

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



(ISSN 0024-7537)

April 2005, VOL. 47 NO. 10

"I am the good shepherd..." (Jesus, in John 10:11)

From the moment Adam and Eve decided they could be as God, they and their descendants have sought to bring God down to their level.

This is done by disregarding God's voice and elevating one's own. It is the disregarding of God's voice which Satan seeks, and he works very hard at it.

It is evident from his first question, "Has God indeed said...?" (Gen. 3:2) that such is Satan's aim. He will even use God's Word when it suits his purpose; and, of course, he never uses it correctly.

So when Jesus calls Himself the "good shepherd," the devil seeks to lessen in our minds and hearts that wonderful picture which Jesus gives to us.

Satan does this not by attacking the idea of a shepherd, but by attacking the word *good*. He takes our concept of good—as that which is okay, or as

something which has room for improvement—and applies that to our Lord Jesus.

What we end up with is a shepherd who for the most part is good, but not always.

The "good," of course, is that Jesus is kind and nice and giving, and will save everyone, no matter what.

Disciplining in love

This could leave one with the idea that when the Shepherd disciplines us (due to our waywardness), that is not a good thing. No one, of course, likes to be disciplined. Depending upon the type of discipline your parents give, discipline can hurt and leave you standing for a time. Yet the end result was that through discipline we did learn, and through discipline we were rescued from many a hurtful and harm-

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

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

Editor: Paul Fleischer, 1741 E. 22nd Street, Cheyenne, WY 82001-4138, E-Mail to paulgf@qwest.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Artists: John Fox, Matthew Schaser; Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Warren Fanning, Daniel Fleischer, Joel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Roland H. Gurgel, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Bertram Naumann, Paul D. Nolting, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Andrew Schaller, Michael Schierenbeck.

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

Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to benno.sydow@isd623.org. Individual subscriptions {foreign—U.S. currency only}: \$11.00 {\$15.00} for one year; \$19.00 {\$27.00} for two years; \$27.00 {\$39.00} for three years. Subscriptions sent in bulk to congregations: \$9.00.

Spokesman Internet access: <http://www.lutheranspokesman.org>

Printed in U.S.A.

ful situation.

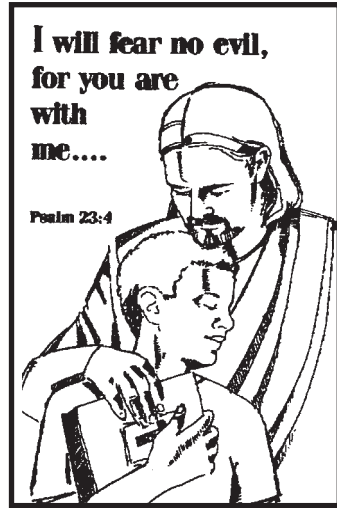
On the other hand, if there were no discipline, the result would simply be spoiled children and spoiled adults who do whatever they wish when they wish, with dangerous results.

No parent who loves his children, no pastor who loves his members, no teacher who loves his students will withhold discipline, but just as they will give good gifts (see Matthew 7:11) so they will, in love, discipline when necessary, and also warn.

When applied to spiritual matters this, of course, has very serious results. If we expect to be—or are allowed to be—spoiled spiritually, the end result is not heaven.

The goodness then of our Shepherd lies not only in the mercy and grace He gives, but also in the discipline and the warnings He gives, that we do not become spoiled and lose the hope of eternal life.

Our Shepherd need not discipline us if we would learn to hear and follow the voice by which He leads. If we would listen to His warnings, we



would see good days.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd—and, by God's definition, you can't get any better than that!—for He leads you on the paths of righteousness, from one green pasture to another, from one quiet watering place to another all the way to heaven.

He brings us up to Him and to heaven—the ultimate good!

—Pastor Roland Gurgel



"I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

"Then came I..."

The resurrection was very important to the apostle Paul and to the theology he imparted to the Christians in Corinth.

Following these chapters in which he had been rebuking, correcting, and

admonishing this congregation, he arrived at this most profound chapter, demonstrating the fact and power of the resurrection of Christ.

And he started by listing the many appearances of the risen Christ to the

believers: He was seen by "Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren..."

"...Then last of all He was seen by me also..." (v. 8)

"Then came I..."

Paul's (shall we say 'Saul's?') sighting of Jesus was different from the others. It was not a graveside sighting, not a surprise visit in the inner room. It was roadside, outside Damascus, while Paul was on a mission to defeat Christianity.

The others had seen Jesus earlier—in the forty days after the resurrection. Saul's sighting came years afterward. The others were, at least, professed followers of Jesus; Saul was an avowed enemy. The others experienced almost immediate joy at the sight; Saul, unadulterated terror, and three days of trembling prayer.

All circumstances pointed to what Paul so earnestly felt: "I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15:9).

A living Jesus of Nazareth—called "Christ" by many—crushed Saul's assumptions about the Jewish religion, about the value of works-righteousness, about the very path to God.

This realization itself might have been enough to kill a man. But in Paul's case, it killed only that which needed to die.

His meeting with Christ made him a child of grace. The broken spirit was healed, for God in Jesus Christ meant forgiveness more than anything else. The blinded eyes were restored, now with a new vision of God's will. The former persecutor was specifically sent "to open [Gentile] eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the

power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18).

It was the risen Jesus who sent him on his way.

We often say that "justification" is central to Paul's theology. But I don't think Paul saw it that way.

For Paul, the event of the resurrection was the central fact. It told him so-o-o much about Jesus: It identified Jesus as the Son of God: "Jesus Christ...was declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead, through whom we have received grace" (Rom. 1:4).

Also, it was proof positive of our right standing before God: "Jesus Christ was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4: 25). Christ brought an end to the age-old dominion of the Serpent: "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Rom. 16:20).

Paul was not among the first; not a favorite (he thought); not in any way deserving (but who was?). Still, it was given to Saul to see Jesus! And all Saul's self-righteousness slipped away. His ego ("I") receded in deference to the Christ—who not only lived, but lived in him: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20)!

"Then came I..."

The feast of the resurrection deserves to be the most cherished event on the Christian calendar. Even today the risen Christ remains a powerful message to Christians. What more startling message for man in the "me-first" era?! What more enduring message to those whose chief future prospect is only death ("and then...?")?!

Nobody can know the power of the

resurrection until he dies to sin. Repent. Believe—as Paul taught—that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures."

Wonder at that giving love; marvel at that long-ago plan. And let the fact of the resurrection sink down into your heart. A living Jesus Christ—glorified and seated at the right hand of the

Father—dwarfs our every trouble, humbles our proud ambitions, raises our crushed hopes of peace with God and everlasting life.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

First, Christ rose—"then came I."

—*Pastor Peter Reim*



HOPELESSNESS? WHAT HOPELESSNESS?

How many in the world are despairing or desperate! How many live in a condition commonly described as hopeless!

How they came to that condition—whether by circumstances out of their control, as it may appear, or by choice—is, for purposes here, not the point. Yet we cannot escape the feeling that there are some in society who seem to be comfortable wallowing in their hopelessness. It gives them victim status.

Candidly speaking, we must also acknowledge that we have been in situations where the cause seemed hopeless. Elijah certainly had that feeling (1 Kings 19:14). Through his own eyes the situation was grave and seemed hopeless. However, the Lord set his thinking straight.

So the Lord does with us also. More than we choose to acknowledge, the Lord has delivered us out of situations that we thought to be hopeless. More than we can count, He has kept us out of hopeless situations—in spite of our natural inclination to get ourselves into such circumstances. In other words,

many circumstances have not remained hopeless because the Heavenly Father has intervened.

There is a hopeless condition, however, which afflicts all people by reason of the flesh with which they are born. Adam and Eve knew they had sinned. However, they made no move to God. They ran from Him. They hid and—when confronted by God—they made excuse.

By reason of the sinful nature, none can make a move toward God to correct the wrong, even if one realizes the depth of his depravity. It is therefore certain that no one can—for himself or for another—bring to the righteous God a sacrifice as payment for sin. It is a hopeless situation. Nevertheless, in a state of self-delusion some believe they can work their way out of their hopelessness or at least contribute toward alleviating it.

But the Lord God says, "Not so." Works of self-righteousness save no one. It is a hopeless situation ... except for God's love which moved Him in compassion to promise and send the

Savior.

Confidence Through the Word!

Because we have heard it so often, we may be "singing to the choir" when we remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus took our sins upon Himself, that He made the sacrifice demanded, that He paid the price we could not pay, that He became a curse for us, and that by His death He died the death that we deserved.

Yes, we may be "singing to the choir." Yet, even as a choir needs to rehearse over and over again, so by reason of our weaknesses and fears we need the continual rehearsal or retelling of God's grace.

This is why we never weary of the age-old Easter message as we heard it again just a few weeks ago. And indeed, faithful Bible preaching is a continual retelling of the Easter message. Whenever Christ-believers hear the gospel preached, they are reminded, strengthened, and comforted in the knowledge that in Christ there is forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Our situation is no longer hopeless—ever! If such a feeling ever afflicts us, it is because we have forgotten the promises of God.

But we are restored to confidence through the Word. We can go to many

Bible passages. Here is one to tuck in the memory of your heart: In His abundant mercy we have been begotten again "to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

As we remember the Easter message, basking in the warmth of the Easter glow, surely we will say with Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Our gracious Father be praised for instilling in us a "living hope" in and through the risen Lord.

A "living hope" and hopelessness cannot coexist. We are not victims, but victors in Jesus Who has risen from the dead and made us partakers of His victory over sin, death, and the devil.

Think about it. As the living hope fills our hearts, there is no circumstance, spiritual or temporal, that is hopeless, for the gracious Lord turns weeping into joy, making our short afflictions here but a forgotten memory in eternity. "Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory ... " over hopelessness " ... through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 57)!

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



Journal of Theology Staff.
(Back): J. Hein, F. Gantt,
D. Lau, T. Kesterson, D.
Maas; (Front) P. Tiefel, E.
Hallauer, M. Roehl, N.
Greve, P. Sippert (editor)

*"Father, into Thy hands
I commend my spirit"
(Luke 23:46)*

The parting words of Jesus were taken from Scripture. Psalm 31:5 says, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit."

After the torment of betrayal by one of His own, after the anguish of denial by another of His own, after mockery and abuse, a crown of thorns and suffering, being forsaken by God, enduring the throes of death, His was nevertheless a peaceful death!

The measure of our affliction in life can never measure up to that of our Lord, yet just because He suffered more than we ever could have endured, we are bold to say, "Lord, give us such a death as this."

As children of God we may be confident that, measured in terms of our relationship to God, ours will be a peaceful death. Our Savior has reconciled us to God. As we are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus, we have nothing to fear from God. No matter how violent our death may be, no matter how fierce the struggle may be between life and death, our heart can be at peace. Our Lord Jesus promised us, "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

Further, He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave



them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (Jn. 10:27-29).

With these promises in heart, the apostle Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

Amidst all the noise and raucousness of our ungodly age, the believer in Jesus can join with the martyr Stephen (Acts 7), who said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; and with John Huss who, before He was burned at the stake, said, "But I commit my soul into Thy hands; Thou hast redeemed me, Lord Jesus, God of Truth"; and finally with Martin Luther who, lying on his death bed, said "I pass away; I yield up my spirit. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit, Thou hast redeemed me, Lord, Thou faithful God."

Such a confession we may confidently make because our Lord Jesus,

having fulfilled all for our salvation, commended Himself—and with Himself all His members—to the hands of the Father in Heaven. For which reason we may say,

In Thine arms I rest me,
Foes who would molest me
Cannot harm me here.*

Blessed is the death of His saints.
Their new morning dawns in heaven
safe from every foe!

* *The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 347

.....

AN EIGHTH WORD—

*"He is not here: for he is risen,
as he said."
(Matthew 28:6)*

We have considered the seven words of Jesus from the cross. From them we have drawn comfort, encouragement, and strength as we make our pilgrimage through the wasteland of this morally barren and spiritually destitute Earth.

But all would be for naught, and we of all people would be the most deceived were it not for an eighth word, spoken in this case by the heavenly messenger, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said."

In the grand resurrection chapter in his first epistle to the Corinthians (chapter 15), the apostle Paul wrote, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain...And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins...But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

Many witnesses and events substantiate the message of the angel to the women after the fact. It happened "as He said."

These three words are significant.

Christ fulfilled the Scriptures. Christ took up His life again (John 10:18). The temple that men sought to destroy was raised up again after three days, just as Jesus said it would be (John 2:19).

It is the faithfulness of God that sustains the Christian through this life. Every promise of God is "yea and amen." Therefore, before the fact Job said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold..." (Job 19:25-27).

As the eyes grow dim and the shadows lengthen, there echoes through the corridor of the heart, "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19).

The one is true—"He is risen!"

Therefore, the other is also true—"You shall live also!"

"... As He said!"

We thank Pastor Daniel Fleischer for this editing series on the words of Christ from the cross—as well as the eighth word of the angel!—Ed.

SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

Ninth in a series

“Jesus changes men’s lives for good”

We begin our consideration of this church sign by assuming that the word “men” is used in the generic sense, in the sense of mankind, members of the human race, male and female. Thus we can restate the message, “Jesus changes people’s lives for good.”

The truth of this statement is beyond dispute among us. Jesus has certainly made our lives completely different from what they would have been without Him. But because of all the false doctrines being taught by various denominations in outward Christendom, it does us well to look carefully at each aspect of this statement.

When I first began to consider this sign, I was reminded of an incident in my ministry at Bethel Lutheran Church, Spring, Texas. One of the members of the women’s group brought me a copy of the book *The Cross and The Switchblade*, raving about how good it was, and asking whether there was anything we could learn from it to further our mission endeavors. I told her I would read it, and we could discuss it at a future meeting.

The main point of the book seemed to be the same as this church sign: “Jesus changes people’s lives for good.” The book told about the work of a minister and his dealings with young

men who roamed the streets in gangs, who had dropped out of school, and who were involved with drugs and crime. The minister got many of them to “commit their lives to Jesus” and to give up their lives of crime. This was certainly very impressive.

But the sad thing was that there was not one syllable of the gospel in this book. There were many references to Jesus, but not once was it stated what Jesus came to this Earth to accomplish. Again and again the young men were exhorted to invite Jesus into their hearts and to commit their lives to Jesus, but not once was it stated what they should believe about Jesus according to the Bible.

As I recall, the book was telling the real life story of a minister, and I cannot say that this minister never preached the gospel to those young men. But one would think that the preaching of the gospel would be important enough to include in the book.

We might wonder: How could there be such success in turning the lives of those young men around, if they were not actually hearing the gospel? The answer to that question is in something Pastor Gilbert Sydow used to say: “The old Adam can take a high polish.” Look around you. Many unbelievers are outwardly honorable. They work hard, they

stay out of trouble, and they help others. Their motives for leading outwardly decent lives can range from the praise of their fellow men to the hope of heaven based on their own good works. And the world may be a better place because of such people (speaking from a purely human viewpoint).

But this is not the goal of our mission work. We do not want to help make unbelievers more honorable. Jesus' words to His disciples about the cost of discipleship have an application here: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36)

One would like to believe that the owners of this church sign would not omit the gospel in their preaching. But with the prevalence of the social gospel today, one can have no such assurance. Church after church and preacher after preacher are found to be stressing only the benefits for this life to be derived from Jesus. We certainly do not deny that there are special benefits for this life in connection with faith in Jesus, but we submit that these benefits cannot be realized without the correct understanding of the gospel of redemption.

So as much as we agree that "Jesus changes people's lives for good," let us never forget that we can see the truth of this statement only as we appropriate for ourselves and reveal to others the Bible teachings of sin and grace. All people by nature are spiritually dead in sin, enemies of God, and destined to an eternity in hell. And no amount of striving to do better can satisfy God's demands of perfection. The only solution to sin is the gospel, the good news that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16), that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (2 Cor. 5:19), and that Jesus "bore our sins in His own body on the tree (the cross)" (1 Pet. 2:24). Numerous additional references could be added to explain exactly what is the basis for a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

So may we never give up on the power of the gospel to truly change people's hearts, so that they may join us in the eternal joys of heaven.

—Gene Rutz



Women In Fellowship Group, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

The Heart of the Gospel (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The truth concerning a sinner's justification is the heart of the gospel. That truth beats throughout the gospel message. If the truth of justification is lost, then the gospel is lost and there is no forgiveness, only death.

The Guilty Declared Righteous

The ultimate question concerning our soul's salvation is this: How will we be judged righteous before our Creator on the Last Day?

One could attempt to be righteous before God by being "good and giving"—striving to fill one's life with what mankind considers to be good so that God will see his goodness, forgive all the rest, and welcome him into glory. This approach leads either to arrogance or to despair—to arrogance because of the thought, "Look! I have done so much!" or to despair as one wonders, "Am I good enough to earn God's favor?"

The fallacy of obtaining righteousness in this way is exposed by God's Word: "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight..." (Rom. 3:20).

Another approach—the scriptural one—sees the need for divine intervention. God intervened when He "sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). God sent Jesus as our substitute to



live a perfect life and so to keep the Law which we could never keep. Then God "made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). God put our sins upon Jesus and punished Jesus for every one of them, when He died on the cross.

As a result of Jesus' sacrifice, God justified the whole world. He declared all sinners "not guilty," because the blood of Jesus has washed their guilt away and given them His righteousness. "[Christ] Himself is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world!" (1 Jn. 2:2).

Justified by Grace through Faith

Our justification is a wonderfully free and undeserved gift of God's grace. "By grace you have been saved through

faith" (Eph. 2:8). God was under no obligation to rescue us from our own foolishness and sin. Nothing in us moved God to give up His Son to be our Savior. God's deep undeserved love and mercy moved Him to save us.

The blessings of justification—forgiveness of sins, peace with God, life everlasting—come to the individual sinner through faith.

Sad to say, many reject God's gift through unbelief. The unbelieving sinner despises such news as foolishness (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18ff) and distances himself from God's gift. The child of God rejoices in the news of reconciliation and rests his hope and trust upon it.

The human notion of saving oneself is hard to let go. A particular temptation is to accept that God has saved us by grace through faith, but then to look upon faith as being our task and accomplishment. St. Paul dashes such human hope and gives glory to God, when he writes: "By grace you have been saved through faith—and that not of your-



selves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Neither the gift nor the faith comes through human works or effort.

Justification at Augsburg

The question of being righteous before God plagued Martin Luther's early life because the heart of the gospel was not beating in what he had been taught. He found peace with God only after the Holy Spirit led him to understand that righteousness was God's gift.

The heart of the gospel was the heart of the Reformers' teaching. When they confessed their faith at Augsburg, they

WE BELIEVE & CONFESS

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

A CONFESSION OF FAITH PRESENTED IN AUGSBURG
BY CERTAIN PRINCES AND CITIES TO HIS IMPERIAL
MAJESTY CHARLES V IN THE YEAR 1530

Psalm 119:46

*"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall
not be put to shame."*

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

IV. Justification

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

declared: "We cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfaction...we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith."

When the Roman Church responded to THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, the article concerning justification was completely rejected. The Lutheran confessors were condemned both for denying that there is forgiveness of sins by human works and for affirming that sinners receive forgiveness by faith in Christ. Therefore, in the Defense of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, the discussion of justification increased forty-fold. The Lutheran theologians

observed: "In this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity is involved."

How will we be judged righteous before our Creator? One either believes he will meet his Creator standing on his own merits or on the merits of Christ. One approach condemns, the other saves. One is the false promise of human contrivance, the other is the sure promise of God's grace. Many try to mix these two, but only weaken the heart of the gospel in the process, and eventually kill it.

By grace you are saved through faith—this is the heart of the gospel beating in the truth of God's Word and bringing life to sinners!

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt

FROM A PASTOR'S DESK—

"THE NEW HOUSES OF GOD"

A few months back, one of those Sunday newsmagazines (October 31, 2004) had an article with the above title. Among other things, this was written: "For years, places of worship were easy to identify. Steeples, jewel-toned stained glass and prominent religious symbols have long defined the religious landscape of every community. Recognizing today's churches is tougher. ..."

In order to address the "problem of declining attendance," the article goes on to say of these new churches: "... a growing number are enlisting a new psychology to bring people inside: pop culture. Think coffee bars, skate parks, surround sound audio systems and movie theaters that hold the interest of

a generation fascinated by high-tech gadgetry."

And the result of this new attempt at "growing" the church: "religious centers ... that resemble sports complexes or shopping centers more than traditional churches." According to the article, one 48,250-square-foot converted grocery store church in Atlanta has a movie theater and a teen center; worshipers watch video sermons on giant TV screens; another similar size church has a food court; another, four stories with escalators; another "throws Saturday evening socials for singles."

You get the idea. In fact, if you live in a six-figure or larger population center in our country, you may have one of these "new houses of God" just



St. Peter's Ev. Lutheran Church, Stambaugh, Mich., Pastor Philip Matzke

down the road.

Now, we are not surprised. The last few decades we have witnessed the societal/cultural trends toward postmodern relativism slowly but surely eating away at the church. So then, as respect for a divinely-inspired, clear and authoritative Word of God has gone by the boards for most mainstream churches—including, then, the gospel which is alone "the power of God unto salvation" (cf. Rom. 1:16)—what is left to "grow the church" but such methods, common's, and the shallow "church growth" substitutes mentioned?

If some of our orthodox Lutheran forefathers were alive to witness what we are witnessing, do we wonder what they would say? Knowing how things go in this world, neither would they be surprised. In a 1944 sermon (text: 1 Kings 6:7) we read this: *"There is no doubt at all that we are workmen engaged in the building of God's holy Temple, the Church ... We are working hard—yet in the judgment of some, not as we should. Our work seems to lack importance, and our rating as laborers is very humble because we make so very little noise at it. Who, after all,*

knows what is going on in our corner of the Temple? How many are aware of who we are and what we are doing? The Rev. Billy Graham gets into the newspapers, but we do not." (*Selected Sermons of E. Schaller*, Volume III, p. 116ff).

Not long ago (mid-November '04) we read that the Rev. Graham—arguably, the ground-layer for many of the above-described "new houses of God" churches—is soon to have yet another crusade, supposedly his last, out in the state of California.

But continuing with our sixty-year-old sermon: *"Truly, we are put to shame by the loud and noisy way in which many pastors, congregations, and synods are building at the Church—or seem to be. Among them the work is done in a frenzy of loud advertising; in their opinion, the preacher who can shout the loudest and shoot his message out with riveting hammer speed or with great theatrics is the most effective. They send him out onto the networks at great expense; they do almost anything to give their work the greatest publicity, noisily forcing themselves on the attention of*

the world. The church that runs the biggest ad in the paper, inviting all to come worship the Lord 'in the beauty of our air-conditioned auditorium' is considered the most active, live-wire church..."

Sixty years have passed since those words were first preached (written). In our pop-culture world, things have come to such a pass that (mere) air-conditioned auditoriums are no longer enough to attract people to "worship."

An older gentleman we chatted with last summer on the golf course told of plugging his ears with cotton when he goes to his church nowadays—"the drums and other instrument noise is just too much"! If it's still true that "faith comes by hearing ..."—and surely it is, according to the trustworthy Word of God (see Romans 10:17; also Isaiah 55:10-11 etc.)—it is more than sad that

church attendees in the "new houses of God" have to plug the very organ the Holy Spirit would use to create, nurture, and sustain the one and only true and saving faith in their hearts.

By way of encouragement also to us, then-Pastor E. Schaller had this to say to his congregation in 1944: *"Our work is quiet because it is the slow, careful task of building with one stone at a time, one upon the other, into the Holy Church, and securing those firmly which we lay. This is neither fast nor sensational work. We expect no one to applaud, nor do we expect thousands to stand eagerly and watch us at the performance. We are satisfied to know that the angels shout with joy each time we add a sinner to the Church and keep him there to his blessed end."*

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



Above: West Central Conference Women's Retreat, September 2004, Chadron State Park, Nebraska

Below: (l-r) Sylvia Sprengeler, Ruth Ahrens, Mary Greening, Geri Ohlmann

#4: "Tell me more about Jesus!"

Do you want to hear more about the love of God that desires to save you from hell? There's much more in the Bible about the redeeming love and work of Jesus, our Savior.

This is the one truth that makes all the difference for your life and for eternity, and it is the central theme of the Bible. Perhaps by now you have memorized the way God puts it: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

What does this mean? It means that the Creator of the Universe, who has all power in heaven and on Earth, has put your salvation at the top of His priorities. We do not always realize what God has accomplished against our enemy Satan, who intends to drag souls down into hell in order to frustrate God's love for humans. Though we were born into this world as Satan's victims, God is able to handle Satan.

God did so by inventing His special way to get souls free from Satan's control, a way that is superior to human nature and human efforts.

God decided that somewhere, sometime, someone had to live the way humans should live, completely free of sin, genuinely obedient to Father-God, and totally loving to everyone else. Since no sinner could accomplish this, God took the job out of the hands of sinful humans and took it upon Himself.

In short, His Son was commissioned to get the job done, and He did it. That job brought Him to an earthly life of suffering and rejection by humans, but He never slacked off or quit. Why? Because your salvation depends on Him, and He loves you too much to abandon you to Satan and hellfire.

How do you know that Jesus is your Substitute and your Redeemer? The Bible tells you so. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; ... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6).

As you get better acquainted with the Bible, you will find many more assurances of God's saving love for you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down.
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"
(The Lutheran Hymnal, #388, v.6)

—Paul R. Koch



—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions; May, 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Genesis</u>	<u>A leading thought on the reading</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	4:1-17	No excuse for refusing to serve	41,1
2	4:18-31	Your firstborn for Mine	41,2
3	5:1-9	A heathen says, "I do not know Him."	41,3
4	5:10-23	Tongues ready to complain	41,4
5	6:1-9	(Ascension) I am the Jehovah of promise	40,3-4
6	6:10-27	How then shall Pharaoh listen?	19,1-2
7	6:28-7:7	You as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron	19,3-4
8	7:8-24	Pharaoh's heart was not moved by this	19,5-6
9	8:1-15	Entreat the Lord to take away the frogs	25,1-2
10	10:1-11	Do you not yet understand?	25,3-4
11	10:21-29	Never see My face again, as you say	25,5
12	11:1-10	Afterward he will let you go	25,6

When Pharaoh refused to heed Jehovah, God dealt the final blow: He instituted the Passover, by which Israel was spared while every firstborn of Egypt died. Thus Egypt was decimated, and in a final gesture of defiance, Pharaoh (God's enemy) sealed his own doom.

13	12:1-13	The blood of a perfect lamb	156,1-3
14	12:14-20	An everlasting sign and memorial	156,4-5
15	12:21-28	(Pentecost) What do you mean by this service?	629,1-2
16	12:29-42	Kingship belongs to His Anointed	219,1-3
17	12:43-51	For the native and believing stranger	498,1
18	13:1-22	Because of what the Lord did for me	629,3-5
19	14:1-18	Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord	265,1-2
20	14:19-31	He who sits in the heavens shall laugh	265,3-4
21	15:1-18	And He shall reign forever and ever	218,5-6

The children of Israel were now alone with their God—and could not stand in His sight by their own worth. In His steadfast and abiding faithfulness, He bore with them and upheld them.

22	15:22-27	(Trinity) And there He tested them	422,1-2
23	16:1-12	Give us this day bread for today	422,3-4
24	16:13-21	Faithlessness breeds worms of trouble	436,1-3
25	16:22-36	Man shall not live by bread alone	436,4-5
26	17:1-16	Holding up the prophets' hands	496,3
27	18:13-27	All members of one body	496,3

When God announced the covenant of the Law, He did not thereby cancel the covenant of the Promise made with Abraham (Gal. 3:17-19), but the Law would help separate them from the influence of the heathen and also help preserve them from moral decay (Eph. 2:14).

28	19:1-15	A kingdom of priests and a holy nation	244,1-2
29	19:16-25	The glory of the Lord for a sinful people	244,3-4
30	20:1-11	Love your God with all your heart	287,1-2
31	20:12-17	Love your neighbor as yourself	287,3-4



CLC Teachers Conference

We need not walk in darkness...
And wander aimlessly...
In our plight
God's brilliant light
Will shine down gloriously.

[From the centerpieces on Conference dining tables]

The theme of the Conference, held October 20-22, 2004 at Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin was the term *light*.

Chaplain Daniel Barthels walked us through the different "lights" God has given us. God created light on the first day, soon after which our foreparents fell into the darkness of sin. In His great love and mercy, God sent Jesus to be the Light of the world, paying the penalty for that darkness so that we could be brought back into that light. And through the work of the Holy Spirit that light has shone on us. Now, having been adopted as children of God, we are called to reflect that light of Christ to the rest of the world, striving to live God-pleasing lives and proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection to those still lost in darkness.

We also had the privilege of professional growth filtered through the light of Scripture.

We received suggestions and activities for "Making History Come Alive" for our students (by James Arndt), as well as "Tools for Teaching" techniques for classroom management that can be immediately implemented (presented by Sara Pfeiffer). These provide teachers with more opportunities for students to let their lights shine. "A Principal's Responsibilities" (by Theodore Quade) served as a good reminder for all of Christ's workers as to how to let their light shine in His

service. James Sydow led us through a look at the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" in the light of Scripture, pointing out that habits do not save, but do provide opportunities to reflect Christ's light and saving grace to others.

In "Awareness For Fairness," Prof. Ross Roehl helped us stop and think about the "whys" and "hows" of our grading systems; he opened the door for active feedback and spirited discussions, which lasted far beyond the parameters of the presentation. Matthew Thurow provided an in-depth analysis of the "Entry Level/Grade Placement Testing" resources available; he encouraged us to use our God-given abilities to determine what's in the best interest of our students.

In "Our School as a Mission Arm of the Church," Pastor Mark Bernthal gave Bible-grounded ideas for letting our Christian light shine out into the world. In his presentation, "Impressing Upon Parents that God has Appointed Them to Be Their Child's First and Most Important Teacher," Karl Olmanson lent many Scriptural resources regarding how to use the Lord's guidance.

New Ideas, Attitudes, Outlooks...

Many easy-to-use and ready-to-implement ideas were offered through the upper and lower grade Idea

Exchanges as well as through the Title Fives. We covered a full school year's layout with "Back to School Ideas" (by Anita Meyer), a packet of worksheets on the "10 Commandments" (by Ann Sprengeler), ready-to-use "Art Projects" which lent immediate success for our students in their drawing (by David Bernthal), and "End of the Year Programs and Ideas" (by Valerie Bernthal).

During Wednesday evening's edifying Communion Service, Pastor David Naumann brought the teachers the opportunity for spiritual growth with a message based on Deuteronomy 6:4-7. Under the theme "The World's Greatest Teachers," the pastor reminded us that bringing the message of Christ's love and forgiveness is the greatest and most important teaching all Christians can do in their lives.

As always, one of the most refreshing aspects of the Conference is the fellowship shared—not only sharing our profession, but our faith as well! We are able to discuss the joys and challenges of the teaching ministry with those who not only empathize, but also spiritually comfort and encourage one another with Christ's refreshing message of love and forgiveness.

This enables us to return to our classrooms with new ideas, attitudes, and outlooks on our unique privilege of



Teachers James Arndt & Seth Schaller, with Pastor Frank Gantt

sharing the Light with Jesus' little lambs.

We thank the Lord for the blessings He has bestowed, giving us workers willing to tirelessly and cheerfully organize and oversee such a Conference, and to present such Christ-centered topics.

We also appreciate the Christian love that flowed from Luther Memorial's members as they opened up their hearts, homes, and kitchens to make us feel so greatly welcomed and so wonderfully fed!

The teachers rejoiced in their special calling of letting their light so shine that students and others might see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven! As the choir sang at our Communion service, "Shine, Jesus, Shine!", we joined in the prayer that our Lord Jesus would let us shine out into the world, bringing the light of His forgiveness to all.

—Reporting: Teacher
Rachel Rosendahl



Naumann Row at '04 Convention: (l-r) Pastors James, Bruce, David, Paul, (Teacher Owings), Father Bertram (in retirement)

Announcements

AN INVITATION FROM THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ILC:

Professor David Lau has announced his retirement from the Faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. effective at the end of the current school year. Professor Lau served in the pastoral ministry from his ordination in 1960 until the summer of 1991, when he was installed as a member of the ILC Faculty. His long and faithful service to our church and our school will be acknowledged in part during the Class Day-Graduation festivities on the ILC campus May 20-21, 2005.

As is our custom, we would like to present a monetary gift to Professor Lau as a token of our appreciation. CLC members are invited to contribute to a "retirement purse" which will be presented to him in May. Please make your checks payable to Immanuel Lutheran College, and stipulate: "D. Lau retirement purse." Send your gifts to

Jim Sydow, ILC Business Manager
Immanuel Lutheran College
501 Grover Road
Eau Claire, WI 54701

—*Pastor Vance Fossum,*
ILC Regents chairman

Change of Address

Pastor Thomas Schuetze
6768 Paw Paw Ave.
Coloma, MI 49038
Phone (269) 468-4368

Gift of God Lutheran Church Mapleton, North Dakota

Please note a change from the information which was provided on page 18 of our February issue. The phone number for vacancy pastor John M. Johannes is 218-847-2080.

—*The Editor*



Missionary Koenig reports: Among the Masai tribe in Kenya, January '05, sixty adults and twenty children were baptized.