

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



1 PETER 3:15-

"BUT SANCTIFY THE LORD GOD IN YOUR HEARTS,
AND ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE A DEFENSE TO EVERYONE
WHO ASKS YOU A REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU,
WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR"

SMORGASBORD

• EMPHASIS: PERSONAL MISSION WORK

The “missions” emphasis in this issue was by editorial request. Not necessarily a personal mission work angle. Yet it is interesting how all has “come together” (may we say) for such an emphasis. Let us explain.

The author-unknown poem “My Friend . . . ?” found in this issue was submitted some time ago. We were hesitant to use it, at least without some words of explanation. We happened to think of the poem while reading the e-mail writing below, together with the two devotional writings “Ambassadors For Christ” (by Pastor John Klatt) and “Mission Work—God’s Work” (by Pastor James Albrecht).

It is surely to be granted that the poem’s “spiritual shock treatment” idea is hardly proper motivation for personal Christian witnessing. For one thing, as Pastor Klatt brings out in his

article, the importance of the human agent who brings the gospel is truly secondary to the power of the gospel itself.

Interestingly, however, both writers—without consultation with the editor or, as far as we know, with one another—have included “true life” illustrations of individuals who were brought to faith by reluctant and/or unwitting human agents of the Spirit of God working through the Word.

In short, “Ambassadors For Christ”



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and “Mission Work—God’s Work,” coupled with the “THOUGHTS AFTER TODAY’S SERMON” piece below, are fitting words of explanation to “set the stage” for the compelling thoughts of the “My Friend . . . ?” poem.

In the words of a more familiar “poem”:

Let none hear you idly saying,
“There is nothing I can do,”
While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly,
Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when He calleth,
“Here am I, send me, send me!”

Through His enabling Spirit, may the Heavenly Father give each of us as His believing children the courage and confidence to follow through with the gospel-oriented encouragement of these holy words: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV).

• **“THOUGHTS AFTER TODAY’S SERMON”** (What follows was posted on CLC e-mail. Like the poem opposite, the thoughts add a perspective on personal mission work we all need—but perhaps don’t like—to hear. The writer is Robin Vogsland, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico. We copy with permission.)

Our discussion of this morning’s sermon brought up some thoughts:

When we Christians think of bear-

ing witness to our neighbors and acquaintances, we are so often so reluctant to do anything. Inertia rules. We think of the stubbornness of our neighbor or of their dedication to some philosophy or lust or religion. We are in intimidated by the vastness of the task and the daunting, seemingly impervious facade of resistance presented by the unbeliever. We worry that our little candle is just too small to light so great a

My Friend . . . ?

My friend, I stand in judgment now,
And feel that you’re at fault somehow.
On earth I walked with you by day,
But never did you point the Way.

You knew the Lord in truth and glory;
But never did you tell His story.
My knowledge then was very dim;
You could have led me on to Him.

We lived together here on earth,
But never shared the second birth.
And now I stand this day condemned,
I wish that you had preached of Him.

You taught me many things, ‘tis true;
I called you “friend” and trusted you.
But now I learn that it’s too late,
For you to keep me from this fate.

We walked by day, and talked by night,
And yet you showed me not the Light.
You let me live and love and die,
But cared not if I’d live on high.

I called you “friend” in earthly life,
And trusted you through joy and strife.
And yet, on coming to my end—
I cannot, now, call you “my friend.”

—Anonymous

(Note: Some editing of this poem was done to improve the meter)

darkness.

But that is not how God sees it, and surely that is not how He wants us to think of it. God does not see a body of resistance that must be overcome by a tremendous frontal assault. (No one is argued into the kingdom of heaven.) God sees only a dry husk of a spiritually dead person who is utterly powerless.

So God whispers to us: "Just draw close in love to that person I have sent to you; just lean your puny candle flame a little closer to that dry husk. Even a short time of continuous exposure to your weak flame can raise that dry material to the kindling point (remember that the flame on your candle is from ME); so just speak purpose-

fully to them for even a few minutes. And when it catches fire, the mental and spiritual resistance will be burned up from the inside by My Holy Spirit, rather than being overcome by any external force. It is not by might or by power, but by My Spirit."

We cannot see the dryness of the dry husk, but God can. Therefore, we should not try to judge the likelihood of success or hold back from speaking because "success" seems too low. God's program for us is that we heedlessly lean our little God-given candle to as many as cross our path. Then we can step back and let God finish what He has started.

*Our Lord is a consuming fire!
Lord, help our unbelief. Amen.*



AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

A missionary came to a village carrying a Bible in the language of the people there, intending to preach the gospel to them. But the people of that village were suspicious of strangers and killed the missionary before he had a chance to say one word to them. Years later another missionary came to that same village. When he began to talk to one of the men there, he was amazed to find that the man knew about Jesus Christ. The missionary asked how he had come to know the gospel. The man took him to his home and showed him a most extraordinary sight. The walls of the home were papered with pages of the Bible left there by the earlier missionary.

A Jewish man married a Christian woman who often spoke to him of Christ her Savior, but he remained an unbeliever. Then while serving as a

diplomat in a foreign country, the man was taken captive and held as a hostage. There he spent his days in a room by himself with nothing to occupy his mind. In an effort to retain his sanity, the man went back in his mind as far as he could remember and tried to recall everything in his life. In the course of this exercise he began to think of the gospel witness brought to him by his wife, and he became a believer.

Both of these stories show the power of the gospel and the secondary importance of the human agent who brings it. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that is the power of God for salvation. It is the Holy Spirit working through the gospel who turns man's heart from unbelief to faith. The preacher—the witness who brings the gospel to another—is an ambassador. When we

“ . . . The missionary carrying the Bible or the wife witnessing to her husband are features of God’s plan to bring the message of salvation in Christ to the world.”

preach the gospel, we are ambassadors of the King, carrying the King’s message. We are not responsible for the content of the message; we are not to apologize for it; nor are we to alter it in any way. We can add nothing to the message. We cannot force anyone to believe it. Our role is that of a servant.

A Feature Of God’s Plan

But this servant’s role is by no means to be despised. The missionary carrying the Bible or the wife witnessing to her husband are features of God’s plan to bring the message of salvation in Christ to the world. Christ has ordained that His gospel be taken to humanity by human preachers. When God wanted Cornelius, the Roman centurion, to hear the gospel, He sent an angel to him. But the angel did not

preach Christ. He told Cornelius to send for Peter, who came and preached Christ to Cornelius and his household and baptized them (Acts 10).

The calling of a preacher or witness is a high one. This is what Paul emphasizes when he says, “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). In the original text Christ is placed first in the sentence: “For Christ we are ambassadors.”

As representatives of the King, we bring a noble message, offering great gifts: the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. As ambassadors of the King we speak with royal authority. Jesus says to those who proclaim His gospel, “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Lk. 10:16).

As ambassadors we also have an interest in the message that we bring. We are not like the messenger boy who delivers an envelope but knows nothing of what is in it. We know and believe the gospel that we bring to others. We ourselves possess the blessings it offers. We love those to whom we bring the gospel and earnestly desire that they should believe it and be saved.

It is considered a great honor to be appointed an ambassador to represent a president or prime minister. It is a far greater honor and privilege to serve as an ambassador for the King of kings, to carry in our hands—and on our heart and lips—the life-giving gospel.

—*Pastor John Klatt*



This banner, made by member Sherri Winkelman, hangs in Ascension Lutheran Church, Kimball, Minnesota (see story, p. 18).

Mission Work—God’s Work

It was the early 1500’s. As the story has it, a Swiss monk named Martin of Basel had made an astonishing discovery. He had come upon something that could have made the difference between life and death for thousands of his countrymen. Unfortunately, as far as we know, he kept the information to himself. He carefully removed a stone from the wall of his monastery room and inserted the following message: “Most merciful Jesus, I know that I can be saved only by the merits of your blood. I acknowledge your sufferings for me. I love you.” Nearly one hundred years later, the tattered piece of parchment was found.

The question is, why would anyone who had discovered something so important keep it to himself? You may find the answer in your own life. Just ask yourself: “Have I ever missed an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others?”

And what were your reasons? It could be that you were afraid that others wouldn’t be interested in or wouldn’t believe what you had to tell them. From our perspective, witnessing opportunities usually come at inopportune times: wrong place, wrong people, wrong question—so we think. Peter felt that way when a golden opportunity arose in the high priest’s courtyard. What he ended up saying was worse than nothing, because his words forged a very serious denial.

We cringe whenever Peter’s story is read during Lent, not because we think we would have done better, but because we have the very same weakness ourselves. Who hasn’t felt the temptation to remain silent? Who has-

n’t knuckled under the pressure of the situation and said nothing at all?

Message All-important

Maybe you felt that others already knew what you had to say. Ours is called a Christian nation, and therefore we may think that people already know the way of salvation. But do they?

Church membership is no guarantee that people understand God’s grace. Ingrained in everyone’s being is the belief that we must contribute something to our salvation, making us semi-responsible for what is clearly the work of our God. Most denominations fail to separate Law from Gospel because of

... Perhaps it was inadequacy that you felt when the opportunity to witness arrived. You are not alone. Even great men of the Bible, such as Jeremiah and Moses, expressed that sentiment.

their faulty theology. They use the right words, but what they mean by “grace” is not necessarily true grace.

Perhaps it was inadequacy that you felt when the opportunity to witness arrived. You are not alone. Even great men of the Bible, such as Jeremiah and Moses, expressed that sentiment. They learned, as do we all, that the message—and not the messenger—is the important thing. Consider the young slave girl who apparently had no qualms about sharing her faith with a mighty Syrian commander. Think of the Samaritan woman. With her

shameful past fully absolved by her Savior, she shamelessly witnessed to her community. Uneducated fishermen addressed multitudes of common folk as well as schooled members of the Sanhedrin. One need not worry about human credentials when his heart has been changed by the gospel. Then, “we cannot but speak the things we have heard and seen.”

Perhaps you felt that you were simply not able to convince others anyway. Perhaps you thought that debating

skills and rhetorical abilities are necessary for persuading others to your point of view. But you can't persuade anyone to come to faith, nor can I. This is God's work. Our role is simply to be what He has made us: lights, witnesses, and messengers.

God's forgiveness certainly covers every opportunity we have allowed to slip by. In fact, His forgiveness covers every part of our sinful lives. Once you know that, of course, then you have a message that really needs to be shared.

—Pastor James Albrecht



His Story

In the next several weeks children will be starting back to school. This is an exciting time. It is exciting to see old friends again and to start new classes. It is exciting to get back to history class.

... History?!

As I think back to my school days, history was never something I was anxious to get back to. I always thought of it as a necessary evil that all children have to endure before they can get out of school.

But I have come to look at history in a different light, and it is actually exciting. All of history is “His Story.” It is the living demonstration of how God is carrying out His will and plan for His children.

The Power And Wisdom Of God

In some ways history can demonstrate the power and wisdom of God in a more remarkable way than other subjects do. In science class we study all

the wonders of God's creation. What wisdom is revealed in all the intricate details of everything God made! It is exciting to discover the marvels of what God has made and how we may become the best stewards of His creation. We learn Bible stories and see God's almighty power over nature as He performs miracles for the sake of His people.

How amazing it is to witness God parting the waters of the Red Sea, or making the sun stand still in the sky. What tremendous power God displayed in protecting His children from the fiery furnace and from the hungry lions. How comforting to see God's power over every sickness, over the devils, and even over death itself. What a great God we have!

In some ways, however, history is even more amazing and exciting than all this. When God performs a miracle, He “simply” interrupts the events of the world with His power and does what He wants.

All history is a demonstration of how God intricately orchestrates the virtually infinite number of events and circumstances to accomplish His will. He takes into account—and into His control—all of the personal attitudes, ambitions, and abilities of men (and even of the devils!) and uses them to work together to perfectly fulfill His divine plan.

God does not force people to do good and He never causes or tempts anyone to do evil, yet He uses man's choices, actions, and plans and synchronizes them perfectly so that His will is done.

God At Work

This is a marvelous display of God's power and control of this world.

God tells us that He "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). That includes all the decisions and actions of nations and kings. King Jehoshaphat said in a prayer, "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?" (2 Chron. 20:6)

God Himself says through the prophet Isaiah, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done. Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Is. 46:9-11).

It is nothing less than utterly amaz-



ing to see how great men of history like Alexander the Great, working by his own ambitions and strategy, conquered the world. Yet Alexander was carrying out God's plan in preparing the world for the birth of His Son.

Or how God used the heathen Romans to conquer Europe so that the gospel could be spread freely, and Europe could become a stronghold for Christianity. That, of course, spread to the new world as the Europeans migrated to the Americas. God directed the course of history so that you and I could have the gospel today and be free to worship Him in truth. How exciting and comforting it is to see God at work.

No matter what period of history you may be studying, look to see how God was directing things to work out for the benefit of His Church. You may not see any miracles performed as you study the course of history, yet God directs all events in a way that goes beyond the miraculous.

So as you go back to school, look forward to history class and watch for the ways God was working His plans.

And know that He still does the same today. Even more exciting—watch to see how God will use YOU in working out His Story!

—Pastor David Reim

“Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing” (Luke 23:8-9).

BORING WORSHIP?

From the editor:

This devotion was preached to the ILC faculty, staff, and student body on May 4, 2001. Professor Steve Sippert, the writer [and preacher], acknowledges a bit of a disconnect between the Scripture text from Luke 23 and the body of the address. Says the professor: “I believe this is the result of a devotional rather than expositional approach. Thus I offer the suggestion that the text could be dropped from the article.” Nevertheless, we choose to retain the text.

While this article is a bit longer than usual *Spokesman* fare, the reader will surely not be “bored” in the reading; the devotion came to us by recommendation of another ILC professor.

It was the first day of Vacation Bible School. At the opening devotion the pastor came out of the sacristy, bouncing a basketball right there in the front of the church! The children were very surprised. When the pastor began to speak, he said there are some things that a person shouldn’t do in church. Some things are too distracting. Certain activities and certain forms of appearance would actually steal the attention away from Jesus, where the spotlight should always be. If we all came to church with our favorite snack to eat, that would be more than distracting—it would be disrespectful. To treat Jesus like a TV show in the family living room . . . ? We can’t do that.

Now maybe you have thought to yourself, “Wouldn’t it be permissible, even beneficial if the church service

had a little more comfort, a little more convenience, and a little more fun involved?” There’s a growing popular notion in today’s society that religion should be entertaining. Let’s recognize the devil’s dirty work. He wants you to swallow the lie that Jesus should be entertaining. Meanwhile, Jesus wants you to realize the truth that because He is your Savior, He deserves your grateful attention and your thoughtful devotion.

Herod was glad to see Jesus on the morning of Good Friday because “he hoped to see some miracle done by Him” (Lk. 23:8). Many people today—though not as crassly as Herod did—are walking in the same steps nonetheless. They are willing to experiment with Christianity as long as it’s fun, as long as it appeals to their sense of instant gratification. Many pastors and churches are willing to cater to this viewpoint. They replace the meaningful elements of worship with things more appealing to the flesh. They replace sacred hymns, liturgy, and Law-and-Gospel preaching with skits, puppet shows, and other popular forms of presentation. Consequently, church has more the look of a talk show than a worship service. And yes, people love it. They flock in great numbers to be entertained on Sunday morning.

Perhaps this sort of thing has a cer-

tain appeal to us as well. How often have we thought, "This service is getting boring; I'd rather be doing something else right now"? Where does that come from—this thought of "boring" worship? Is there something wrong with the gospel or the way that the Bible portrays Jesus? Of course not! There's something wrong with us. Our corrupted heart is just too ready to go along with the idea, "If you amuse me, if you entertain me, then I'll pay attention." Our human nature wants everything to be fun, including the Sunday service. If we assume that worship is boring, then we're letting sin take over on two fronts at least. Showing disrespect to God is sin #1. Depriving yourself of what you need the most is sin #2.

By virtue of its content, Christianity is not entertaining. It's not even comfortable. Look at the core problem of your sin. When you come to terms with that reality, you're bound to have negative, unpleasant feelings. God's law says you're guilty; so you feel guilty. God's law says that you and I deserve death and hell; so yes, there's fear of judgment. And then the law says that you can't do anything to get yourself out of this predicament. How does that make you feel? Helpless! Full of despair! Shall we get rid of the law to remove those negative feelings? Can we make the law a little more fun or a little easier to take? It's just not possible, when the fact of the matter is this: God has to crush us with the heavy hand of His law in order to heal and bring about the recovery of the gospel.

Even the gospel has a message far removed from human entertainment. If the opportunity came along to watch a surgical operation, you would not

expect to be amused by what you saw. It's blood and guts there on the operating table. A person's life hangs in the balance. Well, the same goes for the cross of Christ. There's nothing amusing about the Lord's suffering or the torment of His crucifixion or the God-forsakenness that He felt, although each of these things will make you better off. He suffered your punishment from God and purchased your forgiveness and your place in heaven. No, it won't entertain you, but the cross of Christ will surely change your life and make it last forever.

Let's back up to a previous thought—the troublesome idea that "worship is boring." I want to help you overcome that feeling. There is a way to readjust the attitude. Before you enter the worship area in chapel or in church, stop and ask yourself: "What's going to happen here?" Expect the sacred. Expect the uncommon. God is coming to meet us in His Word. Do you remember what the Lord said to Moses at the burning bush? "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

You enter the holy ground of God's house, not to be overwhelmed but rather to be served at His table. We get to "trade up" every time we are at the gathering of Christian worship. Here's the standing invitation from your Lord. You should bring all the guilt for every sin you've done. Confess it, own up to it, and have it replaced with the guarantee of His forgiveness. You should bring all of your fears—especially the fear of death and hell—and have them replaced with the promise of eternal life and the comfort of God's refuge. You should bring all the troubles and sorrows that are bothering you and

have them replaced with the confidence and the joy that comes from knowing Christ as the all-conquering Savior. Jesus wants you to dump all your bad on Him and take home with you all the good things that He has to offer.

As a consumer I have noticed two distinct tendencies in the market place. Either the quality goods are too expensive, or the bargain goods are cheaply made. It's so difficult to get good quality at a low price. Just think—in the Word of God you get the riches of His grace at no cost to you! Therefore, dear Christian, if the mind starts to wander

and those feelings of boredom creep in, you can revisit the model of Christian worship.

For your own sake remember the following: 1) church is sacred, you're on holy ground, and therefore it's too important to daydream or get distracted. Remember: 2) the Word is what you need for spiritual safety and blessing. And remember: 3) that Christian worship is the best deal you can get, which makes it time well spent and the best thing for you.

No, it won't be entertaining, but the Lord assures you it will be life-saving. Amen.



THE WORSHIP SERVICE

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

Psalm 95:6

Eighth in a Series—

The Gloria In Excelsis and Instruction from God's Word

This conclusion of Part I of the liturgy was often referred to as the “Angelic Hymn” because its opening lines are taken from the words of the heavenly choir above the fields of Bethlehem on the night our Savior was born.

Together with the *Magnificat* (Mary's song of praise at the annunciation), the *Benedictus* (the utterance of Zacharias concerning the exalted mission of his son, the forerunner of the Christ), and the *Nunc Dimittis* (the prayer of thanksgiving that came from

the lips of the aged Simeon as he held the Christchild in his arms in the temple), *The Gloria in Excelsis* comes to us from the earliest days of the Christian Church. All of these expressions of praise have become a permanent part of the liturgies of Christianity and have resounded in its sanctuaries down through the centuries.

In our regular order of worship we often substitute hymn 237 (“All Glory Be To God On High”), which is a metrical version of *The Gloria In Excelsis*. *The Gloria In Excelsis* was and is more

of a chant. Likely this style of singing was carried over from the Hebrew worship of the Old Testament.

While many of our churches use substitute hymns for *The Gloria In Excelsis*, this ancient, meaningful hymn should not be cast aside and forgotten. Let it be used at least periodically, and perhaps on special occasions (a lower key can be used for easier singing).

“Glory be to God on high: And on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heav’nly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord.

They devoted themselves to the APOSTLES’ TEACHING and to the FELLOWSHIP, to the BREAKING OF BREAD and to PRAYER.

ACTS 2:42



Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”

The Salutation

“The Lord be with you: And with thy spirit.”

Having confessed our sins unto God, having received His gracious assurance of forgiveness, and having responded with praise and adoration to our loving and forgiving God, we now begin Part II of our Worship Service, which is the section made up primarily of instruction from God’s Word.

We begin with a greeting. That is why it is called *The Salutation*. The worship leader greets the people: “The Lord be with you.” The people respond: “And with thy spirit.”

Though this is not an every-day greeting among Christians today, perhaps it should be. Similar greetings were common among the believers whose words are recorded in Holy Scripture. For example, in the book of Ruth we read that Boaz came to his reapers in the field and greeted them with these words: “The LORD be with you!” And they answered him: “The LORD bless you!”

After *The Salutation* the worship leader invites the worshipers to pray. Then follows . . .

The Collect For The Day

The Collect is a short prayer which is to briefly refer to the principal point being stressed in the worship service on that day. There are *Introits* (described previously), *Collects*, and *Graduals* (to be spoken of later) assigned for each Sunday and for some special days of worship. They are all found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (pp.

54ff). However, some worship leaders write their own *Collects* to coincide with the primary thought of the day. After this short prayer the worshippers respond with an “Amen,” signifying their desire to make this prayer their own.

The Epistle Lesson

The first instruction from the Word is generally taken from one of the epistles of Holy Scripture. The word *epistle* simply means “letter.” All of the books of the New Testament except the four Gospels are epistles—letters written by inspiration of God to individuals or to various groups of Christians in approximately the first 50-60 years after Jesus Christ died, arose, and ascended into heaven. From that time on these letters have been faithfully read by the people of God, realizing as the Apostle Paul puts it: “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13).

Worship services from the earliest times included chosen readings from

the epistles. Initially entire books were read, often continuing on from one service to another. As time went on, the church year as we know it today developed. The epistle readings were shortened, and these shortened sections of the epistles became designated readings for each Sunday of the church year.

The references for these are found in the liturgical appointments for each Sunday on pp. 54ff. in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Other series of readings for each Sunday are found on pp. 159ff. However, since these assigned readings may not emphasize the central point of a particular worship service for a given Sunday, the thoughtful worship leader will choose an epistle lesson to coincide with the focal point of the worship service (usually driven by the sermon text).

Following the Epistle Lesson is the . . .

Gradual

The word *gradual* comes from the Latin “gradus,” which means “step.” It is so named because at this time in



In the Spring, volunteers Larry and Martin Hansen remodeled this house for the second missionary in Nigeria (more pictures, p.19).

early liturgies a small choir positioned on steps to the pulpit sang or chanted a psalm. As with the *Introit*, the *Gradual* eventually was shortened (the choir no longer sang or chanted it), and finally it was reduced to a few verses from the psalm. From time to time a hymn may be sung in this place in an attempt to restore some of the original purpose of the *Gradual*.

The *Gradual* often begins and always ends with a “hallelujah.” This

signals a responsive “hallelujah” from the worshipers. Joyful praise is found in the word “hallelujah” (“Hallel,” praise, plus “jah,” Jehovah— “Praise the LORD!”) This word is used again and again in the psalms. For example, it is the first word in Psalms 106, 111, 112, 113. “Praise the LORD!” is a deep and heartfelt response to the words of God just read and received with a heart of faith.

—Pastor L. Dale Redlin



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.

5th Petition

“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

So often we find ourselves mouthing words in worship and in prayer without thinking about what we are saying. We pray the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us our inattentiveness and our empty words. We further implore Him to direct our thoughts and our words so that we always speak what we mean and mean what we speak when we address Him in worship and prayer. We praise our Lord for His patience with us and for His grace toward us in that He forgives us over and over again instead of treating us as we deserve. For surely it is true as we confess in the 5th petition of the Lord's Prayer as taught by Dr. Luther: “We daily sin much and indeed deserve

nothing but punishment.”

In this petition, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” we ask that our Heavenly Father would not look upon our sins, but graciously, for Jesus' sake, forgive them. We have the wonderful assurance from the Scriptures that the Father is pleased to forgive us our sins, yes, even the dullness of our devotion, for Jesus' sake. For this cause Jesus came into the world. His perfection covers our imperfections; His holiness covers our sins; His death has paid our penalty; and His resurrection has put an exclamation mark to His word from the cross: “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). By virtue of His finished work, our sins have been for-

THE FIFTH PETITION

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we also heartily forgive and readily do good to those who sin against us.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S *Small Catechism*
(Concordia Publ. House, 1943)

The Fourth Petition

“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look on our sins or deny our prayer because of them. We are not worthy of things for which we are asking, neither have we deserved them. However, we ask that our Father would by His grace give us what we ask; even though we sin often every day and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. We, too, will from our hearts gladly forgive and do good to all those who sin against us.

—MARTIN LUTHER'S *SMALL CATECHISM*
(Sydow edition, 1988)

A comparison of two currently used versions



given.

The forgiveness of sins is a gift in which to delight and for which to thank

our God. Forgiveness of sins is not license to live a life of sin or to think of sin lightly. It is the power to fight against sin. Daily the Christian will lament his sin and be thankful to God for His grace.

Our thanks for forgiveness is given in words and also shown in our actions. We cannot earn forgiveness of sins, but we can lose that gift if we find ourselves unwilling or unable to forgive our neighbor. Take your Bible and read Matthew 18:22-35 as well as Mark 11:25-26. Now think about what you are praying. “Forgive us our trespasses

AS we forgive those who trespass against us.” Have we ever said or thought, “I can (will) never forgive him (her) for what was done to me”? Then ask yourself a question: “Do I really want God to forgive me as I forgive my neighbor?” This in turn will lead the honest heart to confess, “Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake, and help me, O Lord, to forgive my neighbor, to put behind me all grudges.” Remember, forgiveness is not approval.

Jesus forgave us our sin, though He did not approve of our sin. Jesus died for us. He has forgiven us at great cost to Himself. He did not complain or murmur. For those who crucified Him, and ultimately for us, He prayed to His Father, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). If

our God has forgiven us and continues to forgive a mountain of sin daily, even those sins which we do not know (Ps. 19:12), can we not find it in our heart to forgive our neighbor who has not sinned against us in the same magnitude as our sin against God?

Even as we continue to sin in weakness and by reason of our flesh, the Father is strong in grace to forgive. As we contemplate that and rejoice in that forgiveness, “We will also heartily forgive and readily do good to those who sin against us.” The fact that we fail is certainly no reason to quit trying, and is good reason to daily pray, “Forgive us our trespasses . . .”. The Lord will give the strength for the next day and the new desire to forgive as we have been forgiven.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



FROM A PASTOR’S DESK—

“Part of the problem . . .”

No doubt you too have read lately about the formation of another “branch” (synod?) within Lutheranism. We speak of a group or association calling itself “Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ” (LCMC) within the 10,000-congregation and three-million-plus-member Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

The association (also called the WordAlone Network) claims to number about 160 congregations and 80,000 members. It is made up of dissenters to the “full communion” agreement announced last year by the ELCA and the Episcopal church. That agreement (which took effect January 1, 2001) allows the two denominations to

share clergy. According to the dissenters, one of the problems with the agreement is that new pastors have to be ordained by a bishop who is a member of the “historic episcopate”—bishops who claim to represent an unbroken line dating to the beginning of the Christian Church.

The dissenters object, we’re told, on the basis of Luther’s Reformation teaching about the universal priesthood of all believers—a teaching to which we in the conservative, orthodox Lutheran church have always subscribed. In our circles—and on the basis of Reformation teaching—it doesn’t take a special bishop to ordain, but ordinary pastors can and do ordain

other pastors.

Now, on the one hand, we commend the dissenters. It is rare in our day for anybody anymore within the visible Christian church—be it an individual or a group—to take a stand for (or against) something, particularly if church doctrine is involved. The prevailing attitude goes something like this: “The epitome of Christianity is love—a love which sees differences of doctrine to be a strictly personal and private matter, and surely not divisive of religious fellowship (or joint worship).” We in the CLC are among the ever-shrinking minority of those within the Christian church in general and the Lutheran church in particular who object to this liberal, postmodern idea.

That being said—as our heading puts it, we are also of the conviction that the ELCA dissenters (and any others who protest against but refuse to “come out and be separate” from false teachers) are part of the problem. The problem of which we speak is unionism—religious unionism.

By unionism we mean remaining in the bonds of church fellowship with those with whom one is not agreed in Bible doctrine and practice. Such unionism is rampant today in spite of the fact that many passages of Scripture show clearly that it is sinful. It is sinful because it is disobedience to the Word of the Lord.

When it comes to false teachers and their teachings, the Lord God commands His children to “come out from among them and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:17); God’s children are not to receive “deceivers” “into your house nor greet them” (2 Jn. 10-11), not to mention having fellowship with them within the “house” of a synod; false teachers are

to be “avoided” like the plague (Rom. 16:17-18); as the kingdom work goes forward, there are to be “no divisions among you” so that “you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Cor. 1:10).

Also among us religious unionism has been characterized as “agreeing to disagree agreeably.” That characterization is not just a caricature. The good—though mistaken and misguided—intent of remaining in synodical fellowship (though one disagrees with some established doctrine or practice of the larger body) is that fighting for the truth from within is the way to go.

According to human reason and opinion, perhaps. The fact is, however, that such “internal fighters for truth” or “error-exposers” are themselves disobedient for such a stance. They are also in danger—according to Scripture itself!—of becoming victims to the very errors they are seeking to eradicate from the false teaching body. The Bible teaches that, like yeast in dough, the leaven of error is continually at work to permeate the whole (1 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 5:9); Scripture teaches that “internal error-exposers” are guilty in that they “share in other people’s sins” (1 Tim. 5:22, cf. 2 Jn. 11).

There is more to say. Today the application of the separation principle is to be faulted, according to some, as violating or sinning against Christian love. We disagree. The love of a child of God for his Heavenly Father and His Word will include childlike obedience to that Word. “If you abide in My Word,” says Jesus, “you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32). Love for—and obedience to—the Word comes before

all other love.

It is for such reasons that we say: let dissenters within the doctrinally bankrupt ELCA make a clear and clean break from that body. It may cost such things as earthly property (we recently read that the ELCA is demanding a 90% “pro” vote before any protesting congregation can withdraw and take its property with it); it may also cost the breaking up of one’s earthly family. Such sacrifices have always been part

of the cost of Christian cross-bearing and discipleship. Jesus said: “He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt. 10:38).

In a number of places Dr. Luther wrote, in effect, that Bible doctrine is “of heaven” and that therefore conscientious Christians will not want to part with one iota of its clear teachings.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word!

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



(Adapted with permission from an article in the Kimball, Minnesota newspaper)

Kimball church installs first minister

Ascension Lutheran Church in Kimball has installed its first resident minister.

The congregation, which today has twenty-five members, was begun as a mission church at the Streich farm in Eden Valley in 1993. It is affiliated with the Church of the Lutheran Confession, a synod of the Lutheran church. Although there are several churches of that synod within Minnesota, the nearest one is at least 80 miles to the north or south of here.

At first the congregation met at North Junior High School in St. Cloud. When that location became unavailable, the congregation moved to Kimball, into the former D.A.C. building, which is now its permanent home.

Kimball is a geographically central location for Ascension’s members, who come from Avon, Eden Valley, St. Cloud, and further. Interestingly, none of the twenty-five members is from Kimball, something they’d like to see change soon.

In 1996 Ascension had its first Christmas program; there were three children in it. In 1999 it had its first Vacation Bible School. There were six children in the 2000 Christmas program.

Until recently the tiny church had a different pastor every week. Many were seminary students from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Other visiting pastors have come from as far away as Mankato.

Karl Neumann, a retired minister who had visited Ascension several



Pastor Karl Neumann

times, became the church's first resident minister. He and his wife recently relocated from Texas to Watkins.

Born in a suburb of Berlin in 1919, he came to the U.S. as a child just before Thanksgiving in 1923. Coming from post-World War I Germany, he was awestruck by the bounty in America.

Neumann attended Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm and graduated from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. He completed seminary at Thiensville in 1944, the same year he became a citizen and married his wife Lorraine.

Pastor Neumann has previously served (Wisconsin synod—ed.) congregations in Minnesota, South Dakota, Arizona, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Washington.

Each Sunday Ascension holds worship service at 9:30 a.m., followed by Sunday School and Bible Class at 10:30. For more information you may

call Pastor Neumann at (320) 764-2975. Visitors are always welcome!

Editor's note:

Since its beginnings at the Reuben and Joan Streich farm in 1993, Ascension Lutheran has been under the auspices of Grace Lutheran Church of Fridley, whose pastors (Daniel Fleischer, John Ude) have until now coordinated the congregation's ministry and on-going outreach efforts.

With regard to the April 29th installation service, Mrs. Streich passes along these interesting sidelights: "During the installation service we also had special music. The opening hymn was 'Beautiful Savior,' with Pam Streich on flute, Karen Marschel on clarinet, and Sue Nelson on the organ. The Sunday School children also sang."

May the Lord richly bless the gospel ministry in this central Minnesota area!



Up to 18 volunteers each day helped Larry (shown here) and Martin Hansen (below) in their remodeling project in Nigeria (see picture, p.13).



Announcements

Great Lakes Pastoral Conference

Dates: September 25-27, 2001

Place: Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis.

Agenda:

1. Old Testament Exegesis: Ecclesiastes 11:1ff.—Pastor Timothy Holland
2. New Testament Exegesis: 2 Corinthians 13:5ff.—Pastor Philip Matzke
3. Encouragement in the Pastor's Personal Use of God's Word—Pastor David Naumann
4. Balancing Sanctification and Gospel Preaching—Professor Steven Sippert
5. A Lay User-friendly Pamphlet for Witnessing to Mormons—Pastor Mark Bernthal
6. Church History (A.D.1096 and the First Crusade)—Pastor Joel Fleischer
7. Isagogical Study (essayist's choice)—Pastor Matthew Gurath
8. Book Review (essayist's choice)—Professor David Lau

Communion Service Speaker—Professor Michael Sydow

Conference Chaplain—Pastor Gordon Radtke
—*Pastor Mark Gullerud, Sec'y*

West-Central Pastoral Conference

Dates: September 18-20, beginning at 10:00 a.m. (MDT) on Tuesday through noon on Thursday

Place: Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Loveland, Colo.

Agenda:

- 1) Old Testament Exegesis: Daniel 9:20-27—Pastor Michael Wilke
- 2) New Testament Exegesis: Romans 8:24-30—Pastor Peter Reim
- 3) Study and Application of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: How Do We Avoid Being "Unequally Yoked Together with Unbelievers?"—Pastor Jay Hartmann
- 4) Does True Oneness Require Uniformity of Doctrine and Application?—Pastor James Sandeen
- 5) Explaining Textual Variants to our Members—Pastor Timothy Wheaton
- 6) The Relationship Between Pastor and the Church Council—Pastor Andrew Schaller
- 7) A Survey and Analysis of Eschatological Views—Pastor John M. Johannes
- 8) Does a Woman Pastor Serve Under a Legitimate Call?—Pastor Michael Schierenbeck
- 9) Church History (essayist's choice)—Pastor Frank Gant

Book Reviews:

- 1) "Damned Through the Church" by John W. Montgomery—Pastor Michael Roehl
- 2) "The Lord's Supper" by Martin Chemnitz—Pastor James Naumann

Speaker: Pastor George Dumann

Chaplain: Pastor Roland H. Gurgel

—*Pastor Michael Schierenbeck, Sec'y*

South Eastern Pastoral Conference

Zion Ev. Lutheran Church

Atlanta, Georgia

September 18-20, 2001

Chaplain: Pastor John Johannes

Speaker: Pastor John Klatt

Agenda:

- * Old Testament Exegesis: Malachi 4:1-6 — Pastor Paul Larsen
- * New Testament Exegesis: Colossians 1:19ff — Pastor Todd Ohlmann
- * Old Testament Isagogical Study (essayist's choice) — Pastor Karl Stewart
- * Is There a Parallel between 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and 1 John 4:1-3 with Reference to the Antichrist? — Pastor Thomas Schuetze
- * The Relationship of the Defense of the Truth to the Proclamation of the Gospel — Pastor Vance Fossum
- * What is the Significance of the Phrase: "the cup of blessing" as used in 1 Corinthians 10:16? — Pastor John Schierenbeck
- * Discussion of an Ancient Theological Error and Application for Today (essayist's choice) — Pastor Daniel Fleischer

—*Pastor Todd Ohlmann, Sec'y*