

# Lutheran Spokesman



<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

*Matthew 28:18-20*

## TRoubLED MISSIONARIES

*Our loving God tells us that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).*

What is God's purpose for those who love Him? One of these purposes that God works through the lives of His people is the proclamation of the saving message of sins forgiven through Christ Jesus. Our Savior tells us, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19). He tells us, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

When the Holy Spirit assures us through the holy writer that "all things work together for good to those who love God," He means "ALL things." What a comfort this is when our lives are filled with trouble! What peace we have, because we are able to rely on the simple words of Scripture! Even if we cannot see what good can come

from our situation, we know that God will work it for good according to His gracious will. Knowing this and knowing all that He says regarding the proclamation of the gospel, it shouldn't surprise us that sometimes the good that is worked through the difficult times for believers often leads to great mission opportunities.

Consider the early Church. Saul persecuted the church, causing suffering and death for many believers. Many of them fled Jerusalem to escape his persecution, with the result that "Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

Look at Saul after he became Paul. While space does not allow us to consider every adversity/mission opportunity that occurred in Paul's life, consider what happened when Paul was wrongfully jailed in Philippi. He

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shared the gospel with his jailer, and as a result "[The jailer] and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:33).

### **Opportunities To Speak**

When he was again arrested, this time in Jerusalem, Paul had opportunity in his defense to proclaim the gospel to the entire city (Acts 22). In connection with Paul's arrest, the Lord assured him that "As you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (Acts 23:11). Through terrible troubles--including imprisonment, shipwreck, and even deadly snakebite--the Lord led Paul from one mission opportunity to another. As a result of the troubles that the Lord allowed to come into Paul's life, many heard the gospel and were saved.

A hospitalized church member once asked, "Why does this happen?" While we do not pretend to know every aspect of God's will in allowing troubles to enter into the lives of His children, we do know that one of His purposes is to draw His children closer to Him. The Scripture says, "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens ... " (Heb. 12:6).

Our Lord also wants to draw others closer to Himself through our hard times. As one believer said recently of her terminal illness, "Perhaps someone

will come to faith through this." Her funeral was attended by many who either did not know of, or who needed to be reminded of, the saving love of God in Christ Jesus. From God's own Word they heard once more what Christ had done for their salvation. Such mission opportunities are a common occurrence in connection with Christian funerals.

Of course, one need not wait until the funeral to share the hope that we have in Christ. For many believers, hospital visits with their pastor and loved ones have led the patient in the next bed to express to them how much joy and comfort the message of the gospel has brought them through those visits. For others, job loss or relocation may result in opportunity to share the gospel with new contacts--contacts away from our home church and our usual circle of friends.

Hard times and troubles are common in this world. Through all of our troubles we are reminded that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." When the Lord allows troubles or illness to enter into our lives, let us look for the good that God is working. Let us do this especially in connection with His gospel-purpose, that the gospel light of our hope in Christ might shine before others that they, with us, may be brought to believe in and rejoice in the Savior.

*—Pastor Joel Fleischer*



# Head For The Hills—And Beyond

American survivalists are noted for heading for the hills and bunkering down against expected disasters. But after 9/11 all Americans have become more security conscious, aware of the frailty and dangers of life. For this traveler especially, every plane trip has become a reminder and a special opportunity to use the words of Psalm 121 in prayer: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth."

The whole of Psalm 121 has been called by some "The Traveler's Psalm."

It was sung by the people of Israel as they longed for their native mountains and made their way up to Mt. Zion and the temple at Jerusalem.

No doubt Jesus sang this psalm as He ascended to the temple to worship.

It is said that this psalm was the last prayer and devotion used by David Livingston with his family before he left for Africa.

This psalm could also be the language of a pilgrim, an army private or commander, or any pious person encompassed by fears and dangers.

The psalm comforts and teaches us a great deal about trusting God completely in every situation.

Some hills and mountains are often dangerous places—the very homes of terrorists and enemies. But most often hills and mountains are a symbol of security and strength. When in danger, one heads for the hills.

The psalmist lifted up his eyes to the mountains and hills surrounding Jerusalem and the beloved temple. Surely strength and safety were there



to be found. God had expressly chosen to reveal Himself at Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion. The temple was His earthly habitation.

But while the psalmist might have looked to these hills, he knew his real and never-eroding Source of help was always the Lord Himself, the One who created the very hills and valleys.

From such an almighty yet unseen God, the children of the world assume no help can be expected. It's far easier to trust in high places—natural or man-made.

But mountains erode or explode, towers of Babel and Trade are brought down and put to naught. Even high-flying aircraft, so awesome in war, can be turned against us. All are unreliable; only God is trustworthy. He who protects neither slumbers or sleeps. Never is He off duty. He is our Keeper in every situation.

A doctor was once taught that lesson by a little girl, upon whom he was about to operate. The girl's family was very poor, and she seemed afraid. So before surgery the doctor put a fifty-cent piece into her hand with this

## *Psalm 121*

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills—  
From whence comes my help?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
Who made heaven and earth.*

*He will not allow your foot to be moved;  
He who keeps you will not slumber,  
Behold, He who keeps Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The LORD is your keeper;  
The LORD is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
Nor the moon by night.*

*The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;  
He shall preserve your soul.  
The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in  
From this time forth, and even forevermore.*

exhortation: "This is yours to keep. The surgery will hurt a bit, but don't even think about that. Hold on tightly to the coin and think about what you will spend it on when you go home."

The operation proved a success—the coin clutched throughout by a little hand. Afterward the doctor visited his patient and asked her what she thought about as she held on tightly to her money. "I thought of the words," she replied. "What words?" the doctor asked, surprised. "The words on the coin: 'In God We Trust.' I know Jesus loves me and I knew He would help me."

Obviously the little girl knew where to put her trust. She was looking to the hills—and far beyond to the One who keeps our feet from tottering and walks with us on the way.

Surely God loves us. His own Son,

crucified on a hill and raised for our forgiveness, is proof of it. From everything bad He protects us, preventing even death from bringing us to an untimely end. He watches over the totality of our activities and that forever. At home or abroad, in house or field, on land or sea, in climes hot or cold; on Earth, in the grave, and in the eternal beyond, those who trust in God always have Him as Guardian. He permits nothing to happen that is not for our ultimate good.

So look to the hills—and far beyond. Our help comes from almighty God, who has revealed Himself to us in His Word.

Safe traveling! Safe and confident living!

—Pastor David Fuerstenau



# FINDING PERFECT REST

There are many incidents in the Scriptures that confirm to us the human nature of God's Son.

We know how Jesus hungered in the wilderness. We are told that He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He was sleeping in the boat as the disciples rowed against the waves. We know how He felt the burden of the sin of the world in the garden, so much so that He sweat as it were drops of blood.

But there is another reference—one of which we seldom hear in this context. It is a beautiful example of Jesus' humanity and is a comfort to us as we journey through this life. Scripture tells us that we have a High Priest Who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15).

An incident with which we as Christians can identify very easily is found in John 4:6. It reads, ". . . Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well . . ." Jesus had left Judea to go to Galilee. The journey took him through Samaria. Jacob's well was there. The weary Jesus rested at the well.

At the end of a long day, there is a weariness that sets in, particularly as we grow older. It feels good to sit down, kick off the shoes, and (as the saying is) "kick back." Furthermore, our Lord created the body with regenerative powers so that after a night's rest we are ready for the challenges of the next day.

As Christians there is another kind of weariness. It is the weariness of the spirit as we fight the personal battles against sin in our own selves. There is the weariness that we feel when we

observe the evil around us and that knows no end in this sinful world. We are often led to ask, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Even maintaining a confessional stand can become emotionally wearying, because we must be continuously vigilant.

Our gracious Lord has invited us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). Our Lord gives us the promised rest every time that we read and hear the gospel, every time that we hear the words of absolution and receive the Sacrament.

Furthermore, our Lord promises us that He will not forsake us in our daily walk. The covenant of His peace will not be removed. He will bear us up in His arms and carry us through each day.

Jesus knows the weariness we feel. That is why during His ministry on earth, He often went apart to pray to His Father. Remember how in the garden of Gethsemane an angel (Lk. 22:43), a ministering servant of God, came and strengthened Jesus!

Our God will not forget His chil-



dren who through faith have been made members of the body of Christ!

The reality of life is that in this weary and worn world we rest at the end of each day, sometimes fitfully, only to repeat the cycle the next day. That is why the believer in Christ treasures the promise of the Father in Hebrews 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." It is better than the promised rest of Canaan. It is better even than the rest our souls find in the Word while we are in this dizzying world!

It is better—not because our Lord or the gospel has failed us here, but only because it is eternal. It is the promised

rest in our Savior that comes to all who have "fought the good fight . . . have finished the course . . . have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). It is better than the rest we find now, because it knows no end.

Toward the attainment of this better rest for us, Jesus did not grow weary in His resolve, even though along the way weariness of body gave cause to pause for rest and prayer. Oh, how He loved us to humble Himself so!

Victorious, exalted Jesus, keep us until we safely stand in our fatherland where is perpetual rest. Truly, that will be heaven!

*—Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



## Bumpity-bump! down the road we go

Boomp! The left front tire lands in a pot hole. "Ouch" the driver groans as he remembers he needs to put new shock absorbers on his car. Boomp! The left rear tire hits the same hole because the reaction time wasn't quick enough. "Arrghh" the driver growls, wondering what untold damage is being done to his car one bad road at a time.

Potholes and roads in disrepair leave the traveler with a bumpy ride. There are, however, other bumps on the road that are intentional and well-planned. Road "turtles" or ridged pavement are used on many roads to give the driver a bump and a warning that he is leaving his lane of traffic. The rumble strips on many streets jar the driver into the realization that he is approaching an intersection.

When "turtle" bumps are put in between lanes on a multi-lane highway, they are small. They are just a reminder to be cautious. The bumps used to signal an illegal traffic move and the ridges on the edge of the interstate are much larger in order to serve as a warning of potential danger. Speed bumps found in parking lots are big enough to make the driver slow down and take notice, or at least make him wish he had.

The time of life on this Earth has often been compared to a road that we travel. It is the highway of life. God Himself speaks of the way that we conduct ourselves as "walking" and also speaks of the "paths" we follow in this journey through life.

As we walk through life and make our way down the road, we will



encounter the bumps. Some of the bumps are small, some bigger, and some perhaps seem big enough to throw us completely off the road! The first human reaction after hitting a bump is to get angry with the situation and then angry with God for allowing such trouble to come. However, just as the bumps on the street or interstate can be jarring but actually serve a valuable purpose, so too the bumps which God allows to come into one's life may be jarring but serve His purpose.

As soon as sin entered the world, God spoke about the effects that sin would have on the Earth. The effects of sin mentioned by God include pain in child-bearing, as well as thorns and thistles to make Adam work in the sweat of his brow for bread. Every hard time, bad experience, disappointing failure, and anything else that brings pain or sadness—and what we might call a "bump" in our road—is one of the side effects of sin. These lasting side effects of sin mean that sinners living in a sinful world cannot escape the day-to-day reality of their sinfulness (though they may choose to foolishly ignore it).

### **God's Purposes**

God places speed bumps in the road so that we don't go speeding along with such "smooth-sailing" that we forget Him and rely completely on ourselves. God places bumps in the road to wake us up to the reality of our sin, so that we may then daily appreciate our own personal need for the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Bumps are allowed by a merciful God so that we don't foolishly stray off the road and drive ourselves to



destruction.

As He deals with people on Earth, God's purpose is that sinners hear the gospel, be brought into the family of God through trust in Christ Jesus, and then continually be strengthened and kept in the one true faith. He will put bumps in the path of those who are traveling in unbelief to try to jar them into the reality of the utter misery they will find at their destination if they continue on their present path. He will put bumps in the road of those who think they are going to find their reward by living a good life, so that they might learn that their good life isn't what opens heaven's door. And God will put bumps in the path of those who are already trusting in Him for everything so as to strengthen their faith even more.

Solomon's wisdom in Proverbs reminds us not to grow impatient or angry at God when things trouble us, but rather to rejoice that He is using the bumps according to His purpose. "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 . . . My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the



son in whom he delights" (Prov. 3:5-8,11-12).

Rather than grumble as they travel over the bumps, God's children, the believers, can rejoice that God in His wisdom is caring for them and loves them enough to ensure their spiritual

well-being.

The next time you hit a bump, take some time and consider how the bumps in the road are signs of God's corrective and gracious love.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



## SMORGASBORD

**•EXCERPT** (With Pres. Schierenbeck's permission, the editor has lifted the words below from the August 2003 Pastoral Letter of our CLC President to the synod pastors. We believe the thoughts are worthy of the prayers and consideration of all of us.)

. . . The month of August is "back to school" time for many of our grade schools and for ILC. It is a time for all of us to consider and examine our commitment to training our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The CLC has always been concerned about its young people. In the early formative years of the CLC, the first thing this church body did was to establish a Lutheran high school, college, and seminary in Mankato, Minn. The Church of the Lutheran Confession assumed responsibility from a group of dedicated laymen from Immanuel congregation in Mankato for Immanuel High School, College, and Seminary. The second generation of the CLC went to school on the "prairie" in Mankato. Later this school was moved to Eau Claire, Wis. The CLC consciously made the decision that we need to train pastors and teachers at our own school in order to fulfill Jesus' mandate "to make disciples of

all nations." The continuing commitment to ILC and Christian education is evidence of the same spirit today.

The CLC has also always emphasized the importance of feeding Jesus' lambs by actively encouraging the establishment and support of Christian Day Schools. We are acutely aware of Luther's observation that the gospel has never remained with one group for more than three or four generations. The third generation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession is now in the pastoral and teaching ministry of the CLC. Many congregations have struggled financially to begin and support Christian Day Schools. Many have observed that these schools are the feeders for future teachers and pastors. I have been blessed to have served three congregations where there has been a commitment to Christian Day Schools.

However, we cannot rest on past laurels. We need to--in the words of the ILC Building Publicity Committee--begin to think "outside the box." I have felt for a long time that we have neglected the spiritual education and growth of our young people during the most critical and formative period of their lives--the high school and college age years. We need to examine our pre-

sent confirmation practices to see if they can be improved. Perhaps we could have a preparation to receive the Lord's Supper at our present confirmation age and have the in-depth catechism instruction during the high school years. It is important that young people be led into the Scriptures. We need to get beyond simply thinking in terms of fun activities for our post-confirmation youth. There needs to be more real Bible study and application to the daily fight our young people are waging. There is much more that we could do to guide our high school and college age young people into the Scriptures. . . .

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**•PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

*(Teacher David Bernthal presented the following report to the congregational meeting of Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, Wis. The date was July 15, 2003. These remarks, together with those of President Schierenbeck above, cause us to think and pray much about what is being done in our own homes and congregation that our children might be trained, brought up, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.")*

" . . . When your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' Then you shall answer them . . . " (Joshua 4:6-7)

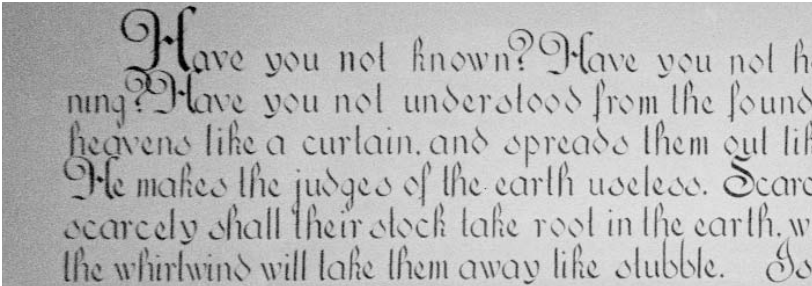
Joshua, under the Lord's guidance,

was leading the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. Before they moved on into the land however, the Lord had a small, but very important building project for the people. They were to take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River, which they had just crossed on dry ground--another miracle of our God.

These stones were to be built up near the river as a memorial, a sign, to the Israelites forever. A sign of God's mighty power and unending faithfulness. When the children of the future would ask the meaning of the stones, as God knew they would, the adults were to be ready with this answer.

Our church and school are named Luther Memorial. Are we ready to answer what are they a memorial to? Our God's wondrous ability to use frail, sinful humans such as Luther (or ourselves, for that matter) to accomplish His holy will is something worth memorializing.

What other memorial stones have we set up in our own lives? Do your children or the children of the congregation, do your neighbors, know the things that are most important in your life? Even if we don't speak of them, yet our actions and attitudes--where we spend our time, talents, and finances--surely speak volumes to everyone who



Touring the classrooms at ILC, Eau Claire, last year, the Spokesman photographer

knows us. Do these things show the power of God as an active force in our lives? Are we willing to talk about and share the love and mercy Jesus has showered upon us?

I've heard it said that God has no grandchildren. How true this is! The Lord gives each and every one of His generations of sons and daughters the blessed opportunity to pass on the heritage of His kingdom. It is His Word, His Promise, and His Power that produces the faith needed for salvation. We need only to bring that message to others in order that ". . . all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever" (Joshua 4:24).

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•**MYSTERY?** (From a recent *Sunday Bulletin of Resurrection Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas.* Daniel Fleischer is pastor.)

An advertisement on the History Channel teased the hearer this week with the statement that it is a mystery yet why Cain killed Abel. Presumably scholars have been pursuing the solution to the mystery, and the History Channel was going to present it.

Ever in search of the truth, natural man never finds the truth even though it is in front of him. The real problem is

not that mystery exists concerning the murder (it doesn't), but that man rejects the Word of God.

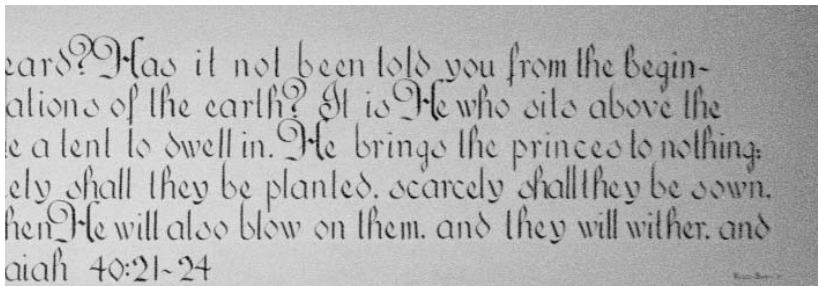
Genesis lays out the scenario in which Cain killed his brother. Hebrews 11 tells us the reason for Cain's envy and anger. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" (Heb. 11:4). Cain was angry because the Lord did not accept his sacrifice but did accept Abel's. The problem with Cain's sacrifice is not what he brought, but that he offered it without faith--whereas Abel offered his in faith.

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Mystery solved!

Cain is an illustration of the world. In all their religious fervor, many in the world lash out at Christians rather than taking a look at themselves. If Cain had respect for the Word, he would have understood that Abel was not to be censured, much less killed, for his act of devotion. Cain should have done some soul-searching.

Lack of respect for the Word of God is an evil that reveals the ignorance of men, as well as it undermines the hope of salvation.

May the Spirit of God, who came to



r snapped this picture—an artistic rendition of the sobering words of Isaiah 40:21-24.

the apostles with His power and grace, so come to us and hold our hearts and minds captive in the Word. The Word of God is light and truth, revealing the

mystery of the Father's love so clearly in the face of Jesus Christ, our Savior.



*From a Layman's Pen—*

## A Devotional Study of Matthew 6:24-34

*Second of three parts of an essay delivered to the June 13-15, 2003 West Central Delegate Conference held at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Jamestown, North Dakota. The writer is Mr. Michael Fuerstenau, a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown, South Dakota.*

**"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Mt. 6:27)**

How many of us who are older wouldn't like to have the body of a 20-year-old? I would guess that most of us, even those in their 40's and 50's, would wish for that too.

God would not have us worry about our bodies as they grow older. Surely God wants us to take care of our bodies by eating properly, exercising regularly, and keeping regular hours. These things have value. We should take care about what we put into our bodies. We are encouraged: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Rom. 13:13).

God would not have us worry and fret over our bodies, for this would take away from our goal of serving Him and trusting in Him for every bodily need. He promises us that if we seek His Kingdom, He will provide our physical needs: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33).

Many of us would like to enjoy life after many years of working. We would like to enjoy the fruits of our labors. We would like to take a vacation. Who wouldn't like to add to the length and joy of his life on Earth?

However, what Jesus here warns us about is worrying about these things, forgetting that our lives are in His hands. We cannot add one single minute to our lives. It is foolish then to worry about our lives. The Lord has planned our lives already! May God grant that we thank God for the lives we now have.

**"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Mt. 6:28-29).**

So why do people want to wear beautiful clothes? Our young people may think that their clothes will attract others to them. Some people want to feel nice and look good for others. God would have us dress and take care of ourselves in this world. However, He would not have us be consumed with what we wear. He has also promised to

provide our clothing.

The Lord tells us to look at the plants of the earth. Even as God provides bark as a covering for the tree, so He will provide clothing as a covering for us. When God made plants, He made each of them beautiful in its own way. Men can't make a flower or cause it to grow. God alone makes flowers and makes them grow. What man makes often wears out or breaks down. So again, we should trust God for all our needs.

Can man with all his wealth make things as beautiful as a flower? No! Why should we fret about our clothing? Worrying about our clothing will only make us old and gray! We should use our time more wisely. So take a lesson from the lilies of the field—God gave them all the beauty they have!

***"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Mt. 6:30)***

It has been said: "Clothes make the man." When we see a person well-tailored, we assume he is a successful and skilled individual. Today people look at the outside and judge men by their appearance. Do people recognize that their clothes are a gift from God or do they think that they have earned them from their toil and labor? Do we trust God to provide our clothing?

The Lord tells us to look at the grass of the field. God has created the grass and plants of the field and He will provide what they need to survive. God has also made us. Are we not of more value than the grass? Will He not also provide for us? In his limited wisdom, man often forgets that God has promised to provide. We often want the nicest and most expensive clothing available. God may provide these things, but we need not worry about them. We should be thankful that we have clothing on our backs.

Think about it! Do we trust God that He will provide, or do we try to do it our own way?

***"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Mt. 6:31-32).***

We need food and drink. We need clothes to cover our bodies. We all know that. However, God doesn't want us to worry about these needs. Is it sinful to have luxurious clothes or expensive food? No, not in every case! However, if having such things is the most important thing, then we are in trouble.

The Lord warns us about being consumed with what we eat, drink, or wear. If we are consumed with getting



**Women of Faith, Faith Lutheran of New Ulm, Minnesota.**



**Mary & Martha Group, St. Paul's of Denver (Lakewood), Colorado**

these earthly things, it may show that we lack trust in the Lord to provide them. This lack of trust in the Lord can lead to more sinful desire. The more we desire a thing, the more we think that we can't do without it. The more things we desire, the further away from God we can be led. Finally, it can happen that we lose our faith in God.

The Lord knows our needs before we do. Don't worry about tomorrow. Even as God has provided your needs today, so will He tomorrow. Stop and think how many times God has stood by you and protected you! Don't you think He will continue to do so?

*(to be concluded)*



# The Discourses of Christ

Christ and the Father  
John 5:16-23  
Part One

## My Lord and My God

The occasion of this discourse of Jesus is His healing of the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. The man's case was a sad one, perhaps the saddest of all the "great multitude of sick people" who lay at the pool, hoping for a cure. The man had lived in his miserable condition for thirty-eight years. Moved with compassion as He always was at human suffering, Jesus healed the man with the words, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

As the man went on his way, walking and carrying his bed for the first time in thirty-eight years, he was stopped. It was the Sabbath, and the act of carrying one's bed was considered labor and therefore a violation of the Sabbath law.

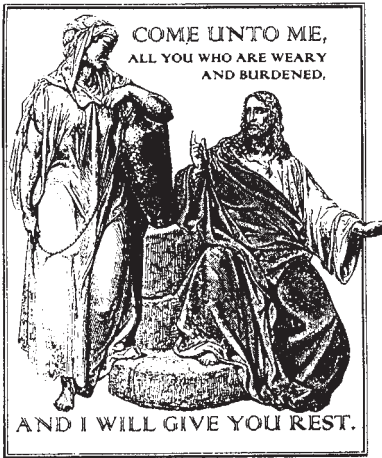
The Jews of Jesus' day completely missed the point of the Sabbath law,

not understanding that it was for man's blessing that God made the seventh day a day of rest. It was most fitting that a man should be healed and freed from years of misery on the Sabbath. It was a hallowing of the Sabbath that a man should take up and carry his bed—as a witness that God had healed him!

The unbelieving Jews questioned the man and eventually learned that it was Jesus who had healed him and told him to take up his bed on the Sabbath. These Jews were enraged at Jesus for this; we are told that they "persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath."

Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. In doing this He had acted as the Son of God, doing the merciful





works of God the Father. He said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

The Sabbath law prohibited labor on the seventh day, making it a day of rest. But the Sabbath was made for man; the law did not apply to God. His working continues seven days a week for the benefit and blessing of man. This was demonstrated in Jesus' healing of a man on the Sabbath. God had not intended the Sabbath law to prevent or delay the flow of divine blessings to man.

### **Jesus, the Unique Son of God!**

But the hearts of Jesus' enemies were hardened in pride and unbelief. They sought all the more to kill Jesus, for now He not only broke the Sabbath but made Himself equal with God, saying that God was His Father.

They had understood correctly the implication of Jesus' saying that God was His Father. But they cared not at all for the work of mercy that Jesus had done, nor did they see that it demonstrated the truth of what Jesus was saying about Himself—He was the Son of God, doing what He saw the

Father do! "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."

Jesus enjoyed perfect union and harmony with the Father, so His works were completely in keeping with those of the Father. It was impossible that He should do anything different from, or apart from, the works of the Father. In doing works of mercy, Jesus was also revealing to man the nature of God. The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father was declaring to us God whom we cannot see (John 1:18). Jesus' work of healing was a proof of divine love.

As God's Son, Jesus is able to do all the works of the Father. "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does." Therefore His enemies would see works even greater than the healing of a man long paralyzed. "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will."

The one true and living God is the source of all life. He gave life to the world when He created it. He breathed into man the breath of life when He formed him out of the dust of

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***" . . . They had understood correctly the implication of Jesus' saying that God was His Father. But they cared not at all for the work of mercy that Jesus had done, nor did they see that it demonstrated the truth of what Jesus was saying about Himself—He was the Son of God."***

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the ground. Even so it is the work of the Son to restore life to man fallen and dead. He won the victory over death when He offered His life as the atoning sacrifice for human sin. The Son has the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18). He exercises His power not as a servant but as Lord, giving life to whom He will.

Jesus' enemies would see the life-giving power of the Son in the resurrection of Lazarus and again in Jesus' own resurrection.

Jesus as God's Son is to be honored as God's Son. It is the Father's will that His Son be honored just as He, the Father, is. To see that the Son is honored, the Father has committed all judgment to Son. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

The enemies of Jesus addressed in this discourse have their descendants, and we have them around us

today. The Moslems, so prominent on the world stage these days, claim to know the one true God, but they do not honor Jesus as God's Son. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim to represent the true God and even speak of Jesus as God's Son and the Savior, yet they do not honor the Son as they honor the Father, saying that Jesus is the Archangel Michael, the first of all created beings. The Masonic Lodge (along with many other organizations) regards all religions as valid and wants to make the worship of Jesus optional. Modern theology, which has corrupted the major denominations, denies the virgin birth and deity of Christ. Jesus' clear words in this discourse are a repudiation of them all.

But blessed are all who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; believing, they have life in His name.

—Pastor John Klatt



## LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

*Daniel Chapter 6*

### Sitting in the Catbird Seat

In James Thurber's short story "The Catbird Seat," a simple, meek, dependable, and horribly predictable employee of a company is accused of planning a terrible crime. His defense is simply his reputation.

He had lived an impeccable life, and all who knew him wouldn't believe he was even capable of what

he was accused. Little did they know!

In the true story of Daniel as it is recorded for us in the Scriptures, we are told Daniel had an "excellent spirit" in him. This prompted King Darius to consider elevating Daniel from his already lofty position of one of three governors to being in charge of the entire realm. God had given Daniel

this "excellent spirit" by which he sought to put the Lord and His Word first in his life.

Daniel's political peers decided it was time to bring his career to a screeching halt. They could surely find some charge to bring against this foreigner—after all, what political figure doesn't have at least a few skeletons in his closet? And yet after investigating Daniel, his adversaries could find nothing of which to accuse him. In fact, they found him faithful, with no errors or faults as far as their laws went.

A new tack had to be taken. If this Daniel was to be taken down, it would be his religion that would be his undoing. If there was one thing Daniel clung to tenaciously, without wavering, it was his religion. If a law could be passed that would force his hand into choosing to serve the king or his God, Daniel's enemies knew which he would choose.

Has anyone tried to pin anything on you lately? Was there enough evidence to bring a charge against you? Has the master prosecutor, Satan, been whispering gloom, doom, and guilt in your ear? (I don't know about you, but when it comes especially to my service

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*" . . . Daniel disobeyed the king's law and served His God. The penalty was the lion's den. Daniel knew this could be the consequence of following his Savior God, yet how could he choose the path of sin and deny that very God?"*

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to God, I feel the pangs of failure quite severely.)

Yet we have been given the opportunity to rejoice! God the Holy Spirit has given us the same "excellent spirit" which preserved Daniel. This spirit shows us that our perfection is in Jesus Christ, who has paid for and conquered our sins. We are now free to serve Him no matter what our abilities or the consequences following His path may bring.

Daniel disobeyed the king's law and served His God. The penalty was the lion's den.

Daniel knew this could be the consequence of following his Savior God, yet how could he choose the path of sin and deny that very God? It was a simple task for God to send His angel to hold closed the mouths of those lions and thus demonstrate to all



**Ladies  
Auxiliary of  
Immanuel  
Lutheran  
Church,  
Mankato,  
Minnesota**

the validity of Daniel's faith.

We have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. How simple our lives would be if we were to keep this thought in mind and act accordingly! Our imperfections have been covered by His perfection. Our inadequacies have been replaced by His completeness. Our doubts and fears have been exchanged with trust and confidence in Him. What a com-

fort that our salvation rests in Jesus' almighty hands with no ability on our part to add or detract!

We are truly "sitting in the catbird seat." No one—not lions, not Satan, not our enemies, not even our own consciences—can convict or divide us from our loving Savior.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

—Teacher David W. Bernthal



# SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

Second in a series

## "Know God, Know Peace No God, No Peace"

This sign (together with some of the other signs we will consider) has a clever play on words. Such a device can help encourage people to think about spiritual things.

The few words of this sign are full of meaning, if we consider them on the basis of God's Word. First, we should remember that one can truly know God only through His Son Jesus Christ. As Jesus told the unbelieving Jews and later His own disciples, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also" (Jn. 8:19; 14:7). Jesus also said, "No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Mt. 11:27). Then immediately follows the familiar invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... rest for your souls" (vv. 28 & 29). This certainly indicates that rest and peace are directly related to a true knowledge of God and Jesus.

But what is this rest and peace? Certainly not an earthly peace between one person and another, or between one nation and another. Of that kind of peace Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. And a man's foes will be those of his own household" (Mt. 10:34-36). Notice: one person against another. We see examples of that kind of strife all around us in the world, much of it brought on by people's hatred for Jesus. So when people insist that one of the goals of Christianity is world peace, they are way off base.

But don't misunderstand: True Christians are not the cause of the enmity between them and others in the world, as long as they follow Paul's admonition, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). But very often they cannot appease the anger and hatred of the world against them. Nor do they regard this as a failure on their own part or on the part of the gospel they preach. For again—and this cannot be emphasized too much in our day—Jesus did not come to establish earthly peace.

Rather, Jesus came to establish peace between God and man. By nature all people are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and are enemies of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:17). But "it pleased the Father that in Him (Jesus Christ) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made

peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:19-20). This is the same peace announced by the angels to the shepherds near Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" (Lk. 2:14)

If you know God aright, you know what true peace is. Conversely, if you do not know the true God, or if you have no God, you have no real peace of heart, mind, and soul. "'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked'" (Is. 48:22).

There is no higher goal for us as a church body or as a congregation than to strive to lead people to a knowledge of the true God and thereby to true peace and to everlasting life in heaven.

—Gene Rutz

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The author of this compelling new series is a member of Bethel Lutheran Church (CLC), Houston (Spring), Texas. These articles are revised versions of articles that previously appeared in another periodical.— Ed.



Participating in the July 13, 2003 ordination/installation of Pastor Matthew Hanel, Prince of Peace, Hecla, S.Dak. were (l-r) Pastor Michael Roehl, Prof. Michael Sydow, Pastor Paul Nolting, Pastor Hanel, Prof. Paul Schaller, Pastor Roland Gurgel, Pastor George Dumann.

# Announcements

## Change of Address:

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt  
417 Woodhaven Lane  
Mankato, MN 56001

## Ordination/Installation

*In accord with our usage and order, Matthew P. Hanel, who was called by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Hecla, S.Dak. to be its pastor, was ordained and installed on July 13th. Pastor Paul D. Nolting preached. Also assisting were Pastors George Dummann and Roland Gurgel, Professors Paul Schaller and Michael Sydow.*

—Pastor Michael Roehl

## Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference

*Dates:* October 14-16, 2003 (beginning on Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.)

*Place:* Redemption Lutheran Church, Lynnwood, Wash.

*Agenda:*

- + Old Testament Exegesis—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer
- + New Testament Exegesis—Pastor Delwyn Maas
- + Book Review of Walther's *LAW AND GOSPEL* (Theses VIII-X)—Pastor David Reim.
- + A combination of two topics: 1. Equipping the Saints—Meaning and Practical Program for Doing So; and 2. Leadership—Biblical Principles, Pastor as Leader—Pastor Paul Krause.
- + Word Study of HOCHMAH and its Synonyms, Analogous to LOGOS in the New Testament?—Pastor Paul Naumann.
- + Expository Preaching: Advantages of Using a Pericope or Using a Book of the Bible (Does Pericope Preaching REAL LY Cover All the Doctrines?)—Pastor John Hein
- + Book Review: *The Charismatic Gifts, An Obsolete Witness to the Gospel*—Pastor Steven Karp

*Conference Chaplain:* Pastor David Povolny

*Conference Speaker:* Pastor Robert List

—Pastor Terrel Kesterson, Secretary

## West Central Pastoral Conference

*Dates:* September 16-18, 2003

*Place:* St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Bismarck, North Dakota

*Agenda*

1. Old Testament Exegesis: Malachi 1: 6-14—Pastor Roland Gurgel
2. New Testament Exegesis: Romans 8:31-39—Pastor Mark Gurath
3. The Pastor's Prayer Life: Intercessory and Devotional—Pastor John Klatt
4. Presentation on Islam and Teachings of the Koran—Pastor Timothy Wheaton
5. Study of Romans 14:12 and Related Passages—Pastor Peter Reim
6. Distinguishing Between a Warning from God and a Command From God—Pastor Andrew Schaller
7. Does True Oneness Require Uniformity of Doctrine and Application?—Pastor James Sandeen
8. What does Scripture Say About Gambling?—Pastor James Naumann
9. Why Keep the Name 'Lutheran'?—Pastor George Dummann

Book Reviews:

1. *Motivation for Ministry* by Nathan Pope—Pastor Paul Fleischer

2. Review and Analysis of Pieper's "Law" Articles in the *Wauwatosa Theology*, Vol. 2—Pastor Michael Roehl

Other:

1) Discussion of the benefits of a chapel facility for the ILC campus

2) Pastoral Counseling and Psychology—Dean Marzofka

Chaplain: Pastor James Sandeen

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor Frank Gantt

—Pastor Mark Gurath, Secretary

## Minnesota Pastoral Conference

*Place:* Grace Lutheran Church, Fridley, Minn.

*Dates:* October 7-8, 2003

*Agenda:*

- \* 2 Thessalonians 3:1ff—Pastor Paul D. Nolting
- \* Micah 5:2-5a—Pastor Rick Grams
- \* Advent Series—Pastor John Ude
- \* Counseling Addictive Behaviors—Pastor Bruce Naumann
- \* Principles of Finance in regard to Bankruptcy—Pastor James Albrecht
- \* Luther and Islam—Pastor Norman Greve
- \* Scriptural Direction in regard to Marriage to a Non-Christian—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
- \* Gifts of the Holy Spirit—Pastor David Schierenbeck

—Pastor Rick Grams, Secretary

**COVER: John Fox**