl Sunday. Each company will spend millions of dollars to develop an advertisement with a catchy slogan and then spend millions more to air it on national TV.

The rule of the advertising world is that if you can develop a good enough slogan, the product will sell. When spiritual leaders and those concerned with matters of the soul (as we all should be) adopt a similar slogan-selling approach, then we're in trouble . . . BIG trouble!

It has become a religious pastime to condense all of theology into one-liners, catchy "spiritual slogans," and rallying cries for society. At times the names "Jesus" and "Christ" and religious phrases are spread around in such a way that leaves the impression that all will be well just by using the words often enough and with enough enthusiasm.

This is not to say that there can not

be some benefit in compressing a biblical truth into an easily remembered phrase, but before the "condensed version" can ever be used with value, the "expanded version" must first be known, understood, and appreciated.

There are pithy statements of truth presented in Scripture itself, especially in the book of Proverbs. There are recurring themes and phrases throughout the Bible. Still, the books of the Bible are more than a collection of clichés and slogans. Rather, God's Word uses the short proverbs and standard themes together with its in-depth presentation of truth.

There is a grave danger in allowing the Savior to become nothing more than a slogan. The words sound great, but where's the substance? We can talk about Jesus all day but if we don't know who He really is, we have nothing. "Jesus" is a great name. His is a name above every one name, God says (Philippians 2:9), but that is only true when it is attached to Jesus from Nazareth who is true God and true man and when it keeps in mind the work that this Jesus has done. Anything else

leaves “Jesus” an empty shell of five letters that may still look good on paper and sound good in the ear but leaves the soul helpless.

We can speak about the love of God, but if we don’t know who the true God is, or don’t know how totally undeserving each of us is for His love, or don’t understand why His love is so amazing and so necessary, then we are missing an important ingredient. If a slogan advertises God is amazing and so necessary, then we are missing an important ingredient. If a slogan advertises God’s amazing love but never comprehends that “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8), then we have a slogan but are lacking a Savior.

We can talk about all the changes that a relationship with Jesus will make in lives and in actions, but such talk will only be legitimate if we do not forget the substance of the great change Jesus accomplished concerning our soul’s life and eternity. Slogans are awfully good at saying that Jesus will make a difference in your life, but what does that mean? Why will He make a difference? How? The difference doesn’t come from a well-worded, energizing sales punch. The difference will come from the Savior behind the slogan who has made the difference by dying for our sins to free us from eternal damnation. The difference is found in the fullness of God’s Word.

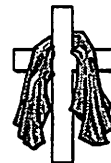
The danger that surrounds religious slogans and overused religious words is that they are said so easily and repeatedly that they soon are spoken without thought or understanding. Some of the most common words used

in the Bible, such as faith, love, forgiveness, spiritual, blessing, repentance etc. flow so easily from the lips. However, if we take time to try to define them accurately and fully we might have to stop and think a bit because, for example, “love . . . we . . . hmm . . . well, you know . . . hmm . . . well, it’s just love!”

Jesus speaks of empty words in connection with prayer. He warned against prayers being said over and over again as if there would be some merit in the repetition itself, even if comprehension, mental focus, knowledge and trust in God were lacking. “When you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

The modern marketplace is consumed with a desire for things that are “light” and fat-free. Sadly, it seems that there are similar desires for “light religion.” Cream cheese-lite and fat-free chips may be better for the body, but Bible-lite and substance-free theology will kill the soul. “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

(This article first appeared in the pastor’s column for a Florida newspaper last fall when its author, Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, was serving as Missionary-at-large in Live Oak. Eichstadt now serves as associate pastor at Immanuel, Mankato, Minn.)



SMORGASBORD

• **‘HAVE YOU OPENED YOUR CATECHISM LATELY?’**—Is it sitting on the shelf collecting dust much like your Bible? How sad it is if this is the case! Someone once said, “I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain.” The very writer of the Catechism himself, Martin Luther, said this. Each of us needs to examine and review the instruction we received from it. All the short, pithy statements demonstrate how clearly and simply Luther described the essence of the Biblical doctrine which is essential for our learning. If you haven’t done so for a long time, open your Catechism and daily spend a few minutes in it. Our catechism isn’t intended only for the children. It is for ALL of us. A world of Christian understanding will open before your very eyes. (*Bulletin, Our Redeemer’s, Red Wing, Minn. John Hein is pastor*)

• **RE: ILC VOLUNTEERS**—The October 1997 Immanuel Lutheran College Newsletter had an article titled ‘Volunteers, Thank You.’ Here is some of what was said: “This summer, we were thankful to see many volunteers come to ILC. There is much more work on this campus than can be managed by the staff that we have. Every volunteer lightens the load and makes an impossible task almost possible. . . . There is no way to properly thank everyone that helped this summer. We regard each of them as a blessing from the Lord. . . .”

We made reference to these ILC

volunteers in our December 1997 SMORGASBORD and suggested that a future ILC Newsletter would acknowledge their contributions. We are blushing, for it is we who missed an acknowledgement of appreciation. Our apologies.

• **‘REFORMED JUNKIE TELLS ALL’**—This was a headline in the October 23, 1997 *Sleepy Eye (Minn.) Herald Dispatch* as a reporter told of the appearance of Russell Simon at the local high school. Many CLC folk will recognize Simon’s name and message as in recent years he has taken that message—intended mostly to reach the younger generation—to many of our area congregations as well as to public high schools. In the last three years Russ says he has “shared his life experiences about the deadly powers of drugs and alcohol addiction” to large and small groups in over 20 states.

Here is a bit more from the *Sleepy Eye* newspaper report:

Reformed drug user and drunk turned author and public speaker Russell Simon Jr., told students at Sleepy Eye Public School Tuesday morning that having fun isn’t supposed to kill them.

“Celebrate the right way, not by getting drunk or high. . . . Try faith, hope and love, the greatest of which is love,” he told students and faculty in the high school gym.

Simon spoke eloquently for a recovered and admitted ‘dope fiend and drunk’ who grew up in the Minnesota communities of New Prague, Princeton, and Elk River.



Russell Simon Jr. is shown with Mrs. Lois Maas. Mrs. Maas made the background banner and presented it to Russ when he gave his talk at her home congregation, Grace of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota.

"It's my hope that none of you will ever, ever wind up on the same path I chose. If you are (on that path), I hope you stop, take a couple steps back and re-evaluate some of the choices and decisions you make in your life. That's what it's all about. Choices, decisions, and consequences," he said.

Simon, an ex-con who has become a member of our CLC church in Fridley, Minn., realizes that he can't tell his whole story in a public school setting. Specifically, he is limited in what he can say about the Lord God and His Holy Spirit helping him turn his life around.

For that reason Russ announced to the Sleepy Eye public school audience that he planned to return a week later to tell "the rest of the story." Some eighty people, half of them non-members including the entire confirmation class from the local ELCA church, came back to this return engagement at Grace Church in Sleepy Eye. Again Russ kept everyone's attention for around 90 minutes. And this time Bible passages and Gospel truths were sprinkled through his inspiring talk.

Simon has already written one autobiographical book titled *"Inside The Walls—Drugs, Prison, Gangs, And Recovery."* He is working on another which will detail more of the spiritual side of his life's story. Assisting Russ in the second book is his pastor, Daniel Fleischer, who is quoted as saying:

"Russell's message is a powerful indictment of a life without Christ. He is living testimony to the truth: 'The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'"

To contact Russell J. Simon Jr. write to: Inside the Walls, P.O. Box 131684, Roseville, MN 55113-0015, or phone (612) 407-8355.

• REDLIN RETIRES



Members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minn. honored Pastor & Mrs. L. Dale Redlin on Sunday, October 26, 1997. Pastor Redlin and his wife, Hope, retired after serving Immanuel congregation for 18 years.

Several members made presentations recognizing the service given by the Redlins. Gayle Stelter served as Master of Ceremonies and introduced Gene Schreyer, Martha Backhaus, Herb Geiger, Mark Redlin, President Daniel Fleischer, Immanuel Grade School Choir, and the Church Choir.

Congregation President Ted Schreyer and School Principal Kevin Hulke presented gifts from the Church Council and the School Faculty. A lunch followed in the church parlors. (Gayle Stelter, Reporter) •

Studies In Galatians

Standing Fast In The Liberty By Which Christ Has Made Us Free (See 5:1)

Galatians 3:26-4:7

The Well-dressed Christian

“Clothes make the man!” said the smartly dressed collegiate to a classmate. “Not so” retorted his ‘fashion-challenged’ friend; “You can’t judge a book by its cover!”

Thus went the battle of clichés in a debate with no satisfactory end. But if the discussion revolves around the clothing referred to in our precious letter to the Galatians, the “clothes make the man” side carries the day. For here is a case where what you wear makes *all* the difference. The ‘well-dressed’ Christian is wearing Christ, and that alone makes him who he, or she, is.

To fully understand where Paul is going with this idea of “putting on Christ,” we need to understand where he is coming from at this point in his letter. The peace and unity of the group is being troubled by ‘Judaizers’ whose aim it is to compel all the believers to adopt the ordinances and practices of Old Testament Judaism. Paul’s message all along has been that they are all complete in their righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. The suggestion that their standing before God can be improved upon by the addition of human works is actually a step backward—a fatal one.

Reaching Maturity

But, since the law is given by God, Paul must explain the relation of the

Mosaic Law to the Gospel. The Law, Paul explains, was our “tutor” until Christ (3:24). Like a strict headmaster it kept its immature subjects in line, not from inward motivation but by outward discipline.

Paul argues that, under the Law, one is in a period of minority, a time of being under restrictions. Under the Gospel one has reached full maturity, and is free of youthful constraints. Here is where one’s ‘apparel’ begins to make the difference.

He states “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26). “Sons,” that is, in the sense of being rightful heirs to a father’s estate. We Christians are like “sons” who have reached the age of maturity.

In contrast, those who are “under the law”—either Jews striving to fulfill the outward requirements of Moses, or Gentiles trying to observe the moral promptings of their conscience—are regarded as minors, awaiting the privilege and freedom of adulthood, but for the time being, still juveniles, kept in check by “guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father” (4:2). A grand inheritance awaits them, but it

is in the form of a trust which they cannot touch until they 'come of age.'

And until they come of age "the heir . . . does not differ from a slave" (4:1). As the slave's ragged and worn clothes testify that he has no part in the inheritance, so also the juvenile's childish clothes indicate that the inheritance is also out of his reach.

But at the time appointed by the Father, His Son dressed up like a Man: "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (4:4). What a marvelous bit of theology: the eternal God—God of God, Light of Light, etc.—became true Man. God "put on" man in the person of Jesus Christ, veiling the divine majesty under mortal flesh:

All praise to Thee, eternal God
Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood,
Dost take a manger for Thy throne
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.
Hallelujah! (TLH 80:1)

Furthermore, Christ put on the yoke of the law, obeying both the moral and ceremonial laws that God required of His Old Testament people. He came to us as the Son in whom God was well-pleased (Mt. 3:17); He came as our Redeemer and Substitute "that He might taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:9). All the ordinances that confined and shackled us—laws that accused and condemned us—were fulfilled in Him.

Baptism

Those who, believing in Him, come to be baptized in His Name "have put on Christ" (3:27). Repenting of our

sins and self-righteousness, we shed our childish apparel; baptism unites the believer with Christ and His perfect righteousness before God. We put on the garments of righteousness that identify one as a true son and heir of the Kingdom of God (remember the robe given to the Prodigal Son? Lk. 15:22). What belongs to Christ as heir of the Kingdom of heaven is open also to His believing co-heirs. We have full access to the realities of the Kingdom: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into Your hearts crying out 'Abba, Father'" (4:6). We enjoy the riches of the heavenly kingdom with full maturity; but we approach our Father with perfect innocence, appealing to Him with the 'daddy' words of Jesus' mother tongue (Mk. 14:36); addressing Him with childlike trust and openness. This boldness and intimacy with God is the privilege of *all* those who are in Christ: earthly divisions and distinctions become irrelevant, for we all approach the Father cloaked in Christ: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

Earthly distinctions do remain in our earthly lives. The Christian Gospel has never been a social agenda: a plan to wipe out social divisions. Rather, the spiritual apparel of Christ grants dignity to each of us in our callings, drawing diverse people together in one Christian calling, fostering sacrificial love and genuine respect, whatever clothes we put on for the day.

—Pastor Peter Reim

Reformation Vignettes

5. LUTHER AS HUSBAND AND FATHER

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” — Ephesians 5:25, 6:4.

Martin Luther proposed to and married Katherine von Bora on the same day. She was a former nun, placed under Luther's care. He tried to find her a husband, but with no success. The parents of one willing young man refused to permit him to marry her. Katherine refused to marry several prospects suggested by Luther. She stated that she would marry Luther himself, but his friends strongly advised against that. She was far too headstrong, they felt, and would be a poor match. When Luther finally married her, he did not do it for love. He stated that he was marrying, first, to please his father, and second, to confirm by example his teaching that marriage was a good and God-pleasing act. The couple was blessed with six children, three sons and three daughters.

Through his marriage Luther established by example the Lutheran parsonage and reestablished God's intentions for the Christian home. Celibacy, as embraced and enforced by the Roman Church, contradicts both the Word and intentions of God. Man was not created to be alone, and very few individuals possess the gift of continence. In Luther's day, as well as in our own, the sad results of forced celibacy are obvious. What a blessing it is for pastors to have wives and to be blessed with families.

But Luther's example goes beyond simply the marriage of clergy. Before the Reformation people lost a proper understanding of God's will for marriage. Sometimes wives were viewed as chattel—the personal property of husbands, and were married, not for loving companionship, as God intended, but to work and to produce heirs. Luther reestablished God's will, that men marry and be faithful to their wives. In the pulpit and at home he upheld God's directive, that “husbands love (their) wives, as Christ loved the Church.” In other words, they were to love their wives self-sacrificially. Luther grew to love Katie and stated that he would not give her up for all of Venice and France put together. She was God's gift to him—a gift he treasured!

By example Luther also reestablished God's will for fathers and their children. He took Paul's words seriously: “Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Luther spent time with his children. He used strict discipline, but in love. He maintained that a father needs a “rod in one hand and an apple in the other.” He shared God's truths with his children in ways they could understand. He once wrote a delightful letter to his son, Hans, in which he described heaven as

a pleasant garden, in which boys “wore golden jackets” and “gathered apples and pears and purple and yellow plums.” Luther went on to describe how there were “ponies with golden reins and silver saddles” to ride, “whistles and drums” to play and “crossbows” to shoot.

Recently I have heard more than one individual lament that our young people seem to take little interest in church. May I suggest that a most

important remedy to that problem is for our men to remember the example of Martin Luther—love your wives as Christ loved the Church and take the time personally to bring up your children in the training and admonition of the Lord!

We thank God for His gift to the church in Martin Luther also as husband and father.

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting

(Series concluded — Ed.)

“Promise Keepers”

Mixture of Worthy Goals and Anti-Biblical Teaching

“Promise Keepers” is a national men’s movement that is sweeping the country. It is built around some very good ideas about men taking responsibility for family obligations—in particular, exercising spiritual leadership within the home. It began when a former football coach, Bill McCartney, held a rally in 1990 at Colorado University in Pueblo. Men were invited to come and acknowledge their past failings over toward their families, to sing, pray, and dedicate themselves to righteous living by keeping their promises.

Among the promises they make are commitments to “honoring Jesus Christ” through worship and prayer, meeting in small groups with other Promise Keepers, practicing ethical and sexual purity, building stronger marriages and families, supporting their local church and clergy, practicing racial tolerance, and being obedient to God’s commands. Each year since

1990 this movement has become more and more popular nationwide, and has sold millions of dollars worth of books and tapes. In 1996 the rallies drew 1.2 million men to 22 events.

While many of its stated goals are good ones, this organization is also a vehicle for the spread of a different gospel—which is no gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-7). We will do well to become familiar with this organization, since it continues to grow by leaps and bounds and will no doubt provide us with an opportunity to bear witness to the truth about the “real” Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners.

Here are some of the reasons why the conscientious Christian will steer clear of this group.

- *Lots of laws—no gospel.* Although words such as “gospel,” “faith,” and “grace” are used, the “gospel” that is being preached is this: You can be right with God by reforming your life. All

kinds of “vows of obedience” and commitments to holiness are made, but what is hidden is the fact that NO ONE can become personally holy enough to satisfy God. Such vows that are not a product of the true Gospel either become vows lightly taken or sources of despair when failure comes. The real Gospel has to do with what JESUS did for US by paying the price for our sins. It is HIS holiness alone that counts with God. The Promise Keepers movement virtually ignores this true Gospel, despite the fact that it is only this Gospel that can motivate a person to practice righteous living that is truly God-pleasing. See Galatians chapter three for the Lord’s admonition about this.

- ***Strong charismatic element.*** The organizers and board chairmen of Promise Keepers have many members of charismatic churches among them. The rallies mimic the style of a charismatic revival. What is presented as being an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is actually the product of the minds and emotions of men, while the true vehicle of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word, is ignored in many ways. Like other charismatic movements, the Promise Keepers substitute a person’s own emotions and experiences for faith. That which is seen, felt, and experienced is presented as spiritual reality, rather than what the Lord Jesus experienced, as related in the Bible.

- ***Doctrinal indifference.*** The Promise Keepers is an ecumenical movement. It says that differences in teaching between churches are unimportant, thereby belittling something that the

Bible clearly warns us about. God says in His Word that ALL of the Bible’s teachings are important, and worth taking a stand on. Romans 16:17 and many other passages warn us not to be religious partners with those who do not teach all the truth of God’s Word. Public worship and prayer without agreement about what the Bible teaches dishonors God.

- ***Encouragement to support false teachers.*** One of the promises that a Promise Keeper must make is to honor and pray for his pastor, and to support his local church. This may sound great, until we realize the implications of this. For instance, according to this idea a Unitarian Promise Keeper should support his pastor and church, which teaches that all gods are really one, and there is no such thing as the Trinity. A Roman Catholic Promise Keeper is supposed to be more devoted to the Catholic church, which teaches him that a believer has to pay for his own sins in purgatory. The list goes on. From this we see that the Promise Keepers movement is one of many groups that encourages the worship of a “generic” god, which is really a false idol. God says that we have the responsibility to reject false teaching, using the doctrines of the Bible as our standard.

To sum up, the “Promise Keepers” organization has a lot going for it, but only on the surface of things. There is much to be admired in their outward goals for the personal righteousness of men. However, their message consists of lots of law, very little gospel, and a destructive mingling of both. By contrast, the Bible shows us that our com-

mitment to righteous living is very important, but our relationship with God dare not be defined by *our* promises to *Him*. Instead, the center of our spiritual life is about *His* promises to *us* in Christ Jesus.

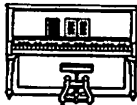
There is every reason to avoid this

organization completely, and to reject the false doctrine that hides behind the laudable goals.

—Pastor Bruce Naumann
(prepared for his congregation,
Faith of Markesan, Wis.)

Announcements

1998 Intinerary Immanuel Lutheran College Tour Choir



March 8, Trinity, Millston, Wis.	10:15 a.m.
March 14, St. Peter's, Stambaugh, Mich.	2:00 p.m.
March 14, Calvary, Marquette, Mich.	7:30 p.m.
March 15, Gethsemane, Saginaw, Mich.	7:30 p.m.
March 16, Faith, Coloma, Mich.	7:00 p.m.
March 17, Faith, Ballwin, Mo.	7:30 p.m.
March 18, Immanuel, Batavia, Ill.	7:30 p.m.
March 19, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, Wis.	7:30 p.m.
March 20, Messiah, Hales Corners, Wis.	7:00 p.m.
March 21, Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, Wis.	7:00 p.m.
March 22, Faith, Markesan, Wis.	10:30 a.m.
March 29, Grace, Fridley, Minn.	10:00 a.m.
March 29, Messiah, Eau Claire, Wis.	7:00 p.m.

Please confirm concert times with local congregations.

—John Reim, Director

Installations

In accord with our usage and order Wayne C. Eichstadt who was called as associate pastor by Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church of Mankato, Minnesota was installed on January 11, 1998.

—Pastor P. D. Nolting

In accord with our usage and order, Warren Fanning, who had been called as Exploratory Missionary in Gold Canyon, Arizona, was commissioned (installed) on February 8, 1998.

—Pastor Michael Eichstadt

Call Committee

The Call Committee on Graduates will meet at Immanuel Lutheran College on April 22. All congregations calling for a pastor or teacher through the committee should have the call form (without candidate designation) and other pertinent information in the hands of the president by April 15.

—Daniel Fleischer, President

Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council will meet Wednesday and Thursday, April 22 & 23, at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. The first session will convene after chapel on Wednesday.

—Daniel Fleischer, President

ILC President

Prof. John Pfeiffer, currently finishing a term as President of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis., has been nominated for a two-year term beginning June 1, 1998. No other nominations were received.

—Rev. Vance Fossum,
Board of Regents for ILC

Brice Prairie Preaching Station

The following information was inadvertently omitted from last month's Table of CLC Exploratory Services. Worship services are being held every Sunday at 2:30 p.m. in Brice Prairie (La Crosse area), Wisconsin. For information regarding location of the service, call either John Hein, the pastor in charge (612-388-4403), or lay person Kirby Pabst (608-781-0835).

SPOKESMAN-ON-TAPE

Monthly mailings of the *Lutheran Spokesman* on audio-cassette are available for the blind and anyone else who would like it in this format. Order from Pastor Walter Schaller, 517 Bayberry Pointe Dr. NW, Apt. C, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49544.



Mr. & Mrs. Albert Gebhardt
811 S. Union Road
Spokane, WA 99206

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99209

IF YOU WISH TO MAKE A GIFT TO

The CLC Foundation

The ways to do so are many. Here are examples:

Special Gifts: Cash Payments Income from Assets
Stocks, Bonds, Mutual Fund Shares
Real Estate

Bequests: General Contingent
 Specific IRAs
 Residuary Life Insurance

(For consideration of tax benefits, such as tax deductions and avoidance of taxes on capital gains, etc., professional advice may be suggested.)

Those interested in making gifts to the CLC Foundation, perhaps as part of an estate plan, will be interested in having "Ways of Giving" material which reviews some options. Request from

CLC Foundation Chairman,
c/o Immanuel Lutheran College,
501 Grover Rd., Eau Claire WI 54701
or E-mail: jnrnlaw@juno.com

(End of a Series)

94. From whom do we receive our property?

A. We receive our property from God. However, He remains the owner and we are only His stewards.

(Luther's *Small Catechism* - Gausewitz)