

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." - Matthew 2:1,2

Christian Internationalism

On the subject of internationalism we might mention several varieties. Politically there is that internationalism represented by 20th century communism, which has been destructive and enslaving—some even say ‘evil.’ It has sought to destroy governments, institutions, and individual liberties—and with an arrogant voice rage against God.

There is that internationalism which is economic in nature and is championed by NAFTA and similar trade agreements. Some argue that such free trade across national borders is good and promotes prosperity; others fear loss of jobs and national sovereignty.

And then there is Christian internationalism, which is pleasing to and commanded by God. Christian internationalism seeks to promote true spiritual liberty by shepherding all people to Christ who alone can give spiritual peace and security to the sinner.

Christian internationalism is based

on a twin foundation: 1) a common heritage; not all can trace their ancestry back to Peter the Great, Frederick the Wise, or Louis the Pious, but we are all descended from Adam the sinner. 2) God loved all in all nations and sent His Son to be the universal Savior from sin.

The season is called Epiphany with reference to the manifestation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior also of the Gentiles. It is sometimes called the Christmas of the Gentiles, a standard text being the story of the Three Magi (Matthew 2:1-12). On Christmas certain Jewish shepherds near Bethlehem were told of the birth of the promised Savior by an angelic herald. God did not short the Gentiles. To certain Magi in the East God sent a special star in the heavens to announce the birth of the King and to lead them across national boundaries to the very place where He was. What a bright star it was! It proclaimed that the saving

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message of Jesus was meant to be international in scope; and in this story we have an explanation of our own Christian status.

The Light-giving Word

The Magi not only saw and studied the star, but God's divine word explained to them its significance. No doubt a prophecy of Daniel shed light on its meaning, and the power of that Word made them willing to travel long distances to seek out and worship the Christ.

For of what use are star-signs in the sky if the divine word does not explain them? And of what use is the divine word if it were only a message of historical interest, but without any potency? And of what use is the potent, light-giving word to us Gentiles if it is restricted to Jews? That the gospel goes beyond such limitations is proved by the international star and the actions of the Magi. We ourselves testify to the gospel's saving power to convert, forgive, lead, and keep.

Led by the star explained by the word, the Magi did not show up at Christ's feet with empty hands. Rich presents they brought. It is evident that these Gentiles were accepted as citizens by faith in Christ's international kingdom of grace. Economic free-traders claim benefits for both sides in a transaction. So here. The gospel of a Jewish-born Savior was exported to the East. And from the East came back worshipers, importing tribute and gifts befitting the King of Glory—exactly what the prophet Isaiah had foretold (chapter 60).

Because His kingdom is truly international, Christ has graciously accepted our homage and gifts of faith. He permits and instructs us to assert ourselves in His gracious kingdom of peace and hope. The best way, therefore, to celebrate Epiphany is to worship our King and lead others to see His beauty. [This is, after all, the mission-festival season of the church year.] We do that by bringing our gold, frankincense, and myrrh as well as our lives to Him to be placed at His disposal for this very purpose. We do that by assisting our missions at home and abroad with our support and prayers. We do that by manifesting the spirit of true Christian internationalism.

—Pastor David Fuerstenau



FOLLOW THAT STAR

Every year we read once again of the journey of the Wise Men from the East who came so far to find the new-born King that they might worship Him. Every year our attention is focused on that mysterious star which

they somehow knew marked the Savior's birth, and set them off on their long and difficult journey. We remember that following their stop in Jerusalem, where they were directed from the Scriptures to turn to

Bethlehem, that “behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (Mt. 2:9-11).

Over the centuries that have passed since the Wise Men made that epic journey to seek out and worship the Savior of all the world, there has been much speculation about that star. Was it an alignment of planets? Probably not. How would that lead them to the home where Jesus was? Was it a special star prepared by God for this purpose? In one way or another it was prepared by God, and it was used by Him to lead these first pilgrims from the Gentile nations to the infant Savior’s presence that they might worship Him.

Can we follow that star? That wondrous star served its purpose. It focused the attention of the Gentile nations upon another even more glorious and far more spectacular Star. Jesus tells us plainly in Revelation: “I am . . . the Bright and Morning Star” (22:16).

That is the Star which the Wise Men sought out. We have been brought to the brightness of this Star by the calling of the Holy Spirit. Even as God guided and directed the travels of the Wise Men through their earthly pilgrimage that they might bow the knee before the Christchild, so also God has directed our lives that He might lead us to know the glory of our Savior’s birth. We have seen the glory of the true Star of Bethlehem, the glory of salvation for all the peoples of the earth. “The



people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Is. 9:2).

The words of Simeon also point us to the light of our Savior: “My eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to bring salvation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel” (Lk. 2:30-32).

These words of Simeon remind us of another prophecy recorded by Isaiah, and how its fulfillment began with the coming of the Wise Men and continues with our own coming to seek Jesus. Isaiah spoke to Zion saying: “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Is. 60:1-3).

Without doubt the light that brought glory to Zion was the light of our Savior’s birth. His lowly birth in this sinful world brought a glorious light to all the world.

May we “Follow That Star” all our days until we reach the eternal glory which He shall reveal to us in heaven.

—Pastor Theodore Barthels

“LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” — Psalm 90:1-2

A Devotional Study of Psalm 90

(The reader is encouraged to have a Bible open to the psalm under consideration—Ed.)

You should know the name Iwo Jima. It's a small Pacific island 760 miles south of Tokyo, a strategic bit of volcanic sand that cost almost 7,000 American casualties, but became a turning point in the Pacific theater in World War II. That was fifty years ago and articles like this appeared on Saturday, marking the time and place memorialized by the catastrophe.

Days of infamy, days of disaster have shock value even fifty years later. But in counterbalance, I must ask, what of all the other days? The normal ones, the ones that lack the shock value of Pearl Harbor and Kennedy's assassination? Happy UNbirthday has a lot to be said for it.

Here at the tag end of winter, I look back at a lot of infamous events that did NOT happen. We should note a long list of days safely and comfortably passed in which we suffered no trauma. Though it may be that from the newspaper's perspective this winter lies awash in bad news, I am not ready to surrender the high ground, for I share the psalmist's hopeful and thankful view of God's kindnesses, even as I recognize the fragility of human life.

“For all our days have passed away in Your wrath,” (v. 9) he says, and we acknowledge that we “have seen evil”

(v. 15) this winter—from crime in the streets to obscenity and debauchery on the TV screen. I grant, on one hand, that a vortex of evil swirls about us and amongst us like a firestorm of war—yet is it not manifest at the same time that you and I have been spared a whole barrage of infamous events that never happened?

Let us start at the top of the endless list: the biggest infamy that did NOT take place on this planet this winter would be the headlines that never got printed, reading: GOD HAS QUIT BEING GOD; next day the headline on Sunday: JESUS QUIT BEING THE SAVIOR; followed by this one today: THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN UP TRYING TO SALVAGE SOULS.

In actuality, on the positive side we have this news from the spokesman of God (largely bypassed in the public press and even the pulpit): “LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (vv. 1-2).

Further, in a list of preposterous horrors that have not happened, neither fifty years ago at the tag end of four years of bloody war, nor today in urban jungles, a headline reading: “GOD HAS GIVEN UP ON HUMANITY— He doesn't care if we all go to hell

eternally, unrepentant and unsalvaged; it's such an uphill struggle with sinners who don't comprehend their problem."

You may have seen a person growing so dull in spirit that he dismisses God from his life, as a child grows up to dismiss Santa Claus. Would it not be a horrendous act of infamy to find that God, in response to being trapped that way, would throw up His hands in despair and mutter: "I give up! I quit!"

Thank God such a day of infamy has not happened yet.

Thank God He is still on the job, ever putting His finger on sin, getting people like you and me to perceive our ulcer of anger, or of lust, or of selfish discontent. "You turn man to destruction—(face it, there is HELL without God)—and say, Return, O children of men . . . For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance . . ." (vv. 3, 7-8). We realize that these are blessings that come from God NOT giving up on us. Every conscience-stricken moment of guilt you have ever had is a blessing NOT to be regretted. "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (v.12). And the best wisdom to which we apply our hearts is the blessed wisdom that God has attended to our needs in the gift of His dear Son.

Time for one more huge catastrophe we have escaped that could have descended on us? Picture these headlines: JESUS HAS CANCELLED CHRISTMAS—He has decided to relax in His celestial Strato-lounger and on December 25th after one bored sidelong glance at our world, He stifled a big yawn and turned to the audition-

ing troupe of angel carolers and told them to forget it; so neither He nor they ever made it to Bethlehem. Jesus abandoned the human race to its pet perversions and self-destruction, about which He couldn't care less.

In blessed actuality, Jesus took the job of Savior and stayed on the job, as the psalmist reminds us: "Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children" (v.16). Here we are—their children generations later, still beholding the glorious realities that God yet IS God, that Jesus still IS our Savior from the deep graveyard of hell, and that God still cares about you and me.

You may go on with this preposterous parable, and draw up your own list of all the horrifying, hellish events that did NOT happen to this planet, or to you on it. Memorialize them for yourself and be thankful God has spared us from the unbearable tragedies. Indeed, "let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us" (v. 17)—as it always has been, is now, and ever shall be. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*(From the "chapel-talks" file of Prof. em. Paul R. Koch)*_____



FACING HOMOSEXUALITY

(Part 1 of 4)

In this article and its subsequent installments we will be considering the issue of homosexuality in our world and our response to it. It is our prayer that this study will enable us to better understand a scriptural response to homosexuality and to look for opportunities to implement that response in our lives.

- ... Afraid
- ... Disgusted
- ... Outraged
- ... Humored
- ... Uninterested

Each of the above adjectives (and others) represent the variety of ways in which someone may react to the growing prevalence of homosexuality in today's world. The prevalence of homosexuality in our society is not so much the result of an increase in the actual number of people who are trapped in its lies, but it is rather the result of a concerted effort to dull people into a casual acceptance of homosexuality.

There are many social issues to which the conscientious Christian will need to respond. In many ways the modern Christian's response to the world of 2000 will be the same as it has been for every Christian ever since sin entered the world. From the beginning the devil's tools have been deception, lies, and every other manner of sin (made to look enticing). Nothing has changed. The devil's tools are the same. Therefore, a godly response also remains essentially the same.

Even though the devil continually uses the same lies and fleshly temptations, he also is an expert at molding

his enticements to the weaknesses of the times so that he obtains the most "tempting power" for his effort. There were, for example, plenty of temptations for people who lived through the Great Depression, but going to the electronics store and squandering a paycheck on every new technological advance wasn't one of them. The way in which homosexuality is casually becoming an accepted "norm" in today's world is just one of the dangers Satan is tailoring for our present time.

As Christians, what is our response as we face the issue of homosexuality in the world? Sadly, the response of Christians toward homosexuality has not always been scriptural or God-pleasing. In this matter (as well in all others) care must be taken that we not fall into a standard "response of the church" without evaluating that response in the light of Scripture. Nor do we wish to fall into a "text book" response that may be scriptural—but only in words and not in actions.

The world surrounds us. As we consider the way the world treats homosexuality, the first thing to realize is that we do need to respond. A lack of response to the sinful world is a response of disregard and disinterest. Such a response is not consistent with

the instructions of our Savior: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Mt. 26:41), and “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20).

Perhaps the best way to describe a God-pleasing response to homosexuality is to characterize it as a response of deep concern. It is a deep concern for two reasons:

1. Let every Christian have a deep concern as to the danger for his soul and the souls of others, because our spiritual enemies work feverishly to make sin look inviting and to pull many souls into its supposed delights. If a Christian believes that the issues surrounding homosexuality do not affect him, God warns: “He who thinks

he stands, take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). Homosexuality in itself may never be a temptation to a particular Christian, and yet the devil may use it and our attitudes toward it as a stepping stone to other equally dangerous temptations.

2. Let every Christian have deep concern for the souls of those who are being led into homosexuality (and any other sin) or who are already trapped in its lies. If a Christian believes that the issues surrounding homosexuality do not affect him, he is forgetting that there are many souls living around him who are in need of the Gospel because they are affected by these issues in some way. Souls in need—plus Christ’s commission to make disciples—means that this is an issue that affects us.

(to be continued)

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

First Kings, Chapters One through Eleven

Sophomore Solomon

As I am writing this, our nation is in the midst of that down and dirty, mud slinging, hand wringing, finger pointing, misrepresenting debacle known as our election process. Oh, if only it was more simple, we say. If only we could vote for someone rather than against an individual, as we so often find ourselves doing. If only we could have a Solomon—a wise leader, right with God, in charge of our government!

Yet what about Solomon? Were his decisions always wise or did he play the part of the sophomore (wise fool), as we so often do?

A strong leader for Israel was needed. It was a critical juncture in their political, if not spiritual, life. David had ruled as a powerful king—subduing enemies, establishing justice, and enlarging borders. In short, the groundwork had been laid for a truly great nation. However, David seemed a bit reluctant to name his successor, which would lead to a power struggle among the royal heirs. Surely the rebellions of Absalom and his brother Adonijah were still fresh in the memories of the subjects.

Finally, Bathsheba went to her aged husband and reminded him of the promise he had made concerning their son Solomon, that he would sit on the throne after his father. When David realized his mistake, he had Solomon anointed as king of Israel; then David—in view of his death—charged Solomon with instructions for a successful reign.

Prayer For Wisdom

Solomon was now king. What should he do? His administration needed work, to say the least. Both of his military commanders were dead. Abiathar the priest had to be exiled for helping Solomon's brother Adonijah in a coup attempt. A later attempt to usurp the throne resulted in Solomon having his brother executed. We can be sure the neighboring nations were watching closely to see just what sort of mettle this 'son of David' was made of.

While we may not have ever found ourselves in as tight a spot as Solomon did, we still have our troubles. And since they are our troubles, they can be quite serious to us. Where do we go for help? Solomon had been given wonderful advice from his father David:

“ . . . How could it be that the man—who ruled his people so wisely and contracted treaties and economic agreements that amassed great wealth for his nation—could have trouble with women? This appears to have been a part of Solomon's life that he had been unwilling to surrender to his Lord.”

“Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn...” (1 Kgs. 2:2-3)

Then the Lord came to Solomon in a dream and posed this question to him: “Ask! What shall I give you?” The thoughts, desires, and wishes that one would expect to come to the mind of a young man given such a grand opportunity didn't materialize. Instead we see into the heart of this servant of God through his response: “O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kgs. 3:7-9)

What a choice! Good for Solomon. The Lord was pleased and so are we. But how often do we forget to make

this choice ourselves? When decisions and problems arise, it is so easy to simply roll up the sleeves and dive right into the work of solving the matter, and thus we often forget to seek the Lord's counsel. Solomon sought the Lord's blessing of understanding because he already understood the importance of his work. He was to lead the people of God. That needed to be done in a God-pleasing manner.

Are our tasks any less important? If you have a spouse, you have the obligation to love, cherish, and care for that individual, body and soul. If you have children, souls have been placed into your care—precious souls that are the property of our heavenly Father. You must lead them to their Shepherd through His Word. Since you are in this world, you have an obligation to all others around you. You are to be a witness of the things you have seen and heard in God's holy Word. These matters should not be taken lightly. Seek the understanding of the Lord to assure that you are making God-pleasing decision in all matters.

God gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart. We read that God told Solomon that in wisdom no one could compare to him, not the men of the East, nor any of the wise of Egypt, none who came before, nor any who would come after. Solomon used this wisdom for the good of God's people, and his fame and wealth were astounding.

Giving In To Foolishness

Yet Solomon still was to play the part of a sophomore (wise fool) when it came to his relationship with women. How could it be that the man—who ruled his people so wisely and con-

tracted treaties and economic agreements that amassed great wealth for his nation—could have trouble with women?

This appears to have been a part of Solomon's life that he had been unwilling to surrender to his Lord. While the king had all good intentions at heart when it came to the people of God, his own soul's safety seemed low on his list of concerns. Solomon loved many foreign women—the daughter of Pharaoh as well as women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. All of these were nations of whom God had said: "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Yet Solomon "clung to these in love." The result: Solomon went after the gods Ashtoreth and Milcom, Chemosh and Molech. He built high places and temples for these gods and for the gods of all of his foreign wives. Foolishness! The scriptures tell us that the Lord had appeared to Solomon twice, ". . . and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods." How could he not have listened to the Lord?

Think back to your last sin—big or small, it doesn't matter. Do the scriptures address the issue of your sin? The Word of our Lord is clear; we sin in thought, word, and deed. Often we gossip and defame our neighbors, hate and seek revenge. Often we fail to keep our promises and make promises we never intend to keep. Often we slight our friends and family and despise our God and His Word. Who of us can not find a passage in the scriptures where God forbids these things? Thanks be to the Holy Spirit and the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ who has covered us with a robe of His righteousness!

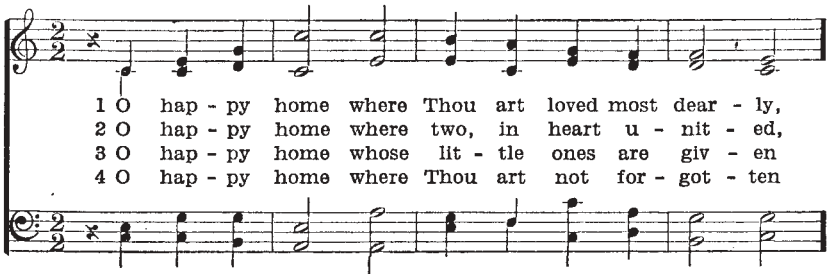
Will our next president have the wisdom of Solomon? The chances are, not likely. Can we obtain the wisdom that Solomon enjoyed? May the Holy Spirit cause us to follow Solomon's example in seeking out the Lord's wisdom and understanding rather than falling into earthly foolishness.

As our Lord directs us through the pen of his servant Solomon: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones" (Prov. 3:5-8).

—Teacher David Bernthal



Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns



1 O hap - py home where Thou art loved most dear - ly,
2 O hap - py home where two, in heart u - nit - ed,
3 O hap - py home whose lit - tle ones are giv - en
4 O hap - py home where Thou art not for - got - ten

O Happy Home A Hymn for the Family #626 in The Lutheran Hymnal

How is it possible to achieve a continuing harmony and happiness in our Christian homes? At times it may seem to be an impossibility because of all the obstacles that there are to that goal in our everyday lives. There are the stresses at the workplace and at home, the quarreling and fussing among the children, the trying to stay on top of bills . . . all these join forces in an attempt to see that our home life is anything but pleasant!

The answer lies in the words of this month's hymn. It was written by Karl Johann Philipp Spitta, who was said to be the greatest German hymn-writer of the 1800s.

Not all was pleasant for the Spitta family. They were among the Huguenots who fled during the Roman Catholic persecutions in France. Karl's father died when he was four. His younger brother died by drowning at a young age.

And yet, when Karl looked back at his growing-up years, he remembered the happiness fostered there under the care of his mother, a Christian Jewess. This month's hymn is said to be a description of his happy home life.

Happiness lies in the One in whom the Christian family trusts—the "Savior full of grace." To Him parents cleave "in truth forever . . . in joy and

grief make Thee their only Stay.” To Him “little ones are given early . . . in humble faith.” To Him, the “great Physician . . . ev’ry wounded spirit is brought.”

And how happy all of us will be when we join the whole family of faith “in the blessed home above . . . His everlasting home of peace and love!”

—Pastor Paul Krause



THE WORSHIP SERVICE

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

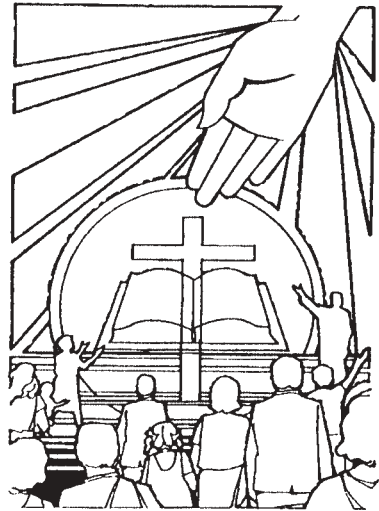
Psalm 95:6

First in a Series—

Introduction

Over the years we have heard many comments about our worship services. Some have indicated that they prefer little or no variation from our conventional Sunday “Order of Morning Service” (page 5ff. from *The Lutheran Hymnal*). We hear from time to time that since we know that order so well, it is comfortable and thus most conducive to heartfelt worship. Others propose that change helps to keep one alert and contributes to more thoughtful worship.

We have sought to strike a happy medium. We do not wish to introduce something which may not help—but rather hinder—this special spiritual experience. Therefore any changes we make we do with much forethought and concern for the worshiper. Out of 168 hours in a week we have approximately one hour to serve God’s people with the best spiritual meal possible. Therefore the service needs to be spiritually edifying, comforting, enjoyable, strengthening, and uplifting. And by all means, it should be simple to follow. But even though it may be simple,



there may be questions as to why things are done in a certain way or why certain parts of our conventional Sunday service are as they are.

In order to gain a deeper understanding and greater appreciation for our worship service, we are offering a series of articles on this subject. We hope and pray that it will be edifying and help us grow in appreciation of our worship service.

Definition

The word “worship” is derived from the Old English “weorthscipe.” The value or “worth” of someone or something is emphasized. Our church services are worship services. This is true whether it is a Sunday morning, mid-week, funeral, or wedding service. Above all, our attention needs to be centered upon the Lord our God who is our highest and dearest treasure. “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. . . . Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Rev. 4:11, 5:12)

Worship In Our Lives

The psalmist invites: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker” (Ps. 95:6). He invites all people of God to join in worshipping the Lord God of heaven and earth. This is something which God’s people do in an informal way every day. They wish to praise and glorify the name of God each day by their thoughts, words, and deeds.

But God’s people also have chosen to worship in a more formal way. For example, Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord of “the fruit of the ground” and “of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen. 4:3-4). Following the

world-wide flood, “Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). Down through the ages worship services have been carried on by God’s people in various ways and forms.

A Human Need

Such worship services flow out of a need for God’s people to stay close to the one true God of heaven and earth. A good relationship of the people with God is essential for life. When this relationship is severed, spiritual life is lost. As a result such people sense that something is wrong in their lives and wander about aimlessly, trying to find reason and purpose for living—but they will not find life in the true sense of the word until their relationship with the one true God has been restored.

Down through the ages God’s people have realized the need to stay close to their Lord and receive His gifts of love in Word and Sacrament for their spiritual strength and life. As our Savior points out: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life” (Jn. 6:63).

(To be continued)

—Pastor em. L. Dale Redlin



SMORGASBORD

•TWO NEW SERIES

This month we are introducing two new series of articles which we trust the reader will find edifying. Both are intended to aid us in what is surely a highpoint of the Christian life—the

worship of our Savior-God.

The series on “THE WORSHIP SERVICE” first appeared in the *Immanuel Home Messenger* (1993-94), the newsletter of Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota

when the Rev. L. Dale Redlin was serving as pastor. Pastor Redlin, now in semi-retirement, wrote the series for his congregation for the good reasons explained in the first installment.

The series on the Lord's Prayer was first written for the members of Resurrection Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas by the congregation's pastor, Daniel Fleischer.

Though neither series was written originally for the *Lutheran Spokesman*, with the writers' permission we are adapting them for purposes of sharing them with a wider audience.

May we add that, together with the Lord's Prayer series, we are printing Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism on the various petitions. There are a number of different translations of Luther's catechism at use among us. For comparison's sake we are printing the version Pastor Fleischer uses in his articles (the blue 1943 Concordia Publishing House version) along with the most recent version introduced among us (the red 1988 version of CLC Pastor [now Professor] Mike Sydow).

Ours is a day when church growth enthusiasts like to suggest that Christian worship services need to be enhanced by all sorts of special "draws" to bring people into church—and then even more to keep them coming back. We are among those who have resisted the trend. Having said that, may we add that as the first installment in "THE WORSHIP SERVICE" suggests, every change or variation in the "page five" worship service is not necessarily bad. (Speaking for himself as a pastor, your editor is thankful for the recent *Worship Supplement 2000* made available for

use in our CLC congregations by ILC Professor John Reim. It provides a few supplemental hymns and and alternative liturgies.) At the same time, there is much to be said for uniformity—that is, for maintaining a common and thus more familiar setting by which God's people can worship Him "comfortably" in spirit and in truth.

•A THIRD SERIES

There is yet a third series beginning in this issue. Pastor Wayne Eichstadt of Immanuel, Mankato has, upon request, provided us with a series of four articles under the title "FACING HOMOSEXUALITY."

This timely writing first appeared also in the newsletter of Immanuel congregation.

•**PRAYERS FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY' WEEK!?** (*The comments which follow have been adapted from the January 23, 2000 bulletin of Grace Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota; Paul Fleischer is pastor*)

This week is currently being celebrated. Evidence of it locally are the ecumenical services with pastors from the Roman Catholic, ELCA Lutheran, Methodist, and Community churches exchanging pulpits, no doubt bringing messages which contain little more than the shallow, watered-down theology so common to ecumenicists. There will doubtless be much talk about "love" and "building bridges over what divides us" and so forth.

We are among those who choose not to participate. On our part, we refuse for conscience reasons bound in the Word. Those who do participate can do so only by agreeing to disagree—say, compromise!—on Bible doctrine. As 'prayers for Christian unity' are offered, how can this be done



One display at last summer's synod convention told the story of the Traveling Vacation Bible School. This program involves many volunteers who assist smaller CLC congregations nationwide in reaching out to their communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ

with clear conscience before God who in copious passages in His Word is so explicit in His warnings against false teachers and teachings? (Yes, we know the answer to our own question. In a day when 'truth' is a relative thing, doctrine is no longer seen or considered as important [or even knowable!], and surely not as divisive.)

In addition, make no mistake who is behind all this call for unity. It is the Roman Catholic Church. We read that this week the pope welcomed "a significant representation of the world's non-Catholic Christians" to the Vatican's special ecumenical service marking the Week for Christian Unity. "Delegates from 23 Orthodox and Reformed churches and communions attended the Holy Door ceremony. . . ." Also mentioned again is that the year 2000 has been dubbed a "Holy Year." This calendar year the pope gives "Roman Catholic pilgrims plenary indulgences—or full remission of temporal punishment for sins—when they enter the Holy Doors of Rome's major basilicas to confess their sins and pray

for the church."

In regard to all this we have read this assessment—in our view, a correct one—in a recent magazine: "The first doctrine that must give way for the Roman-led ecumenical movement to succeed is the doctrine of Scripture alone. Luther and other reformers risked life and property to maintain that all teachings and teachers must be judged by Scripture alone. Only because the teachings (traditions) of the Roman Church are made equal with Scripture can doctrines such as purgatory and indulgences be taught. Protestant leaders who reject the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God have little problem embracing the Roman Church" (*Vine & Branches*, Winter 1999, p. 10).

On the subject of unity, Luther one time put it like this: "Word and doctrine are to create unity or fellowship. Where they are one and the same, the rest will naturally follow; if not, no unity will abide anyway. Therefore do not speak to me of love or friendship when anything is to be detracted from

the Word or the faith; for we are told that not love but the Word brings eternal life, God's grace, and all heavenly treasures. We will gladly keep the peace with them in an external way, as we should do with everybody in the world, even with our worst enemies . . . but in doctrine and Christian fellowship we want to have nothing to do with them. Nor do we want to consider them brethren. . . ." (*What Luther Says*, Vol. III, #4546, p. 1411).

In some quarters of conservative Lutheranism a call has gone out for a second Reformation. We are sympathetic with the call, but will not hold our collective spiritual breath waiting for such an event to happen. God alone can or will bring about such a movement if He deems it good and necessary. Our concern must remain with ourselves and our on-going stance on the Word.

That Word, for example, directs: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31ff). "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10). "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people" (Rom. 16:17f). "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their

own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3ff—NIV).

Lord God, help us to speak the truth in love even as we stand fast in your Word of Truth which alone fosters true unity.

•**LB - AAL UPDATE** — (*We print this article as one which is consistent with biblical fellowship principles endorsed by the CLC. It appeared in the November 12, 2000 Sunday bulletin of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota; Pastors are Paul D. Nolting & Wayne Eichstadt.*)

Immanuel congregation and our CLC have identified the Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans as unionistic bodies to avoid. These two fraternal benefit societies involve their members in supporting church work in false-teaching church bodies. Evidence of this appeared again in the November issue of the *Metro Lutheran*, where one headline proclaimed: "LB, AAL distribute \$1.5 million to nation's three largest Lutheran bodies." The ensuing article explained that "LB/AAL funds provided \$700,000 to the ELCA, \$500,000 to the LCMS, and \$300,000 to the WELS. ELCA leaders say their funds will go to 30 separate ministry projects . . . LCMS will spend its funds on 26 ministry initiatives . . . WELS funds will enable the synod to pursue an unspecified number of projects, and 'will provide opportunities in ministry otherwise not open to us.'" Clearly LB/AAL are involved in church work and involve their members in the sin of unionism. Our God urges us to

“beware of false prophets” (cf. Mt. 7:15), not to support them. He urges us to avoid those who “cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned” (cf. Rom. 16:17), not to provide financial help for

their ministries. May the Lord continue to bless our efforts to sound a clear trumpet in a time when fewer and fewer people remain committed to a biblical confession!



THE LORD’S PRAYER—A Series

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE ADDRESS “Our Father who art in heaven”

Probably more people pray than are able to define prayer, or know for sure to whom it is that they are praying. Probably the best known prayer is what Christians know as the Lord’s Prayer.

So what is prayer? The dictionary definition is: “the act of asking for a favor with earnestness; a petition.” We like to define prayer as “a child of God speaking to His Father.” Such speaking includes petition as well as thanksgiving. Christian prayer is at the same time an “act of worship.”

Christian prayer is addressed to the Triune God. In the uniqueness of the Godhead He is the Creator of all that is and the Preserver of what He has created. He is the Redeemer of the world and the Savior of all who believe in Him. He is the Sanctifier who creates, sustains, and nourishes faith through the Word of the gospel.



The God of heaven has given to His children the right and privilege to call upon Him in prayer. He invites His children to come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in time of need. Since God commands us to pray as well as invites us to do so, and since He has promised to hear those who call upon him in faith, prayer is more than words flung into the air in the vague hope that they will reach divine ears somewhere in the cosmos. Prayer is the

confident expression of the child of God who believes that, as he asks things of God that have to do with this life, the Heavenly Father will answer according to His will.

Further, prayer is the confident expression of a child of God who trusts that the spiritual blessings necessary for salvation for which he asks come to pass, since it is the Father's good pleasure in Christ to give the believer such blessings. For that reason prayer is offered in Christ through the mediatorship of Jesus.

On this earth one can honestly call that one father whose father he is either by birth or by adoption. So also with respect to the Heavenly Father. We are told in the Gospel of John: "But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (1:12). In Galatians we read: "For you are all the sons of God

through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:26). So only they can call the God of heaven "Father" whose Father He is. Jesus amplified this in John 17: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word" (17:6). In John 8 we are told: "If you continue in my Word, then are you my disciples indeed..." (8:31).

When Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer—so called because He taught it—He did not teach it to the world which knows Him not, but to the disciples. Scripture is very clear. In Luke 11 we read: "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father which art in heaven...'" (11:1-2).

As we study the Lord's Prayer

THE INTRODUCTION

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children as their dear father.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S *Small Catechism*
Concordia Publishing House, 1943

The Address

"Our Father, who art in heaven."

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly encourages us to believe that He is our true Father and we are His true children, so that we may ask Him boldly and with complete confidence as dear children ask their dear father.

—MARTIN LUTHER'S *SMALL CATECHISM*
by Pastor Mike Sydow, 1988

which consists of seven petitions, we shall see that it is the grandest of all prayers not only because it is from the lips of our Lord Himself, but also because it encompasses all things for which a child of God could pray. Martin Luther said: “. . . for the Lord has composed the Lord’s Prayer for us in this compact manner and has included in it every need that may arise in all

our trials...” (*What Luther Says*, Vol. II, p. 791, 2459)

The Lord has given the faith, the privilege, and the prayer. He has promised to hear all who call upon Him in the name of Jesus, the Savior. The Father delights in the prayers of His children. They are blessed who “ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.”

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



VBS in Coloma, Michigan—

Noah’s Ark In Parade



One of the Vacation Bible School projects at Faith Lutheran Church in Coloma was to have the children participate in the building of a float for the Glad Peach Festival Parade in town.

It was decided to build a float in the shape of an ark resembling Noah’s Ark. Seeing the ark in its building stage led one to appreciate the work that Noah himself must have gone through in order to build such a massive vessel. The actual building of Noah’s Ark was an amazing feat as

God led Noah to persevere to complete the task the Lord set before him.

Just as Noah, his family, and representatives of all species of land animals were saved by that ark and by God, so we too are saved by God through water: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5). It is by God’s



Did Noah wear tennis shoes??

grace alone that Noah and his family were saved. So we too are saved by God's grace and not by our works.

Through bad weather and setbacks the float did get built by the time of the parade on Saturday, August 5th. Many of the children got their faces painted to appear as animals and rode on the ark. The pastor posing as Noah followed the float (ark).

Praise to God who enabled us to accomplish such a project and to enable us to spread His name abroad. We pray that the Lord would bless all our mission opportunities in this country and in foreign countries.

(Submitted by Pastor Matthew Gurath at the request of his congregation, Faith Lutheran, Coloma, Michigan.)

Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, James Naumann, who was called by Grace Ev. Lutheran congregation of Valentine, Nebr. to be its pastor, was installed on October 15, 2000.

—*Pastor Michael Wilke*

In accord with our usage and order, Mrs. Gloria Wilke and Mrs. Angela Meyer, who were called by Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church of Rapid City, S.Dak. to be their Christian Day School teachers, were installed on August 20, 2000.

—*Pastor Michael Wilke*

In accord with our usage and order, Karl Stewart, who was called by Grace Lutheran Church in Live Oak, Flo. to be its pastor, was installed on December 10, 2000.

—*Pastor John Schierenbeck*

This month's cover: John Fox

