



# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“He is not here”

*Mark 16:6*

*“Our Savior Jesus Christ . . . has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).*

## THE BLESSED HOPE OF BLISSFUL IMMORTALITY

*“Forever with the Lord!”*

*Amen! so let it be.*

*Life from the dead is in that word,  
‘Tis immortality. (TLH 616:1)*

The glorious fate of Christian immortality, that is, the eternal life in that heavenly abode with God beyond this temporal existence, is a blessed truth that sounds forth at this time of year. The many different Easter texts proclaimed from the Christian pulpit and the festival hymns sung from the church pew draw our attention to this wondrous future for believers in Jesus Christ.

This is as it should be. At Easter time the Christian church celebrates Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the grave on the third day after His sacrifi-

cial death on the cross. Jesus assured us in Holy Scripture that His resurrection means immortality for us. He said: “Because I live, you will live also” (Jn. 14:19).

Because Jesus lives victorious beyond the grave in eternity, so also will all who embrace Him by faith.

Christians are not the only ones in this world who entertain the thought of immortality. Both the religious and the irreligious have set their sights on gaining immortality. The many different non-Christian religions from ancient times to the present have held a belief of a never-ending life after death.

What is sad and even tragic about all these other beliefs is that their hope of a blissful eternal life is based upon their own ability to overcome sin and

**Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at Roseville, MN 55113 and at additional offices. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 2750 Oxford Street North, Roseville, MN 55113.**

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

Editor: Paul Fleischer, 710 4th Ave. SW, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085-1232, E-Mail to [pgflei@prairie.lakes.com](mailto:pgflei@prairie.lakes.com); Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Artist: Matthew Schaser; Staff (Also District Reporters): James Albrecht, Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Warren Fanning, Joel Fleischer, Rick Grams (Minnesota), Mark Gullerud (Great Lakes), John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, David Reim, Peter Reim, Rollin Reim (Pacific Coast), David Schierenbeck, John Schierenbeck (South-Eastern), Michael Wilke, (West Central).

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Fleischer one month before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Fleischer.

Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to [BSydow01@roseville.k12.mn.us](mailto:BSydow01@roseville.k12.mn.us). Individual subscriptions {foreign—U.S. currency only}: \$10.00 {\$14.00} for one year; \$18.00 {\$26.00} for two years; \$26.00 {\$38.00} for three years. Subscriptions sent in bulk to congregations: \$8.00.

Spokesman Internet access: <http://www.primenet.com/~mpkelly/clc/spokesman.html>  
Printed in U.S.A.

death. Since “the wages of sin is death (temporal, spiritual, and eternal death)” (Rom. 6:23a), how can anyone hope to be able to pay this costly price by one’s own feeble efforts?

An ancient belief of immortality that is gaining in popularity is reincarnation. This is the vain notion of a person repeatedly dying and his soul returning to this world in a different form. What a wretched thought—having to face the cruel enemy of death over and over again and returning each time to this sin-cursed world!

### Christ — The Firstfruits

The irreligious are hoping to beat death and gain immortality through medical means. They are trying to stop the aging process and to replace worn-out body parts so that man can continue to live on indefinitely.

Why would unbelievers want to live on forever in this vale of tears except to escape the divine judgment of everlasting punishment in hell? No mortal—be he ever so ingenious—is capable of overcoming the deadly hold that sin has on him, for the Bible declares: “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Our hope of obtaining a blissful, immortal existence is not based on our own efforts at conquering sin and death. Rather, this hope is based upon the substitutionary life, death, and resurrection of our Savior Jesus.

Paul wrote to Timothy that Jesus “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). The life-giving gospel of Christ reveals that Jesus removed the sting of death, namely sin,



by suffering death in atonement for all our sin, and that He rose triumphant from the grave. Thus He became the firstfruits—all believers will be raised from the grave in immortal form on the last day (1 Cor. 15).

Jesus’ death and resurrection have made it possible for the paradisaical life which Adam and Eve once enjoyed at the beginning of time to be restored in the glorious life to come. On the last day when believers are raised from the grave, they will be living for eternity on a new, perfected earth in which righteousness dwells (cf. 1 Pet. 3:10-13; Is. 65:17-19).

When Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn. 11:25-26), He was assuring us of a blissful life of immortality which He alone can give.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud

 **H**allelujah!

# Never A Day Like This One!

There had never been a football game quite like it. Not in all the years before; not in the 80-some years since.

It was a dark and dreary day in 1916, the perfect setting for a matchup between the Yellow Jackets of Georgia Tech and their unlikely opponents from Cumberland. Under the leadership of John Heisman, Georgia Tech came eager for victory and would not be disappointed. This would turn out to be the highest-scoring, most lopsided game every played.

By the end of the first quarter, the score was 63-0. From there, the Yellow Jackets averaged a touchdown every minute and twenty seconds. By half time, the Cumberland coach was no longer wondering how to stop the opponents—he was wondering how he could convince his players to return to the field.

They did return, only to suffer the worst loss in football history: 222-0.

There had never been a DAY quite like it. Not in all the years before; not in the many years since.

Dark and dreary can only begin to describe the events of that momentous day beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Another matchup was underway. Jesus, the second Adam, was there to engage the enemy of the first Adam.

Suspended upon a Roman cross and surrounded by enemies, to most observers the outcome appeared hopeless. As death approached and defeat appeared imminent, some courageously mocked: “He saved others, Himself

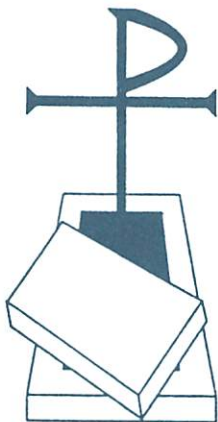
He cannot save.”

Even His disciples were confused. Enroute to Emmaus, just days later, they lamented: “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” With head slumped forward and breathing stopped, He appeared no different than anyone else—defeated by the curse of sin. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). So it seemed.

## An Absolute Blowout!

How sad if this account (and our faith) had ended with Good Friday, when the final score wasn’t posted until Easter Sunday. A short distance in time—but an eternal distance in outcome.

Far from death defeating Jesus—Jesus defeats death. Far from the devil gaining an upperhand, Satan’s head is crushed. Far from sin overcoming Jesus



—Jesus overcomes the curse of sin.

The score isn't even close. It's an absolute blow-out. So great is the margin of victory that Paul goes on: "The free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15,17).

So "*much more*"—that is the outcome of His Easter victory.

More grace than sin ("where sin abounded, grace did much more

abound" - Rom. 5:20); more than enough righteousness to cover an entire world of lost sinners ("by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" - Rom. 5:18); more joy and happiness than could possibly be imagined on this side of heaven ("therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" - Rom. 5:1,2).

So "*much more*" that no sportscaster could conceive of enough superlatives to describe what Jesus has done.

Much more amazing is that this incredible victory is ours by faith. Praise God!

—Pastor James Albrecht

---

## No Fear

In the last few years we have all seen the t-shirts and decals that say "No Fear." Those who display this message apparently intend to say that they are bold and courageous, that they have no fear of the things that ordinarily cause fear in others. Perhaps they also intend to embolden and encourage others to live fearlessly.

On its face, the advice to have no fear is very bad advice indeed, for there are many things in this world that one ought to fear. We should be afraid of what could happen to us when driving a car at high speed. We are right to be afraid of touching an electrified wire. We are prudent to flee or take cover when a storm approaches. Only a fool swaggers into the path of danger with "no fear" emblazoned on his chest.

The ungodly are foolish when they profess no fear of death or of divine judgment. This is true of those who scoff at the judgment and of those who look for something good beyond this life apart from the Savior Jesus Christ. Without Christ one should fear death and judgment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

The trouble with the unbeliever's attempts to free himself from fear is that he does so by pretending that there is nothing to be afraid of. The unbeliever ignores dangers that are both real and threatening. On the other hand, God offers freedom from dangers that are real, not imagined. He has actually removed the greatest of dangers that threatened us. We don't have to be afraid of death because Jesus has removed

death's sting. We don't have to be afraid of divine judgment because Jesus suffered the wrath of God for our sins.

The proof that the cause of our fears has really been removed is the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection after suffering and dying for our sins was God's public announcement that He had accepted the sacrifice that His Son offered.

The resurrection of Jesus declares that our sins are forgiven, that death has lost its sting, that we are at peace with God. Jesus intends that His resurrection should take away our fears.

On that first Easter when the women went to the tomb, an angel greeted them with the words: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And as the women went to tell the disciples, Jesus Himself met them and said: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me" (Mt. 28). And when the risen and glorified Christ appeared to John in Revelation He said: "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades

---

**"The resurrection of Jesus declares that our sins are forgiven, that death has lost its sting, that we are at peace with God. Jesus intends that His resurrection should take away our fears . . ."**

---

and of Death" (Rev. 1:17-18).

With the cause of our worst fears removed by Jesus, we can deal with all our lesser fears by trusting in God, whose children we have become through faith in Jesus Christ.

We are not completely free of fear, nor will we ever be in this life, for we still have the old sinful nature. We sin against God and fear His wrath. Satan accuses us of our sins and tries to frighten us with death and hell.

Our trust in God is not perfect, so lots of things scare us. But when we are afraid, we have God's own Word to drive away our fears, assuring us of our salvation and of the heavenly Father's abiding love and protection.

We can walk confidently, saying: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil . . ."

—*Pastor John Klatt*

---

*A Message From Our CLC President—*

## EASTER 1999

In a world of sin and sorrow there is little of which we can be sure. And many of the things of which we absolutely can be sure we wish weren't so.

For example, we will sin again.

"We daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment," we confess with Luther in the Fifth Petition.

Not all are troubled by that reality and certainty. In fact some delight in

sin and seek it out. We read of the wicked man: "Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually" (Prov. 6:14). "To do evil is like sport to a fool . . ." (Prov. 10:23). Of the certainty of sin and its consequence, which is death, many have no fear—so deep the ignorance and unbelief. "When a wicked man dies, his expectations perish, and the hope of the unjust perish—es" (Prov. 11:7).

On the other hand the Christian, no less a sinner by reason of his flesh and indwelling old man, confesses with Isaiah: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips . . ." (Isa. 6:5). And with the apostle Paul: "O wretched man that I am . . ." (Rom. 7:24).

In spite of the certainty that we will and do sin, even as we have, the Christian has certain expectations and hopes that will not perish. These expectations and hopes are a matter of faith created by and anchored in the Word of God. The heavenly Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21).

There is nothing so simple to understand, even as it is beyond reason to comprehend. The Father laid our sin upon Jesus Christ. On the face of it, this is not fair. But, thank the Lord, He was not concerned with what was fair. In the heart of our Lord was only concern for sinners. He willingly paid the debt which He did not owe, and which we owed but could not pay.

The message of Easter tells us that the heavenly Father has accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as payment for our sin. Through the death of His Son, we who were separated by sin from the Father are reconciled unto Him. Jesus was raised again for our justification.

No charge can be lodged against us. No condemnation can undo us. Not even our own heart can condemn us. "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things" (1 Jn. 3:20).

This is the confidence of the penitent sinner. With his heart he knows, assents to, and trusts in the Word and promise of the Father who "did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (Jn. 3:17).

In all the uncertainties of this life, in the temptation posed by the "good times," and in the stress of affliction, as well as in the certainty of continuing evil in this world, our expectations and our hopes are certain. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! We who believe can say with Paul: "I know whom I have believed . . ." (2 Tim. 1:12).

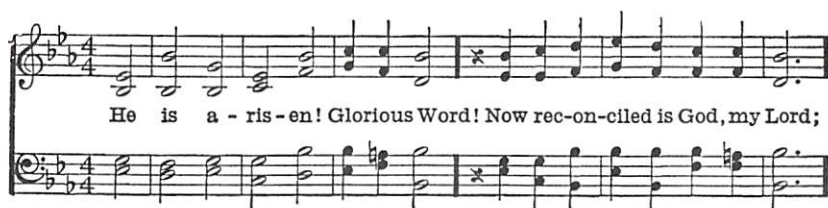
I know that my Redeemer lives, and my expectations and hopes shall come to pass. The risen Lord promises: "He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn. 11:25-26).

So simple is the Easter message, yet so profound! The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of the penitent's expectation and hope.

From the love of Christ may we daily draw strength to overcome temptation and sin. Surely no one who rejoices in his salvation will delight in sin. But when we do fall into sin may we also remember that "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). Because Jesus died—and rose again!

Thanks be to God who turns our expectations and hopes into reality.

## Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns



### He is Arisen! Glorious Word!

An Easter Hymn

#189 in The Lutheran Hymnal

You've heard it said: "Pressure makes diamonds." The Lord speaks in similar fashion through Peter's pen: "You are kept by the power of God . . . In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:5-7).

How true it is that in so many instances God uses what humanly speaking is a tragedy to produce tremendous blessings for His people!

We have such an instance in the Danish woman, Birgitte Katerine Boye. Married at the age of 21, she mothered four children in the next five

years. And then, with her children between the ages of 5 and 10, her husband's position as forester for the king was abolished, and after a year's illness he died. During this trying time Birgitte started writing hymns for a collection later to be called *Guldberg's Hymnal*.

One of those hymns is this powerful Easter hymn, in which she penned the assurance that Jesus' resurrection gave her and every believer in the face of death. His resurrection proves that my sins are forgiven; there is now peace with God: "*Now reconciled is God, my Lord; The gates of heaven are open.*"

And now that He is alive, we will live also: "*Christ victorious Riseth Glorious, Life he giveth!*"

"*He is arisen! Glorious Word!*"

—Pastor Paul Krause





# The Victory That Overcomes The World

*“Whoever is born of God overcometh the world!” —1 John 5:4-5*

John links this thought with what he wrote earlier in chapter 2:13-15, where he says that the young people in the congregation have overcome the wicked one and warns them not to forfeit their victory by falling in love with the world.

The wicked one rules the world. To be victorious over him is to be victorious over the world and over all that is in it. All of those victorious over the world have been born of God and they have been filled with a strong spiritual life. As victors they go forth in their victory to trample upon any interference from the world which is opposed to God.

This becomes clearer when we see what this victory is. It is “our faith.” When God beckons us to believe, He is inviting us to be victorious. When He calls forth love from us, this is the evidence and fruit of that victorious faith. Both faith and love show that we have been born anew.

Yet everything depends upon the

*object* of our faith. So many people talk about faith in abstract terms. “You gotta have faith.” Faith in what?

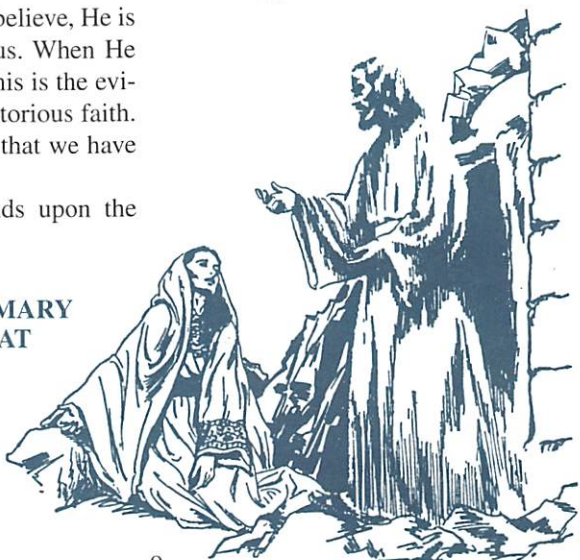
There is only *one* faith that apprehends the eternal victory, and this is faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. He has fulfilled all for us. He died and rose again for us. We have the victory only through Jesus Christ.

## How The Resurrection Changes Our Life

The bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of the Christian’s hope and joy. Thus it brought about great changes in the lives of those who lived at the time of the risen Savior.

The appearance of the risen Savior

**JESUS APPEARS TO MARY  
MAGDALENE ON THAT  
FIRST GLORIOUS  
EASTER MORN**



turned the tears of the sorrowing women into great joy; it turned the discouragement of the Emmaus disciples into great hope; it turned the gloom of His followers in happiness; and it turned doubting Thomas once more into a firm believer.

The resurrection of Jesus has also changed many things for us. In *His* resurrection is the promise of *our* resurrection, and that gives meaning to our otherwise meaningless lives.

We now have a purpose and a goal to pursue. As Paul writes to the Philippians (3:11-14), the resurrection is the objective toward which we are ever pressing. At the end of our brief earthly pilgrimage, we shall depart this vale of tears and enter the glorious, eternal home prepared for us by our Savior.

In the resurrection we will be raised to a life very different than anything we have yet experienced. Many unpleasant things common to this life shall no

longer exist, things like pain and fear and sorrow and crying (Rev. 21:4).

Our bodies also shall undergo a dramatic change in the resurrection. The terrible effects of sin and corruption on our bodies shall be entirely removed. Of this Paul assures us: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Php. 3:20-21). Our bodies shall be renewed to be as pure and perfect and glorious as the risen body of Jesus.

Just as He created all from nothing, and as He fulfilled that which was necessary for us sinners to pass from death unto life, so He is able to raise and glorify our bodies on the Last Day.

Truly, His resurrection has changed our lives!

—Pastor D. Maas and V. Tiefel

*Fourth In A Series (from an essay by Pastor Thomas Schuetze)—*

## Psalm 123

*"LORD, help me bear patiently the insults of the contemptuous world."*

### A Prayer Psalm

#### Psalm 123

Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud.

The thought content of this psalm is similar to Psalm 120. In it the psalmist prays that Jehovah would look down in mercy from His throne in heaven and bring relief to His people who were suffering severe hardship at the hands of their enemies.

The specific hardship they were suffering was this, that their souls were being filled "with the scorn of those who are at ease" and "with contempt of

the proud.” The ungodly children of the world were poking fun at God’s people, making life miserable for them, because they believed in Jehovah and were striving to walk in His ways, not the ways of the ungodly world.

The pilgrim bands would have ample reason to pray this prayer as they traveled to Zion. Their heathen neighbors must have thought of them as religious fanatics. “How foolish you Jewish people are to travel to far-away Jerusalem three times each year to worship your God, the God who allowed your land to be conquered and overrun by the Babylonians!”

Undoubtedly these enemies let their contempt for the Jews and for the God of the Jews show. (The Samaritans come to mind again with their open opposition to the rebuilding of the temple.) This was a heavy cross for the believing remnant to bear.

How natural, then, that they would turn to the Lord with the plea that He would help them and strengthen them (as they journeyed to Jerusalem to worship the God whom they loved) to bear

patiently, without complaint, the insults of their enemies.

We modern day Christian “pilgrims” can expect to receive similar treatment from the world as we make our way to the New Jerusalem. The message of Christ Crucified is our dearest treasure. But it will remain a stumblingblock to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness. This will be evident by the spiteful attitude that society takes towards the Word of God, towards the Lord Jesus, towards His Church, and towards those who seek to abide in His Word. “If you were of the world,” Jesus said, “the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master’” (Jn. 15:19-20). Yet we have reason to remain joyful and confident because we know that the Lord, to whom we lift up our eyes, has promised to strengthen us to “bear the world’s dread frown” as we continue our heavenward walk.



Sunshine bathes the ILC Campus in Eau Claire, with stately trees affording shade to the Commons and Gymnasium.

# LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

*First Samuel, Chapters One Through Seven*

## *Samuel, Prophet and Judge of Israel*

Three names in these opening chapters of 1 Samuel serve as a skeleton upon which to hang the body of the account: Ichabod, Samuel, and Ebenezer.

***Ichabod (“the glory has departed from Israel”)*—a memorable name reflecting the moral decay of a nation**

As the narrative opens, we find the priest Eli serving as judge for the Israelites. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, also served as priests, but they were making a terrible mockery of the worship of the true God there at the tabernacle in Shiloh.

For example, when the people brought offerings for sacrifices, these two would take more than was rightfully theirs, threatening to take it by force if the worshipper refused to comply. They also “lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle” (2:22). When their father Eli heard of what they were doing and verbally rebuked them, “they did not heed the voice of their father” (2:25).

And on top of this, when the Israelites were defeated in battle with the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas took the Ark of the Covenant itself out of the holy of holies and carried it to

the battlefield, treating it as if it were some good-luck charm. Because this was an idolatrous use of the Ark, the Philistines were victorious and confiscated the Ark.

Hophni and Phinehas were killed in the battle, and when Eli heard of their death and of the loss of the Ark, he “fell off the seat backward . . . and his neck was broken and he died. . . . And he had judged Israel forty years” (4:18).

At the same time Phinehas’ wife was nine months pregnant, and at the news of her husband’s death she went into labor. Just as she was about to die in childbirth, she gave her son a name which befit the spiritual depravity which had been plaguing the nation. She called him “Ichabod,” saying: “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured” (4:21-22).

***Samuel (“I have asked for him from the LORD”)*—a memorial name to Jehovah**

In the middle of this spiritual decay in Israel, Samuel was born. The divinely inspired record of his birth and early years with Eli is an all-time favorite. His mother took him to serve Eli already as soon as he was weaned (three years old?), as she had promised. She had been barren, and had offered a

heartfelt, tear-filled prayer that if God would give her a son she would “give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head” (1:11). The Lord heard her prayer and she gave her son a name which means “I have asked for him from the LORD” (1:20).

Young Samuel faithfully served Eli at the tabernacle; we read of him that “Samuel grew in stature and in favor with the LORD and men” (2:26).

It was in those years that the Lord spoke to Samuel in the night—something that had not happened during Eli’s priesthood—and revealed to him all that we read above about the destruction of Eli and his sons.

As Samuel continued to grow, “The Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground” (3:19). Everything he prophesied came true.

### ***Ebenezer (“Thus far the LORD has helped us”)***

How comparable were Samuel’s surroundings to our situation! We too live in a country in which the worship of the true God has been trashed and made into a farce by Hollywood, by the press, even by many churches. God keep that from happening among us!

Instead, when God speaks to us, may we with Samuel respond: “Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears” (3:9).

And whatever that word from God is, let us not hold it back, but proclaim it to those for whom it is meant, just as Samuel told Eli “everything, and hid nothing from him” (3:18).

The people of Samuel’s time needed to hear that they had offended the LORD with their sinfulness. During those years under Philistine oppression, Samuel had encouraged them not to offer insincere confession, but to offer heartfelt repentance to the Lord for their sins and to change their sinful ways.

And as the Israelite nation gathered at Mizpah to confess, “We have sinned against the LORD” (7:6), the Lord gave them a great victory over the Philistines. At the site of the great victory Samuel erected a stone and called it “Ebenezer,” saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us” (7:12).

May our lives prove to be Ebenezer stones to those around us!

First, may our lives be filled with heartfelt repentance over our sins!

Secondly, let our lives be filled with thanks to God for helping us thus far.

And lastly, may our words ever witness the Gospel to the world—the message of the great victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil which is ours and theirs by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

—Pastor Paul Krause



# Celebrating Earth Day?

*Many churches will be involved in Earth Day activities this weekend. Some will even devote their Sunday morning message to this topic. Is this something in which churches should be involved?*

After His resurrection the Lord sent forth His followers with a specific mission. This same mission is the calling of His followers to this day. What is this mission? What are our priorities? Nowhere did Jesus charge His followers to try to rectify the moral decay, the social wrongs, or the political injustices of the world, neither did He give them the means to change or correct these things. He did give them the command to make disciples, that is, to deliver people from sin and death and bring them into the kingdom of grace, making them heirs of eternal life. He has given them the means by which to do this: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Churches involved in any other agenda have lost sight of the high calling given them by their Lord Jesus Christ.

As citizens of our nation, we do have temporal concerns and responsibilities. That is why we vote, donate blood, give to charities, and so forth. On the occasion of Earth Day, there are many who would alert us to the problems and dangers we are facing regarding the environment. Yet, it is not always easy to ascertain the truth. Are we really on the threshold of environmental disaster, or has this been overstated? Who can answer this? Scientists and experts disagree. It is difficult to sift through the rhetoric and exaggeration to find the truth. In this case, there may not even be objective truth, but merely educated guesses.

What does the future hold? No one knows—that is, no one except the Lord.

He informs us that the world will become more and more an unpleasant place. There will be diseases, famines, and an increase of violence. Worst of all, the love of many for Christ and His Word will grow cold (Mt. 24:12). Eventually, the world will come to an end. In 2 Peter 3 it is described this way: “. . . the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” One day, the world and all the accomplishments of mankind will go up in smoke. How sad it is to see people so devoted to the earth that they neglect the One Thing Needful. They have for the creation the love, respect, and devotion they should have for the Creator. Creation is finite, the Creator is eternal.

Now, just because the earth will one day end is not an excuse for abusing, misusing, and despoiling the planet. All of creation is, after all, a gift of God. It is *His* creation—a truly marvelous creation, indeed! As stewards we should regard it highly, be good caretakers of it, and use it wisely.

Of course, the gap is wide between good intentions and poor performance. This is due to the effect of sin. Consider what sin has done to the sanctity of marriage (adultery) and to the sanctity of human life (murder, abortion). What respect does sinful man have for the

reputation of others (gossip) or for the property of others (false ware or dealing)? When we consider the influence of sin in these and other areas, what do we think will happen in the area of responsible stewardship of the world and its resources? We do not need to imagine this, for it is evident.

However, the sinful conduct of many is no excuse for us to follow in kind.

It is well for us to be concerned citizens and to be active in taking care of our earthly responsibilities, including being responsible overseers of the land, air, and water. Yet, as children of God, we are reminded to keep all of these things in their proper perspective. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (conduct) and godliness" (2 Pet.


3:11). Our first priority must be for the welfare of our souls and faithfulness to God's Word.

We also have obligations of an earthly nature. For example, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). However, we know that these things pertain only to our brief pilgrimage on earth. We have duties connected with our earthly life, but none of the things of this world deserve the priority of our heart's love and devotion. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33).

*"Let them praise the name of the LORD: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven" (Ps. 148:13).*

—Pastor Delwyn Maas (first written for his own congregation)

---



Parables Of The Master  
Luke 12:13-21

## The Rich Fool

The title seems all wrong. The world considers a rich man as smarter, more hardworking, and more lucky than the rest. Rich people are not often thought of as fools, except perhaps by those envious of their riches. God, however, has a way of turning our thoughts and assumptions upside down.

While many things of this world are not wrong or sinful in themselves. It is our attitude toward these things that becomes the problem.

We realize that following Jesus is a matter of attitude. In his explanation of the first commandment, Luther teaches the essence of the Law as attitudinal: "We should fear, love, and trust in God *above all things*." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urges believers to "*seek first the kingdom of God . . .*" (Mt. 6:33). Jesus also said: "He who loves father or mother *more than Me* is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37).

What about the attitude that sees

religion and Jesus in terms of a monetary advantage? Televangelists promote a prosperity theology: "If you follow Jesus and send in your contributions, you will be blessed with riches and prosperity." Their mantra is: *God wants you to be rich*. They capitalize on humans being more concerned with this world than with the world to come.

Here's the way Jesus confronted a man who wanted Jesus to mediate his inheritance with his brother: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." This simple and yet profound truth is illustrated by the parable.

Like the rich man who was a fool because he thought he was in charge of building his wealth, one who has achieved wealth and power may think, "Look what I have achieved." The parable is an echo of Moses' warning the children of Israel to beware of this attitude especially when God blessed them and gave them "houses full of all good things, *which you did not fill*, hewn-out wells *which you did not dig*, vineyards and olive trees *which you did not plant*; when you have eaten and are full, then beware lest you forget the LORD" (Deut. 6:11-12). The human is a fool if he thinks his riches are due to his efforts and intelligence, and when he comforts his heart with the abundance of the things he possesses.

### **Where Is Your Treasure?**

This rich man was a fool because he thought that since he had achieved all these things, he was therefore in control of his future. When God blessed him, this man decided to secure his future by laying up treasures in his barns and granaries. The world would consider this

to be smart and forward-looking.

Isn't it so today? Our prosperous generation seems overly concerned with providing for every exigency the future might hold—witness the concern about retirement plans, 401-K plans, IRA's. Many regularly check the stock market in concern over their possessions. In time of prosperity, the danger is that we will lose our spiritual direction and dependence upon God.

The fool thinks that when his wealth reaches critical mass, he can sit back and enjoy life. Thus the rich man in the parable said: "Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry" (Lk. 12:19).

The folly of this kind of attitude is that—as Jesus teaches—a person's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions. The great possessions' equalizer is death. There is a saying in the South: "I have never ever seen a hearse pulling a U-haul." The Pharaohs of Egypt tried to take their wealth with them by having it buried with them, which only enriched later graverobbers.

Solomon, who had it all, spoke sadly of the vanity of such an attitude toward the things of this world. A man works a lifetime only to have his children dissipate his wealth. As our parable puts it: "Fool, this night your soul (life) will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

The person who lays up such treasure for himself is a fool. The Bible reminds us that where one's treasure is, there his heart is centered. What is your treasure?

Jesus is the only treasure that lasts and has any real meaning. In this assurance we acknowledge that everything



we have comes from God; we trust that God alone is able to provide for our future. We seek to get the priorities right in our own lives.

Jesus promises everlasting life to those who believe in Him and count all earthly things as loss, that they might be found in Him.

—Pastor John Schierenbeck

## SMORGASBORD

• **‘WHAT’S YOUR SLANT ON FUNERALS?’** (*From the Messiah Messenger, Newsletter of Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wis. The writer is Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch.*)

If someone is brash enough to ask the question, the answer depends on what funerals he is referring to. This past winter we have been made aware that funerals of notable people become media events; one of them has garnered about the same TV coverage as a war, the person gazetted to such secular sainthood that recording artists and sweatshirt entrepreneurs are raising gadzillions for her favorite charity. Well, we think, then at least something worthwhile has been salvaged from a life that had more glitter than gold.

We might comment that a good Lutheran funeral is something else again. It’s certainly not a fund-raiser; it’s not orchestrated in the customary eulogies to honor the deceased with accolades and pious platitudes. A good

Lutheran funeral becomes a public testimony to what God has done to prepare the deceased for eternal life.

Here we might switch the focus just a bit to ask this related question: “What are you doing to prepare for your own funeral?” (Is that a fair question?)

My first thought is that my funeral preparations are going to be taken care of by my family—surviving spouse and children, assisted by the funeral director; the religious/church part is going to be cared for by my capable pastor. The ladies of the congregation will arrange for a social hour so my relatives from a distance may mingle with my friends at Messiah and share emotional release. The obituary and newspaper notice don’t deserve a lot of study.

But a second concern swirls up from the sidelines: am I concerned only about those external arrangements that can readily be managed by others within the span of a few days after I am gone? Aren’t there other larger, deeper, more important concerns that occupy my mind and my heart as I view my funeral from this comfortable distance? Well . . . yes . . . most decidedly, YES!

I think that God has been interested in my funeral preparations all along, just as He has been concerned about me even before I was conceived. My God has been guiding me all through my lifespan for my return to Him. My God has been orchestrating all my living—



so that my funeral preparations dovetail into my whole biography to constitute an unbroken wholeness. Who I am (God's child) is reflected in how I live (to His glory and service to my neighbor), part of which is preparation to receive His stamp on my passport.

My funeral preparations—exactly as my life preparations—have been in my Father's hands since He first took me up in His arms at Holy Baptism and adopted me into His family of saints. From that moment on—through my infant years, childhood, puberty, adolescence, and into adulthood—I have been under His loving care, served to me in His Word and Sacrament. He has drawn me to Himself in open-hearted prayer; He has brought to my attention my own spiritual hunger and thirst and He has nursed me on the milk and fed me with the strong meat of His Word; He has filled my hands with good things from His treasure-house.

A Christian funeral marks the finish line, the goal toward which we have stretched, sweated, and panted; our funeral preparations stand accomplished beyond the reach of our own skills and strivings, for they have always been and still are in God's hands.

We like it that way.

• **RE: "EASTER MESSAGES"**

1) (*By Pastor Daniel Fleischer, for his congregation*)

The (1998) Easter message of the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA Lutherans is a tell-tale one. It lacks any reference to Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead. It mentions nothing about the forgiveness of sins and the sinner's justification before God guaranteed by the Savior's resurrection.

The ELCA Bishop talks about how "Jesus is not the Jesus of our childhood any more" and "Jesus is not even the Jesus we knew yesterday" but that "he will reveal more of his nature and his power every day of our lives." Though it mentions that the women came to the tomb on Easter morning and "discovered that Jesus was no longer there," what actually happened is left hanging in mid-air with no clear testimony to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, thus conquering death for all His believers. The Bishop says: "To say that Jesus has risen from the dead means that he is not where we left him." What does that mean anyhow?

Shocking, yes. More than that it is all typical, dear friends, of the contentless talk and doctrinally-anemic preaching of liberal (we hesitate to call it "Christian") theology. While liberal theology uses nice-sounding "Christian" words and terms, you will find little or nothing of the FACTS of the Gospel, which facts are supposedly suspect (as liberalism's spokespeople, the notorious *Jesus Seminar* scholars, suggest).

And make no mistake, such "theology"—with its historical critical approach toward the Bible which discounts a divinely-inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God—permeates the ELCA. What remains is what you read above—a teaching and preaching void of doctrinal content and laden with fine-sounding psychic or psychological jargon. As far as Jesus' not being "the Jesus of our childhood" or "the Jesus we knew yesterday," we would simply direct the attention of those who read the ELCA leader's Easter comments to the clear word of God: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).



2) *Speaking of Easter messages—or rather, the lack of them on the part of those who supposedly should speak them clearly—there is also this (first written for the Grace, Sleepy Eye, bulletin, Easter 1998).*

*WORLD* magazine (March 7, 1998) reported that a recently elected leader of the United Church of Canada, a Reformed (Calvinistic) denomination, denies “the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the existence of heaven and hell, and most directly, the deity of Christ.” The man is Bill Phipps who is called “the recently elected moderator of the church,” a position which is the denomination’s highest office.

Phipps, who admits he is no theologian, is quoted as saying: “I don’t believe Jesus is the only way to God. I don’t believe he rose from the dead as scientific fact. I don’t know whether these things happened. It’s an irrelevant question.” The denominational leader goes on to discount “early creeds” and defends his heresy (as *WORLD* correctly describes it) in typical liberal fashion: biblical facts don’t matter.

What does matter no one really knows, and I guess is anybody’s guess. As sad as is the UCC leader’s out-of-hand rejection of the fundamental teachings mentioned, we would agree that “the true scandal is in the church’s refusal to deal with the heresy and call the moderator to account” (*WORLD*).

Here is what the apostle Paul says with regard to whether or not the resurrection of Christ is “relevant”: “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:12ff).

(We don’t have an update on the leader(ship) of the UCC. Nevertheless, what is here written stands.)

#### • BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT (UPDATE)

Last month’s *Spokesman* contained a photograph showing Patrick Udo, his wife, and new baby boy. That photo was taken by our Visitation team in Nigeria back in 1997.

Update: on March 5, 1999 an e-mail came across the sea from Missionary David Koenig who, with his wife Mary, had arrived on February 17th in Nigeria. The missionary’s report told of the family’s safe arrival and some needs of their “Mission House” residence. Then came this footnote: “For those of you who remember Patrick Udo—he remarried a few years ago, and his wife gave birth to their *second* son the day we arrived.”

Some years ago, Patrick attended some classes at Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary, and made a speaking tour to some of our CLC congregations.

Congratulations and God’s blessings, Patrick & Mrs. Udo, on the birth of your second child! •

# Announcements

## Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Michael G. Wagnitz, who was called by Resurrection Lutheran congregation of Calgary, Alberta to be its pastor, was installed on November 29, 1998.

—Pastor David Reim

Editor's note: *Pastor Reim writes regarding the above installation service: "The service was attended by about 60 people. It was a joint German and English service with the sermon given in both languages. The liturgy, including the ordination and installation, was done half in German and half in English. Also present were Pastor Horst Gutsche, John Cobb, and Steve Karp." Pastor Reim then adds: "Pastor Wagnitz is awaiting the second part of his colloquy.*

In accord with our usage and order, Mark Gurath, who was called by Indian Landing Lutheran congregation of Rochester, New York, to be its pastor, was installed on February 28, 1999.

—Pastor Paul Tiefel

## Family Camp

Immanuel of Mankato, Minn. invites CLC individuals and/or families to join us for our annual family camp at Lake Shetek State Park in southwestern Minnesota. 1999 dates are: Youth Day—July 8. Family Camp—July 9-11. For more information please contact Mr. Leif Olmanson or Pastor Wayne Eichstadt at Immanuel—421 North 2nd Street, Mankato, MN 56001; phone (507) 345-3027; e-mail to Weichstadt@juno.com.

## 40th Anniversary Celebration & Invitation

It was on Thanksgiving Day, 1959 that Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Sleepy Eye, Minn. conducted its first worship service. To mark its 40th anniversary Grace is having two special anniversary services this year.

The first of these special services will be Sunday, April 18, 1999 at 10:00 a.m. The speaker will be the first pastor of Grace, Paul F. Nolting, with Pastor Paul D. Nolting serving as liturgist. Pastor Paul F. Nolting will also conduct a Bible Class that morning (beginning at 9:00 a.m.) reviewing the events which led to the formation of the new church. Following these doings will be a noon potluck.

Grace cordially invites our CLC church family to attend this celebration of 40 years of grace at Grace.

The second special anniversary service is scheduled for the Sunday before Thanksgiving, November 21, 1999. This will be a 2:00 p.m. ser-

vice (with a son of the congregation as speaker), followed by a program at 3:30, and potluck supper at 5:00.



## Coffee Mugs

The CLC Book House is now selling souvenir Designer Coffee Mugs. The front has the old familiar etching of the Ingram Hall entrance, with Immanuel Lutheran College above, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin below. The back of the mug has the ILC seal. They are white, printed in green.

The price in the store without a box is \$5.00. The cost including shipping and handling is \$9.00.

M/M Albert Gebhardt  
811 S. Union Road  
Spokane, WA 99206