

Lutheran Spokesman



For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children;
That the generation to come might know them,
The children who would be born,
That they may arise and declare them to their children,
That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;

psalm 78:5-7

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“That the generation to come might know...”

The goal of many parents for many years has been to see to it that their children have a better life than they did. To this end they will put money away month after month for a college education, or leave to their children the family business—and the knowledge of how to run it.

While a college education and a good job are nice, we're doing our children a huge disservice if we are not providing them with the one thing needful—the knowledge of their Savior, Jesus Christ. As fall classes begin, so do many forms of formal Christian education. Even if it is not in the fall or in the classroom, God desires His Word to be taught so that generations to come will have the precious knowledge of their Lord and Savior.

"For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel,

which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:5-7).

After the children of Israel entered the promised land of Canaan, they remained faithful only as long as Joshua and the other leaders were alive. After that, when times were good they quickly forgot that it was the Lord who had blessed them. They placed confidence in themselves.

We're no different, are we?

The Only Resting Place

God has given us every reason to set our hope in Him. This is the message that needs to be preserved for, and

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taught to upcoming generations. The same Lord who made heaven and Earth uses those remarkable powers to protect and preserve us. Everything that He does is based on His love for us. When we combine this with God's power and wisdom, it becomes clear that He is the only resting place for our confidence.

We are encouraged to teach children about God so that they won't forget the works of God. Realize what the Israelites witnessed—the parting of the Red Sea, manna, getting water out of a rock, the fall of Jericho, and other miraculous military victories. We note, though, how quickly they forgot and were seduced by idolatry. Once again, we're no different, are we? Don't we often forget the works of God that we have witnessed through the Scriptures?

In God's Word we discover and re-discover the wonders that God has done. As we are led by the Spirit to draw out the truths of Holy Scripture, we quickly see that not only has God richly provided us with our daily

bread, but He has also given us the Bread of Life—Jesus Christ.

The highlights of the works of God are found in Holy Week—in the substitutionary suffering of Jesus and His glorious resurrection to save us from our sins. These works of God mean salvation for us.

If we want to know what happens when the truth is not passed on, look no further than Israel. They neglected what God had told them, and they were chastised, but to no avail. Their spiritual condition actually ended up being worse than that of the idolatrous Canaanites who inhabited the land before they did.

It is vital that we pass on the message of Christ and His truth to the next generations, so that they may pass it on again. As parents and grandparents, we need to make clear that God and His Word are the number one priority in our lives—not just by our words but also by our actions. May God give us the strength to carry out His will.

—Pastor Michael Schierenbeck



A longing look to the ultimate vacation

During the summer months when workers take time off from their labors, families often take to the roads, traveling to various destinations for rest, relaxation, and recreation. While on the way, youngsters will quite predictably ask the question, "How much farther or how much longer will it be before we get there?"

Now, children usually are not content to ask questions like this only once but numerous times. Why? Part of it

may be due to a sense of excitement and anticipation of the fun activities that have been planned for their vacation stop. Then there is also the matter of impatience when the trip is long and difficult to endure. However, once there and once the fun begins, the children forget all about what it took to get there.

As Christians we are eagerly looking forward to the ultimate rest from our labors when we will reach the final destination of the paradise of heaven. We

will enjoy a perfect rest where there won't be any bad weather, annoying bugs, breakdowns and mishaps, human conflicts or short tempers (check out the description in Revelation 21:1-5).

Unlike our family vacations which may cost us hundreds of dollars or more, the heavenly one God planned out for us in eternity has already been paid for in full by the precious blood and righteousness of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. And while our family vacations must always come to an end, the future perfect rest in the paradise of heaven will last throughout all eternity.

As we travel down the road of life to heaven, how often do we not ask our heavenly Father, "How long will it be before we reach that land of paradise?" We are inclined to ask this question time and again, because we long for the day when we can finally rest from all our labors in this sin-cursed world and enter that glorious state of everlasting bliss.

Yearning for the Day!

Our yearnings for that eternal day grow stronger with every passing day, as we encounter those dreadful conditions which God has foretold will take place in the latter times. The apostle Paul gave us the following list of prevailing perilous conditions in the last days: "Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:2-5). The book of Revelation also speaks of the devil



being "released for a little while" (20:3), feverishly making his last ditch efforts to deceive and tempt the nations of the world before the coming of the Lord on the Last Day.

Evidences of Satan's devilish work abound: the false notion that all religions are valid except for authentic Christianity; the gospel being steadily lost in Christendom; clergy involved in immoral lifestyles (officially approved in some cases); the push for same-sex marriage; the expansion of murdering unborn babies in connection with the area of stem-cell research.

Reading and hearing of these—and other perilously wicked practices in the world—we ask our heavenly Father: "How long before You will bring an end to this wicked world and usher in the eternity of heaven?" Groaning under the sin-cursed conditions of this world, we look forward to the final Day of Deliverance and to that future sin-free world.

Lest we become discouraged and impatient along the difficult road that finally ends in heaven, it is important that we remember that God is following a plan that He mapped out in eternity. It is a plan that involves His gracious will, for He desires "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); before bringing this world to an end, God's plan also includes gathering the elect through the

spread of the gospel.

In the meantime we, on the one hand, are exhorted to stay on the road-way to eternal life through a regular use of God's Word and Sacrament; and on the other hand, to proclaim the gospel to those who are headed in the

other direction.

In response to the word of promise spoken by our Lord at the end of the Bible, "Surely, I am coming quickly," we say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

—Pastor Mark Gullerud



"CULTURE OF LIFE"

By the time a child is born, it already knows a great deal. It doesn't KNOW yet that it knows what it knows. But it knows. It knows there is a "god" of some sort. If the pregnancy took place in a Christian home, it probably "heard" of the Triune God—in family devotions and in church services.

From studies done, it seems to be true that a child becomes familiar with mother's voice during the later months of pregnancy—and perhaps also the father's voice, and of other family members. It also seems that an appreciation for music and languages starts then.

So by birth the child already has quite an education. It has been to school! And from birth on it's just a case of continuing education—after a rather abrupt change from the amniotic sac to another "sack."

The child continues to absorb all kinds of sounds, and now sights also. There is a period of self-discovery, fingers, toes, ears. Then comes the exertion of self-will, the cry, the scream for attention. Soon comes learning how to eat, smile, crawl, stand, play with toys and animals and people, how to make intelligible sounds, soon even to read and count. On and on it goes, long before any real formal education begins.

Children generally look forward to

preschool and kindergarten, and then to elementary school. Wise Christian parents will have seen to Baptism very soon after birth—and then begin early on to teach simple Bible stories from both Testaments, the home being the basic provider for this. Bible lessons will point to and focus on Jesus—His life, His work, including His death, resurrection, ascension, and His coming as Judge of the living and the dead.

Our children are thus taught that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 110:10). We send our children to church schools in order that this fear and wisdom may continue to develop. Our parents and fellow-members are encouraged to support our schools, just as as our children are encouraged to continue to attend. Thus they grow in Christ and in His Word.

This is the "culture of life" that we wish for our offspring, with the prayer that they will be salt and light in the world, spreading hope and grace through the gospel. It is also hoped that at least some of them will become pastors and teachers.

A Stark Contrast!

This is in such stark contrast to the schooling in Saudi Arabia, for example, both in the public school system



and the religious curriculum there. New York Times writer Thomas L. Friedman recently referred to the "culture of death" in those schools. There the education system does not stress awareness of—let alone tolerance for—other lifestyles and civilizations in the world. From fourth to twelfth grade, only the Islamic empires are stressed over and over. This makes the Saudi youth easy targets, Friedman says, for extremists trying to recruit young people for "jihad" operations.

But we need not look as far as Saudi Arabia. Satan is a very active professor here in our own public school system, which has been permeated with all manner of anti-God notions this past century and more: there is no God; there is no Creator; there is no need for God; there is no need for commandments; there is no sin; there is no need for a Savior; there is no hope beyond this life; and this life is only a constant struggle

to get what you want and deserve, any way you can.

Modern theology here has become completely unattached from God's Word. A woman reportedly asked a modern theologian a question. He said that, had she asked him a month ago, he would have given her a different answer. And if she were to ask him again in another month, he would probably have a different answer again!

World, flesh, and devil are always teaching. But so is God! As we think of "Back to School" time, we are so grateful that God is our teacher. All around us is the "culture of death." But thanks be to God, here is His good and holy Book, which maintains His "culture of life" among us—so that we know who we are, whence we came, why we are here, and where we are going. It is all tied to that same Jesus, in whom we are wise unto salvation because of the Scriptures—of which Jesus said: "If you continue in My Word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31, 32).

Our education continues, from the womb to the tomb. School never really closes.

—*Pastor Emeritus Warren Fanning*



**Women's Group,
St. Paul Lutheran
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North Dakota**



CROSS PURPOSES



MAINTAINING BALANCE IN A WORLD OUT OF BALANCE

Every age has had reason to lament the state of the world. The Christ-centered Christian especially laments the consequences of sin that infect one's own flesh, as well as the prevailing evil all around.

Whatever our feeling about the war in Iraq, we all have a certain apprehension. The terrorism that threatens our nation—and that which is particularly aimed at Christianity—is never far from our thoughts. And who can ever forget the beheading of an individual as occurred recently, in the name of "god," no less!? Would one not think that such an act in the name of "god" would give pause to all those who wrongly believe that it makes no difference in what divine being one believes?! Would we not think that within Christendom at least the churches would have the spiritual will to recognize that idolatry is evil and to confess the Triune God alone?!

It is easy for a Christ-believer living in this world to become depressed as he looks about. For many of us advanced in years, we know that we shall not have to endure much longer. But in what kind of atmosphere will our children and grandchildren live? Abortion, homosexuality, and homosexual wickedness (which this writer refuses to call marriage) are countenanced as civil rights by states and by many within Christendom. The politics of hate has now been added to the politics of deceit, hypocrisy, cheating, and posturing to appeal to the grossest forms of immorality—and it is a stench to the Christ-believer. As before the Flood, "the

wickedness of man is great in the earth, and the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually" (Gen. 5:5). To a large extent the church is unable to stand in the breach because—having largely given up steadfastness to the Word of God—it has lost its authority to stand against evil.

So it is quite easy for a Christ-believer to become depressed and to feel that all is lost. How can we maintain balance in a world gone mad, but in which we must live?

We may be pessimistic about the world in which we live, but we are not pessimistic about our future. The *Introit* for (this Sunday) expresses the confidence of the Christ-believer: "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord will I seek: Hide not Thy face from me. The Lord is my Light and my Salvation: Whom shall I fear?"

Our heavenly Father has invited us in Christ Jesus to come to Him. He has promised to hear our prayer. In Christ, who has won the victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil, the victory belongs to all who trust in Him. Even now, without merit on our part, He has gained for us salvation, and has promised us after the night of affliction and sorrow to take us home to Himself. He has told us that in this world we

shall have tribulation and affliction.

Our Savior knows very well the wickedness that is in the world, and the wickedness to which we are subject from within and without, yet He who has risen from the dead and who has ascended into heaven says to us, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (Jn. 16:20-22).

We know not what awaits us or our offspring in this world. We do not have high expectations. But we do know what our ultimate future is. For all who continue in the faith and in the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ the future is bright—as bright as the Light around the throne of God.

The balance in an unbalanced world is tipped in the favor of all who are in Christ Jesus and who confess, "The Lord is my portion; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lam. 3:24).

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



The Discourses of Christ

Christ, the Bread of Life—John 6:41-51
Part Three

“I am the bread of life”

The Holy Spirit here displays Jesus in the first of His "I AM" nuggets of Truth; a score more will follow in John's Gospel, where Jesus further presents Himself as the Light of the world, the door of the sheep, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, the true vine, and "Before Abraham was, I AM."

Some folks flared up with indignation at such claims, "Who does he think HE is; God, or something?!" Others sidled away, sputtering exhaust

fumes of sour disgust. Whichever, the normal human response to Jesus' claim of divinity is disbelief and rejection.

It is so sad that humans blow God off when He speaks up for Himself; should God not declare Himself for who He is?

Let's come to grips with the "bread from heaven" figure of speech, a simple device to reveal to us His identity, His nature, and His skills. We use such metaphors all the time—"That's food for thought." "Life is a roller-coaster!"

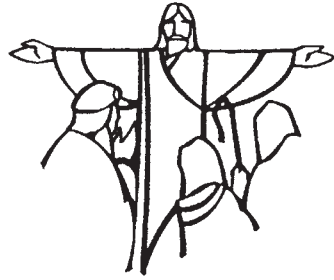
What flummoxed the Jews was not that Jesus used metaphor, but the substance of what He meant behind the metaphor—for He claimed descent from heaven to nourish humans for eternal life . . . and *that* just didn't fit! "Is not this (person) Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

They could understand "down from Nazareth," but not "down from heaven"! What they needed, of course, was not a better grasp of geography, but a better grip on God. God had not been able to ignite their hearts with His Word through the prophets (vv. 44-45), so naturally enough, they couldn't warm up to Jesus, either.

But others, because they were attuned to the Father, were pre-set to "home-in" on their Master's voice when they heard it, and even with their eyes closed (" . . . not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father . . .") they could still identify Jesus as God. At bottom, the issue of Jesus' divinity must be settled by His power to endow everlasting life, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." That's the crux, flat-out, and with no apology!

A Staple of Life

At this juncture, Jesus decides to go back again to the first term of the formula, bread. In subsistence cultures bread was the basic staple of life—in contrast to the current low-carb craze. The best of Jewish breads was manna, which had kept the people of Israel alive and healthy for a whole generation. To these folks proud of their God-given heritage in bread, Jesus opens a



new and startling dimension: "I am the bread of life."

Here's the line of thought: "Though your fathers ate the manna of God's sustenance in the wilderness, they all died—for even though it came down from heaven, that bread was never intended to save souls for eternal life. In contrast to even the best of manna from heaven, God now gives you Bread for your souls, so that you may partake of it and endure beyond the grave. What is this bread for your souls? It is I! I am the living (life-engendering) bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

If that's too much to swallow all at once, dear friend, just take it bite-by-bite: God the Father has sent His best product down to Earth, packaged in the person of Jesus, filled with spiritual nutrition sufficient to fill all human needs; it can overwhelm the sin-virus and is loaded with soul-preservative. Take your portion, feed your heart and soul with the Bread of life, and inwardly digest your Savior, who gave His body and blood on the cross for your salvation.

Believing on Him is simply couched in the metaphor of eating, as He had said a few moments earlier, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who

believes in Me shall never thirst" (v. 35). This single verse, all by itself, makes it clear enough that Jesus is not referring to Lord's Supper eating and drinking but is saying that He satisfies spiritual hunger and soul-thirst, if only the sinner comes to Him in faith, believes on Him as Savior, and thus assimilates Him inwardly, unto salvation. He provides eternally-sustaining food and drink for souls!

He does this by being who He is and by doing what He does! Take Him at His word, and you shall taste that the Lord is good!

"Then let us feast this Easter Day
On Christ, the Bread of heaven;
The Word of Grace hath purged away
The old and evil leaven.
Christ alone our souls will feed,
He is our meat and drink indeed;
Faith lives upon no other. Hallelujah!"
(TLH 195:5)

—Paul R. Koch



SMORGASBORD

• **IN CONNECTION WITH THE NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING, SOME THOUGHTS ON "THE GREAT LIBERATOR"**—(*from the bulletin of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Paul Fleischer is pastor*)

This past week in general and Friday in particular we joined our fellow-citizens in mourning the death of Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of our nation. The television screen and the internet allowed us to have ringside seats for the majestic pomp and circumstance connected with the funeral of a national leader.

As Luther says in the Fourth Petition, "daily bread" includes "pious rulers" and "good government." In the case of Ronald Reagan, those distinctions apply as much as to any other President we have experienced. Writing to the Roman Christians, the apostle Paul acknowledged that earthly rulers are "God's minister to you for good..." (Rom. 13:4). Writing to Timothy, the same apostle exhorts that prayer and "giving of thanks" be made "for all men, for kings . . ." (1 Tim. 2:2). With that in mind, while our nation annually observes various days

for Presidents considered "fathers" of our country (usually marking the day of their birth), it is entirely fitting that, when they pass from the earthly scene, we also join in giving thanks for those whom the Lord God has appointed to positions of national leadership.

In regard to the national day of mourning for President Reagan and especially the religious aspects connected with it, while we may have done and said things differently, yet we were happy to note a distinctly Christian flavor coming through. That was the case particularly in the Reagan family's graveside memorial service, the details being laid out beforehand (we're told) by the deceased President and his wife. Christian hymns such as "Amazing Grace" and "Just As I Am" were sung. More substantively, eternal salvation "by grace" and "through Jesus Christ" was alluded to in public comments made by at least one family member, as well as by the presiding pastor.

After hearing eulogy upon eulogy at the national funeral service—as well as hearing and reading what has been said and written about the fallen leader by news commentators and broadcast-

ers—we recognize that all the outward was just that, outward! God alone knows the heart and whether saving faith in Jesus Christ, the only Savior, resides there. That is true of the hearts of the rich and the famous, the earthly powerful and the influential, as well as of the rest of us.

We give thanks especially for rulers whose legacy allows the country's citizenry to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:2). President Reagan, by his words and deeds, proved himself to be such a ruler. For the most part he was a champion of conservative causes. Together with his challenge to godless communism to "tear down the wall" in Berlin, "the Great Liberator" (as some have named him) encouraged America's citizens to cherish the freedoms enjoyed under the Constitution.

The bottom line of the apostle Paul's directive to give thanks for kings is their legacy of allowing confessors of Christ to practice faith in their Savior-God—in order that they (and others through them!) might "come to the knowledge of the truth." Yes, you see, there IS "truth"! That truth is reposed in the one true God as He has revealed Himself to sinners in the Bible. In those Scriptures God has revealed that His one and only Son Jesus Christ came to tear down a wall—the "wall of separation" between man and God (Eph. 2:14). No one else, no man by himself, no earthly king or potentate—in the church or outside of it!—could remove that wall. Only the God-Man Jesus could, and

did, overcome the curse of the law that was against us, thus reconciling sinners to holy God by His voluntary sacrifice of Himself on Calvary's cross.

So, while we give thanks to God for a "king" such as President Reagan was, above all we thank God for the King of kings, Jesus Christ, who by His every word and deed showed Himself to be the Liberator of sinners in bondage to sin and death. The Spirit of God lead us to confess and defend that freedom as true disciples of Jesus, for the Master said: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31f)!

*** AND FROM A SERMON . . .** (*text: Genesis 12:1-4; theme: "Abraham's Calling—A Type of our Christian Calling"; Preacher, Pastor Paul Fleischer of Redeemer, Cheyenne*)

. . . Among the many accolades accorded President Reagan this week was the idea that he was an unassuming, humble man of faith—all that in spite of the lofty positions he held such as governor of the largest state and President of the nation. God will be the final Judge of the genuineness of saving faith, won't He? Yet those who made the observations would often draw contrasts, suggesting that such traits are rare in our day.

We won't argue that, will we? Our world today is replete with people, male and female alike, who erect their personal towers of Babel. "Only I can make me great" is the prevalent philosophy. Rare indeed are those who, with Abram, come to believe—just believe!—that they are pilgrims and strangers on the Earth; that they have been called out of this world to be God's people in it. It's good—and

there's a place for—knowing about and acknowledging fathers of our country and other great Presidents. But looking for inspiration and motivation, we do ourselves best by looking away from those the world considers great; striving instead

to emulate those the Savior Himself praises—believers like the Roman centurion (Luke 7), the Syrophenician woman (Matthew 15), and a man named Abraham, "the father of the faithful" (Romans 4). . . .



THE MINISTRY OF THE KEYS—

The Authority Given by Christ to His Church [And ONLY to His Church]

Many thoughtful Christians cringed to see the Catholic pope rebuking the American president for his policy in Iraq. What business does a religious leader have telling our government how to do its work? Even if he is a leader who claims to be the vicar (substitute) of Christ and as such wields two scepters, one as ruler of the Christian church, the other as ruler of the world. The papacy has always regarded itself as having this position, so this should come as no surprise.

Surprising it is, however, how commonplace it is for American religious bodies—in convention assembled—to pass resolutions on government matters, using collective clout as lobby force. The National Council of Churches (including the ELCA) is particularly active these days.

The agenda of our CLC at the June Convention dealt only with the work of the gospel among us.

ARE WE NEGLECTING OUR MISSION?

We certainly cannot claim to having fulfilled our gospel mission as it should be done. This we must freely

475th Anniversary of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1529-2004)

What Luther said:

"I do beseech all of you, my dear sirs and friends, for the sake of God and poor youth, not to treat this matter as lightly as so many do who do not see what the prince of this world intends. It is a serious and important matter, in which Christ and all the world are mightily concerned, that we help and assist our youth. By helping the youth we shall be helping ourselves and all men."

confess. But we need not admit failure for having kept our churchly hands out of government matters, even while we pledge ourselves as citizens to play that part individually with diligence.

The reason?

The Lord Jesus, who is ultimately the Ruler of all things in the world as well as in the Church which is His body, has clearly defined the authority He has assigned to His Church and also the authority He has assigned to government. To government He has given

•What is the ministry of the Keys?

The ministry of the Keys is the peculiar authority of the Church, given by Christ to His Church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

Thus writes the holy Evangelist John, chapter twentieth: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost! Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

What do you believe according to these words?

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us according to His divine command (especially when they exclude manifestly impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend), this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.

• Gausewitz edition, 1956

the sword (Romans 13). To His Church He has given the *gospel* (Matthew 16:19, Luke 24:47). each has its own domain of responsibility; each has the instrument suited to its work.

THE KEYS

Keys are meant to open doors or lock them shut. How startling it must have been when the Lord, conferencing with His disciples at the headwaters of the Jordan, advised them that they were entrusted with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," like the chamberlains of ancient kings who were invested with authority to act in the name of the ruler.

If Peter and the others had visions of themselves in positions of power in a political kingdom, they were quickly corrected. Jesus gave them a vision of something vastly greater, of cosmic proportions: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:19-NIV).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood on Pentecost and boldly

began to exercise his God-given authority. Shouting God's judgment, he bound the throng to the guilt of crucifying the Jesus whom God had made *both Lord and Christ* (Acts 2:36). As such opponents they were judged guilty and shut out of the highly prized domain of God's Kingdom. What a painful work this must have been for the apostle!

"Cut to the heart, they said . . . *What shall we do?*"

THE LOOSING

Given this cry of despair, Peter was quick to do the loosing as he voiced the call of God for change of heart and mind and faith in Jesus. God was speaking when Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

The blessed result of this "absolution," this loosing of guilt and shame?

"Those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them, and they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:36-42-NKJV).

The door was opened. The Kingdom of God came to them! Was there ever a greater work than this? Can anything done in Washington DC or the United Nations match this in importance? This is for life eternal.

YES, PECULIAR

Our Catechisms call this a "peculiar" authority, meaning that it is entrusted **ONLY** to the Church of Christ, the assembly of those who, like Peter, recognize and confess Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16-18).

In public church assemblies we are used to hearing absolution from called

servants of the Word ("I, as a called . . ."). The congregation designates such as their spokespersons to declare what they as Christians are authorized to provide. Important it is, however, to know that this authority is not *peculiar* to ordained clergy alone.

A Bible class member told a cherished childhood memory. She recalled how her Christian parents would prepare for church on communion Sundays. Facing each other at home, in the presence of the children, they would each confess his/her sins to the other. Then they would declare the grace of God to one another in the forgiveness of sins, and embrace.

This, too, was "as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself." The authority is, after all, peculiar to *all believers*.

An awesome trust!

—Pastor Em. Rollin A. Reim



The Tongue—Focus of the Eighth Commandment

Why do gossip magazines, newspaper columns, and TV shows generate such a large following and make so much money? Why is it so much easier to say something unkind about someone than it is to say something kind? Have you progressed in your life as a Christian in your ability to keep a secret?

The answers to these questions all point to the insidious nature of sin—especially the sin of the tongue, the focus of the Eighth Commandment. Luther stated: "Besides our own body, our wife or husband, and our temporal property, we have one more treasure

*475th Anniversary of Luther's Small
and Large Catechisms
(1529-2004)*

What Luther said:

"When Christ wished to attract and instruct men, He had to become a man. If we are to attract and instruct children, we must become children with them."

which is indispensable to us, namely, our honor and good name . . ." It is this "honor and good name" which God protects in this commandment.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or say anything that might ruin his good name and reputation; but we should defend him, speak well of him, and explain all his words and actions in the best possible way.

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Large Catechism Comment:

"There is nothing about a man or in a man that can do greater good or greater harm, in spiritual or in temporal matters, than this smallest and weakest of his members, the tongue."

"A good name is better than precious ointment" (Eccles. 7:1).

False witness is a product of a false heart, one which aims to deceive, is not genuine, and intends evil. What about those persons who claim they are not guilty of disobeying this commandment because they were only telling the truth about something their neighbor has done? Has spreading this "truth" helped your neighbor in any way? Luther called such people backbiters and had this to say of them: "Learning a bit of gossip about someone else, they spread it to every corner, relishing and delighting in it like pigs that roll in the mud and root around in it with their snouts."

Christian love should compel us to admonish our neighbor if he or she has sinned, for Jesus tells us, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Mt. 18:15). In this way you may gain a brother and save his or her reputation.

What's more, love should compel us to rebuke those who want to share gossip with us. This is not easy. Perhaps we feel passive listening to gossip is not as bad as gossiping. Is that really true?

Luther gave this bold advice on the matter: "If you encounter somebody with a worthless tongue who gossips and slanders someone, rebuke him straight to his face and make him blush for shame. . . . For honor and good name are easily taken away, but not easily restored."

Perhaps one reason we sinners are so eager to share the sins of others (our neighbors, siblings, co-workers, classmates, etc.) is that it makes *our* misdeeds seem more palatable by comparison.

Does God see it that way? He tells us in Scripture to build each other up, not tear one another down. We do this by helping defend our neighbor's good name, by speaking well of him or her when given the opportunity, and by putting the best construction on everything he or she does.

"Best construction"—that means not seeking to find ulterior motives for the actions of your neighbor. That means giving people the benefit of the doubt, just as you would appreciate their doing for you.

Thank God that He sent His Son to die for all of these sins of the tongue. May His Spirit guide us in saying only that which is pleasing to our Father's ears.

Oh, let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth;
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And then, when in my place

I must and ought to speak,
My words grant pow'r and grace
Lest I offend the weak.
(TLH 395, v. 3)

—Prof. Joseph Lau



Immanuel Lutheran College

Graduation – May 22, 2004

In the ILC Fieldhouse gymnasium, I sat among an overflow crowd enjoying the graduation of the classes of 2004. Just enough pomp to offset the circumstances of drizzle and discomfort of infants.

The preceding evening's concert came on strong with trumpet and drum before settling down to the "Sondays" of praise to the Lord, impressive and uplifting in reverberations of lilting (*The Lamb*), somber (*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*), stately (*See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph*), gentle (*Day by Day*) and jubilant (*Doxology*) songs, as the case may be.

On graduation morning, Pres. Pfeiffer opened our worship with praise and prayer prior to the Processional "O Lord, once more we come to Thee"; we then shared Psalm 107 antiphonally, and the ILC Chorus presented a medley of Christian hymn-tunes. Again we settled back for the sermon, which Pres. Pfeiffer intro-

duced with the comment that this address (based on ch. 12:8-14) constituted the conclusion of his series of chapel talks based on the Book of Ecclesiastes.

To paraphrase: "Conclusions should be taken into account long before they happen, just as for years the graduates have been preparing to graduate. We do believe in this Conclusion, which gives meaning to life, for we know that our Lord will arrive at any time. We do not look to the books of the learned (of which there is no end), for we have one book of wisdom, given by one Shepherd to His true scholars—the Word of our Redeemer—to prepare us for the ultimate conclusion. Holy reverence for God, believing in His Word, and living to fulfill His purposes—this is our goal every day."

No seminary or teacher graduates were presented to the Church, but two young men were graduated from the four-year pre-theological course and



**Immanuel Lutheran
High School Graduates**



Grandparents Enno & Bea Gerbitz, ILC Pres. John Pfeiffer, grandparents Gerhard & Bernice Mueller, Graduate Amanda Mueller, John Mueller, her father

were granted their BA degrees, and one young lady was awarded the AA degree. In counterpoint, announcement was made that two former graduates have lately been added to the teaching ministry of the CLC, and one candidate for the preaching ministry is scheduled for graduation from the seminary at the close of the fall semester, 2004. Finally, thirty high school seniors joined the ranks of ILC graduates and in song asked their Savior to bless them

("Shine, Jesus, Shine . . . on me!").

From lesser to greater: the PA system and acoustics were fine, as were seating accommodations; warmth of fellowship and love flourished. But above all these, our hearts and souls reverberated as we together rehearsed the blessings received from our Lord and Savior in His work among us.

—Your reporter from the back row,
Paul R. Koch



ILHS, Mankato, Graduation

Even the sunny June afternoon seemed dim when compared to the beaming faces of Immanuel Lutheran High School's (Mankato, Minnesota) graduating seniors. During the commencement worship service on June 6, six seniors received their diplomas: James Buckley III, Cassandra Fleischer, Matthew Greve, Brandan Heinze, Erin Jensen, and Meghan Stelter.

The tone of the worship service was set as the assembly joined to sing the opening hymn "Thy Strong Word." Pastor Paul D. Nolting, liturgist, led the assembly in a responsive reading from

Psalm 34. In the days of their Christian education, the graduates were able to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

The Grade School Choir added to the worship by singing "I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus." These simple words of trust reminded everyone of the child-like faith that relies upon its Savior even in an adult post-High School world. The High School Choir also added its praise through several selections.

The commencement speaker, Matthew Busch, urged the graduates to continue 'Appreciating Your Faith!' He based his message on 1 Corinthians



**Faculty Congratulates
ILHS grads.**



Graduates & Speaker Matt Busch

16:13, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." Mr. Busch led the graduates to remember all the blessings they received through their Christian education. Then by intertwining experiences and personalities of each graduate

with Scripture passages, he left the graduates with God's direction for where to find strength, guidance, and motivation to use their gifts, and where to find the confidence of success.

Valedictorian Brandan Heinze spoke on behalf of the Senior Class, basing his message on Ephesians 6:10ff. Brandan thanked all who played a role in equipping the graduates with the armor of God. Then he urged his classmates to keep on putting on the armor of God through daily devotion and study in God's Word.

May it be so among us all!

*—As reported by
Pastor Wayne Eichstadt*



April, '04 Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference;
Standing: Steven Karp, Delwyn Mass, David Reim, Terrel Kesterson, Bertram Naumann;
Kneeling: Nathan Pfeiffer, Robert List, Paul Krause, John Hein, Paul Naumann
 (host pastor, who wrote):
 "During conference we had an evening session scheduled...A windstorm that afternoon knocked the power out, but the session was held by light of Coleman lantern! Very Authentic!"

A Special Day in Cheyenne



Redeemer School children—Matt Fiechtner, Michelle Hensel, Austin Hughes—present their pastor with a plaque on his 40th Anniversary.

Sunday, May 23, 2004, is a day to remember in the history of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming. It was a day on which the congregation marked a couple of anniversaries—the fiftieth of its Christian Day School and the fortieth of its pastor's ordination.

We began the day with the regular Bible class and Sunday school. At 10:30 a.m. we had our church service which focused on "Christian education—a holy relay from one generation to another." Special songs and prayers were included in the service.

After church, we celebrated Pastor Paul Fleischer's 40th year since his ordination into the preaching ministry. Many letters of congratulations were read and gifts given. The ladies' choir sang a special song.

A noon potluck meal was served. Visitors from sister CLC congregations in Denver (Lakewood) and Loveland, Colo., were able to join us for the afternoon celebrations.

After lunch, children of Redeemer Lutheran School put on the Spring Program entitled "The World of Wonder." It included four short skits,



Behind the school children—Teacher Judy Hensel. Teacher's aides in front are their respective grandmothers: Sylvia Sprengeler, Marilyn Greening, Barbara Ruegge

as well as songs about the world. Members and visitors then presented guitar playing, story telling, display projects, string art, songs and prayer, piano playing, origami, acting, and orchestra singing.

The day continued with the reading of many letters from former teachers and students about their memories while teaching at, or attending, Redeemer Lutheran School.

The day of celebration culminated with the school children presenting a special song program. Pastor Fleischer, the ladies' choir, and the audience joined them on certain selections. Songs chosen were those which had been sung during Lenten services this year, focusing on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Each song was introduced with excerpts from what Martin Luther—and Pastor Fleischer in his sermon series—had said about a certain petition. Each song was also accompanied by an appropriate slide projection. The program concluded with the assembly singing the *Nunc Dimittis*. A light meal ended the day's activities.

The Lord's blessings on the past fifty years are certainly still present today. Through the fellowship shared and the many letters read, we realize these blessings. Christian education is indeed a holy relay to be passed on to the next generation. Glory be to God!

—*Teacher Mrs. Judy Hensel reporting*



Announcements

**West Central Pastoral Conference
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Rapid City, South Dakota
Dates: September 14 -16, 2004**

Agenda:

1. Word study on the words "encourage," "beseech," and "entreat" (implore) as used in both the OT and NT—Pastor Michael Roehl

2. Presentation of practical computer tools and techniques that can be employed in the pastoral ministry—Pastor James Sandeen
3. Review of key Greek rules of language—Pastor Timothy Wheaton
4. Biblical study of Walther's Thesis XXV (Gospel must have a general predominance in our teaching). Is this qualitative, quantitative, or both etc.?—Pastor John Klatt
5. Homiletical Study: Presenter's choice—Pastor Mark Gurath
6. Catechetics: Methods/Styles/etc.—Pastor Paul Fleischer
7. Book Review: Essayist's choice—Pastor Andrew Schaller
8. Old Testament Exegesis, Malachi 2:1ff—Pastor Matthew Hanel
9. New Testament Exegesis, Romans 9:1ff—Pastor Frank Gant
10. Study of Romans 14:12 and Related Passages—Pastor Peter Reim
11. What does Scripture say about Gambling?—Pastor James Naumann

Conference Chaplain: Pastor Roland H.

Gurgel

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor George Dummann III

—*Pastor Mark Gurath, Secretary*

COVER: Matt Schaser