

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



*But He said to them,
"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"
Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea,
and there was a great calm.*

MATTHEW 8:26

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Epiphany Show and Tell

It was going to be the best 'show & tell' ever. I once had a pet Mexican red-legs tarantula. When the neighborhood kids found out, a steady stream came to my door wanting to see my huge spider. They were amazed/spellbound/apprehensive, especially when I let it crawl around on my arms and neck. This prompted one of the braver kids to ask if he could take it to school for 'show & tell.'

His teacher at first agreed, but then stipulated that it be confined to a locked cage. The principal then got involved. He first demanded that my harmless spider remain in a locked cage, then that I be present, that I be bonded against all 'accidents,' and even that a doctor be on call just in case. He finally just denied the plan, citing student and faculty safety. The best 'show & tell' never left my house.

But, of course, it was not the best show and tell, even as planned. What

can compare with Jesus of Nazareth leaving His heavenly home and 'telling and showing' Himself as the Divine Son of God and Savior of the world?! The advance notice came already with certain prophecies in the Old Testament. The build-up intensified when God sent the Bethlehem angel to announce good tidings of Savior-joy "which shall be to all people"—and continued with visitors from the East (led by His star) to the very house where the Savior-King was.

With the start of His public ministry, Jesus took His divine 'show and tell' on the road and really began to 'kick it up a notch.' Matthew reported how Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all kinds of disease and torments. His fame even spread throughout all Syria, with huge crowds following Him. His first miracle was in Cana, where Jesus mani-

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fested His glory and power by changing water into wine. The master of the wedding feast was amazed, and Jesus' disciples believed in Him.

A bit later Jesus showed His divine authority by cleansing His Father's house, the temple in Jerusalem. Nicodemus was convinced by Jesus' signs that 'God was with Him,' but had questions about the kingdom of God. John reported what Nicodemus heard by night—nothing less than the Divine mission statement of the Savior-God: "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved...Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (3:17,15).

How Comforting! How Powerful!

The Samaritan woman, waiting for the Messiah and drinking the eternal water from His lips, also heard His testimony: "I who speak to you am He" (the Messiah). Many in her village later said to her, "We believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (Jn. 3:42). The Gentile centurion of Capernaum trusted in Jesus to heal his servant and was commended for his great faith.

How amazing and convincing the 'shows': feeding thousands with one man's lunch; walking on water; calming the storm; healing the crippled, blind, and deaf; casting out demons; raising the dead.

How comforting and gracious and powerful the 'tells':

"Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you...the Son of Man has

power on earth to forgive sins" (Mt. 9:2,6). Mark reports that all were amazed and glorified God saying that they had never seen anything like that before (cf. Mk. 2:12).

Or "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12).

Or "I am the bread of life...I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (Jn. 6:48,38). But this time the Jews murmured at His words and quarreled, and many of Jesus' followers walked with Him no more.

But Peter and his fellow disciples responded: "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have come to know and believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Jn. 6:69).

Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17), however, might have been the culmination of the greatest 'show and tell' on Earth: Jesus' face shining like the sun, Moses and Elijah present, the voice from heaven ("This is my beloved Son..."); words concerning salvation



through Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection; fright and amazement on the part of the three disciples.

Are we not convinced that Jesus is God's Son and Savior of the world? Do we sometimes still wish for a bit more of 'show and tell'?

If you want to hear what I know about tarantulas, give me a call. If you want to hear more about Jesus, then

ask me and we will research the Holy Scriptures—the record of His 'shows' and His 'tells.' They were written, not that you and I be frightened, but amazed and convinced; that you and I continue to believe in the name of the Son of God and so have eternal life.

—Pastor David Fuerstenau
Ketchikan, Alaska



The Baptism of Christ and It's Meaning for Us

The name *Christ* means *Anointed One*. To anoint means simply to apply a liquid to someone's head. Most commonly, olive oil was poured on the head of the person being anointed.

At Christ's baptism (See Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1) we witness the installation of Jesus Christ into His official capacity as the Messiah (which also means the *Anointed One*). Christ was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.

At His baptism Jesus officially began the work associated with each of these offices: declaring to us the Word of God (Prophet); offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice upon the altar of the cross to pay for sin (Priest); bringing us into His kingdom when He sets up His gracious rulership in our hearts (King).

When Jesus was baptized we are told that the following things happened: "He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mk 1:10f).

The fact that Jesus saw heaven

opened was done in order to strengthen Him according to His human nature. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit affirmed Christ's work as the Spirit descended upon Him to strengthen Him, and the Father let it be known that this Jesus was indeed "without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:19), the Son of God promised in the Old Testament.

Some aspects of this event find parallels in our own baptism. Left on our own, we would never see the gates of heaven opened to us. We could never get into heaven by the things that we do, for we are sinful and all that we do is blemished by sin. So, God's Law shuts the door of heaven to the sinner.

But the heavens, which were closed to man on account of sin, have been thrown open again! Because Christ lived a holy life, then died on the cross and rose again, heaven was opened to all sinners. Because Christ was pleasing to the Father in your place, heaven is open to you—yes, to you!

We are told that "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). The Bible tells

*One who is more powerful
than I is coming after me;
I am not worthy to
carry his
sandals.*

*He will
baptize you
with the
Holy Spirit
and fire.*



Matthew 3:11

us that we too are to "repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of sins" (Acts 2:38).

THE LAMB OF GOD!

If Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (and it is!), why was Jesus baptized, since He was without sin?

Well, remember why He came into the world. John the Baptist declared that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). When Christ was baptized He was being anointed for us. Already He had taken our sins upon Himself and was paying for them. He came to wash away our sins in the waters of baptism, as if they were His own sins. When He looked up and saw the heavens open, they were opened for us also.

Unlike Jesus, each of us was conceived and born of sinful flesh. Instead of having the Holy Spirit, we had what Scripture calls "the spirit of the world"

(1 Cor. 2:12)—that's what we had, that is, until our baptism! But when we were baptized, we too received the Holy Spirit.

How is it possible that God the Holy Spirit comes to make His home in the heart of sinners such as we are? It is possible because of Christ Jesus—He was baptized for our salvation, and He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, for "...according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior..." (Titus 3:5f).

We who were once dead in sin are now alive through water and the Word by the Spirit; thus we are brought into the family of God so that, trusting in Christ our Savior, we are privileged to call God our Father; through baptism we become children of God!

We read that at Jesus' baptism "...He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mk. 1:10f). That voice from heaven was none other than God the Father declaring to the world that in Jesus the Old Testament promises were fulfilled—as the pre-incarnate Christ had prophesied through the psalmist, saying, "I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'" (Ps. 2:7).

It is through baptism—as a Means of Grace!—that we receive the forgiveness of sins, so that God looks at us and declares, "You are My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." The wonderful truth is that we are pleasing to God through Christ Jesus, who

pleased God in our place.

Finally, consider that God wants this blessing for all people, which is why the Lord gives His Great Commission to "Go...and teach all nations, baptizing them..." (Mt 28:19). God wants all people to become mem-

bers of His family through faith in Christ—people of every race and color, adults and children alike.

What a privilege is ours to share the Savior with all people!

—Pastor Joel Fleischer
Marquette, Michigan



Handmade by God

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well" (Ps. 139:14).

When you see the word "Handmade" on a label in the store, what does that mean to you?

Doesn't that usually suggest that this is something special? It wasn't just stamped out by some machine; someone took the time and care to craft it by hand. Usually those things are more expensive because of the extra time involved. In some cases the name of the person who made it is even printed on the label.

Have you ever considered that we humans bear a similar label: "Handmade by God"?

Every aspect of God's creation is a wonder to behold. The universe is magnificent! Man has only begun to see the beauty and marvel of it all. Truly, "the heavens declare the glory of God...There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard" (Ps. 19:1&3). God's power is infinite.

The animal kingdom with all its variety is utterly amazing. Every animal is unique and has its own marvels. The wisdom of God is seen in all the intricacies of life. Man with all his wisdom is still baffled by many aspects of life.

God's love of beauty is clearly visi-



"The heavens
are telling the
glory of God;
and the
firmament
proclaims his
handiwork."

Psalm 19:1

ble in the world of plants. When seen with a magnifying glass, the tiniest flower is magnificent in its beauty and detail. All the beautiful colors with the many shades of depth, the delicacies of the flowers, the forested hills and mountains, even the hardy plants of the desert—all speak of God's esthetic nature.

All of this, however, was "mass produced," so to speak. God just spoke the Word, and it was all created. What a testimony to His power!

Man Is Unique

The creation of man was much different. God took the time and the care to personally make Adam and Eve. He formed Adam out of the dust of the ground and Eve out of a rib of Adam.

In our lead-in psalm verse, King David said that God has formed and made him. Each of us, too, was "handmade" by God.

There is a great deal of comfort and assurance for us in that truth. He who took the time and care to make us in such a special way also knows best how to take care of us. We never need to question or doubt God's dealing with us.

One of the things people appreciate about handmade items is that each is unique. Each item is made for a specific purpose and has its own unique qualities.

In the context of Psalm 139, King David says that God formed each one of us in our mother's womb. He made us in a special way and all our days were planned out for us before we were born. God made each one of us uniquely. He gave us particular skills, interests, and personalities to fulfill the role He had in mind for us.

God made each of us—except for our sinfulness—for His special plan

and purpose for our life. So there is no need to be discouraged if we see others with different gifts from ours. Rather, each of us can praise and glorify God that we have been "fearfully and wonderfully made," and we seek to use our God-given gifts in His service.

Not only were Adam and Eve "handmade by God," but He created them in His own image. God made them to be perfectly holy and righteous. Sad to say, Adam and Eve lost that perfect image when they chose to listen to the devil rather than trusting God

Yet here we see the full extent of God's love—instead of punishing us as we deserve for our sin and rebellion, God chose to become one of us, suffering and dying for us. Now, by faith in Christ, the image of God has been restored in us (Eph. 4:24). God has given us everything we need to be able to truly live for Him who died for us.

—Pastor David Reim
Vernon, B.C., Canada



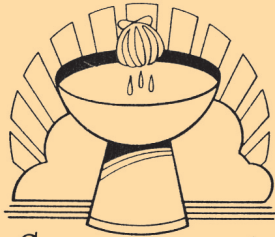
BAPTISM AND ITS SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

When we are baptized according to Christ's command, is it something we do for God, or is it something truly wonderful God does for us?

For those of us who have been taught biblical doctrine from Martin Luther's Small Catechism, this question sounds rather strange. It is completely foreign to the Lutheran Confessions and our Christian belief even to suggest that Baptism is in any way, shape, or form something we do for God.

And yet a vast number of churches in Christendom—Reformed denominations and so-called non-denominational churches—hold to the false notion that Baptism is a New Testament ordinance we are called upon to obey in order to show our love, devotion, and commitment to God.

Think about it—this makes Jesus



Sacrament of Baptism

out to be the second Law-giver (with Moses being the first Law-giver)! The faulty system of belief of which we speak can rob Christians of the special comfort to be received and enjoyed in this sacrament. False teachers would have us believe that Bible passages which speak of the blessings of forgiveness, spiritual life, and salvation in connection with Baptism are to be understood as speaking only in a symbolic way, and that Baptism does not impart these blessings to us.

In the Gospel of John an important distinction is made between Moses and Jesus with this statement, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).

While it is indeed true that Jesus gave command in His great commission (see Mt. 28:19) to baptize in the name of the Triune God, yet He was not telling us that this is something we *must* do for the Lord. Rather, He was revealing His gracious will that we use this Means of Grace through which the Holy Spirit would then make disciples of all nations by creating Christian faith in their hearts.

Holy Scripture abounds with Bible passages which clearly reveal the great things God does for us in and through

Baptism, and the truly priceless spiritual blessings He imparts to us through this precious Means of Grace.

If we are not already armed with these Bible passages and their meaning when engaged in discussions with those of the Reformed Church, we would do well to equip ourselves through a careful study of Holy Scripture.

EQUIPPING OURSELVES...

Look up the third chapter of the Gospel of John and listen in on Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. There He tells of the Holy Spirit working through water baptism to enable natural-born sinners to be spiritually born again into God's eternal kingdom. A Spirit-worked rebirth through Baptism is quite simply the Holy Spirit blessing us with the gift of faith in Jesus and His work of redemption. Being graced with Christian faith, we are enabled to reach out the hand (so to speak) to receive and embrace the wonderful spiritual blessings God offers and gives through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Then study for yourselves those sections of Holy Scripture which testify of God imparting spiritual blessings through Baptism. For example, in Romans chapter six the apostle Paul writes of our being baptized into Christ and into His death and resurrection, so that we have a share in His marvelous redemption, receiving a new spirit whereby we crucify our sinful flesh with repentance and follow the Lord in Christian love.

Elsewhere Paul speaks of Baptism as a way of putting on Christ (Gal.

3:26,27; also cf. Is. 61:10), which is like being dressed with all the wonderful spiritual blessings He worked out for us as our Savior.

Does Holy Baptism impart the spiritual blessing of forgiveness of sins? Most certainly! The Word of God clearly reveals this, as it declares, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). And again: "Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Does Holy Baptism give eternal

salvation? Most certainly! Again the Scriptures declare, "According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5; cf. also 1 Pet. 3:21).

Thank God for Holy Baptism—it is a Means of Grace through which He does something wonderful for us, blessing us with faith to receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation!

—*Pastor Mark Gullerud*
Eau Claire, Wisconsin



The Discourses of Christ

Christ Brings Division—Luke 12:49-53

THANK GOD FOR THE DIVISION

One of the many gifts of our Lord Jesus Christ is the gift of peace. In the evening of the Savior's betrayal, Jesus reassured His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). The Word of God is the preachment of "peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Paul wrote to the Romans, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

How then does this square with Christ as a causer of divisions, who said, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled" (Lk. 12:49)?

This fire is not the fire of judgment

but the intensity of the division that comes with the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus desired to see this fire kindled, but before it occurred He was facing "a baptism to be baptized with." He had His own severe baptism of fire, so severe that He wished it were already finished. He faced the agony and suffering of the cross—so intense that He prayed in the garden that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him. Yet He was willing to endure it as the Father willed.

Jesus' baptism with fire would accomplish its divinely appointed end when, having paid the full price of our deserved judgment, He said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). Now then, having been reconciled to God, we have peace

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

The coming of our Lord and the subsequent offense of the cross has created division, not between the Christ believer and God, but between the Christ believer and the unbeliever. When the gospel message of Christ and His redemptive work is proclaimed, it meets with opposition on the part of many.

The world that lies in sin is confronted in Christ with the reality and seriousness of its sin. It is confronted with the call to repentance, the call to confess its sin, with the invitation to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness, as well as the call to put away the love of sinning.

However, they who love the darkness more than they love the light lash out at Christ and are at odds with those who are overcome by the message of God's love. This division divides even the closest of relationships, "For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three" (Lk. 12:52,53).

The Gospel Is Life!

The alternative to this division that occurs when the sinner is "called out" by Christ would have been to let the whole world go on in its unbelief and sin and to progress to its eternal judgment. Supposedly, we all then could have marched hand in hand united and at peace with each other—to judgment!

But the Lord wished something better for the sinner. It is His will that all people come to repentance and to the possession of eternal life. For that reason the Father sent Christ into the world and has commissioned the Church to proclaim the gospel to all.



Hence the division! The gospel is life to those who believe and a stumbling block to those who do not. The division caused by Jesus and the gospel is present now, and we must face the reality that it will ever be so. We could wish that it were different, but it is what it is and shall be.

Thank God for the division! But thank God that as a Christ believer you, by grace, are on the correct side of the divide, on the side to which the Savior tenders the invitation when the ultimate and final division takes place, "Come, ye blessed of My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34).

In many instances division is necessary to have peace. Look, for instance, at the churches that have divided in order to stay true to their scriptural principles in contrast to those from whom they have separated themselves and are in constant unrest and war with each other.

So to accomplish peace for souls distressed by sin and fear, it was necessary for Jesus to come. The consequent division serves to our peace.

The unrest we must endure by the world's enmity is of little consequence to those who in Christ have peace with God and who, in the peace of heaven, will not even have a memory of what is past!

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*
Corpus Christi, Texas

DIVINE LOVE THE GREATEST GIFT

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES ON

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).



First in a series:



Without love (agape), I am nothing...

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing" (1 Cor. 12:31-13:3).

When the Apostle Paul speaks of the best gifts, we should understand that the gifts to which the Spirit of God refers are not found wrapped in boxes with bows. The gifts that the Holy Spirit would have us earnestly desire—which He freely gives!—are gifts that have a spiritual impact; they are spiritual gifts.

However, there is something more we need in order to govern the use of these gifts...Love. If I have tremendous gifts but do not have Christ's love dwelling in me, then I am nothing and my gifts will likely not be used in a God-pleasing way.

It's important, first of all, that we understand what kind of love we are talking about. After all, love is a word used frequently and in different ways. People say, "I love my wife." "I love my children." "I love my brothers." "I love

my dog."

While the same word "love" is used... we're not talking about the same kind of love in each case. The love I have for my wife is much different than the love I have for my children and my brothers—and much different than the affection I feel for my dog!

There is but one word for love in English, whereas in Greek there are three different words, each referring to a different kind of love.

The word used in our Scripture text (v. 1ff.) refers to a special love, a love of understanding and purpose. It's a love that understands the greatest needs of the other and then selflessly provides.

Selfless Love

The love that Jesus has for us is the perfect example of this kind of love. The Son of God saw our need and provided the solution, even though it meant His own suffering and death. Selfless, self-sacrificing love—that's what Christ has for us.

God enables us to have the same kind of love for others; that's the kind of love that is meant to govern the use of our gifts.

It's not enough to possess gifts and abilities. If Christ's love does not dwell in me, then how can I use them in a God-

pleasing way?

Let's suppose that I could speak in many different languages, and even somehow knew the language of the angels. Don't you imagine that such ability could be a huge asset to our mission work abroad? Yes, indeed!

However, if I do not see other human beings as those for whom Christ died; if I don't love them with a love of action, of understanding and purpose, then my linguistic ability is like senseless noise.

Or suppose I have complete knowledge of God's Word and understand the mysteries of God's salvation and have a faith so strong as to move mountains but do not have love—a love that looks out for the needs of others and seeks to communicate that truth and knowledge I possess—then it will be of no benefit to anyone, not even to myself!

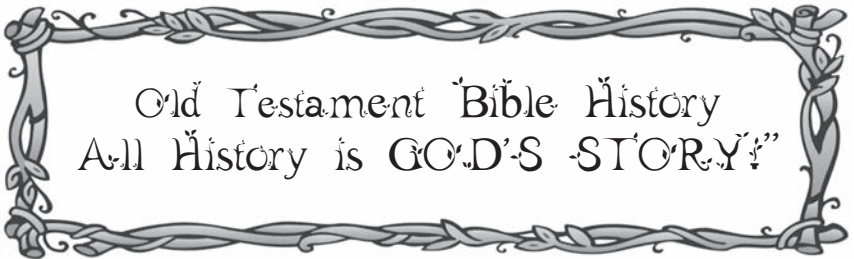
If I decide to give all my goods to feed the poor and am even willing to allow my body to be burned, but do not have Christ's love, then all that I have and am is of no lasting value.

If what I do isn't done in loving concern for the eternal salvation of others, as an expression and reflection of Christ's love for me, then the spiritual benefits which God could have given to me personally don't happen.

Christ's love dwells in us by faith and is reflected in our love toward others. We love Him because He first loved us. We express that love for Christ by loving those for whom Christ died.

May God the Holy Spirit cause each of us to reflect Christ's love in the exercise of our particular gifts.

—Pastor Andrew Schaller
Watertown, South Dakota



No. 9 in Series: Genesis 15-18

Abraham's Faith

The Genesis account of Abraham's life is filled with remarkable events and a tremendous amount of His Story as God begins to create "His People" from which the Savior would be born. A thread running throughout this history is Abraham's faith. A review of Abraham's life and interaction with God gives us much to consider:

Life Circumstance: Abram and his "army" of servants had just rescued his nephew, Lot, from enemy kings.

God's Word of Promise: *"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward"* (Gen. 15:1).

Life Circumstance: Abram recalled God's promise concerning a son and said, *"You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir"* (Gen. 15:3).

God's Word of Promise: God strengthened Abram by assuring him that He would give him a son from his own body, and his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.

Faith's Blessing: *"Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness"* (Gen. 15:6).

God's Word of Promise: *"I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it"* (Gen. 15:7).

Life Circumstance: Abram wondered how this would be, and how he could be sure of it.

God's Visual Aid: At God's direction, Abram sacrificed certain animals for God. Abraham stayed by the animal pieces all day and then *"when...darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces"* (Gen. 15:17 NIV). What Abram saw reassured him of the validity of all that God had told him.

Life Circumstance/Lack of Faith: Still childless, Sarai suggested that Abram have a child with her maidservant. Abram agreed and fathered a son with Hagar. Sarai's and Abram's impatience was a sinful lack of faith which led to strife and further sin rather than a God-pleasing solution (cf. Gen. 16:4ff).

God's Word of Promise/Daily Reminder: When Abram was 99 years old and still childless, God repeated His promise. God also gave Abram a reminder of the promise by changing his name from *Abram* ("exalted father") to *Abraham* ("father of a multitude").

Visual Aid: God established circumcision as an external sign of His promise and covenant with Abraham. By following God's command regarding circumcision, Abraham and his descendants would demonstrate their obedience to God and their trust in His promises (cf. Gen. 17:7ff).

Faith's Response: On that very day Abraham circumcised his whole family and all who were in his house.

Faith's Response: When the LORD and two angels came to Abraham in the heat of the day, Abraham reflected his love for God by offering the travelers kindness, hospitality, and a feast (Gen. 18:1ff).

God's Word of Promise: The LORD again repeated the promise of a son. After Sarah laughed at such a prospect, the LORD said: *"Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you...and Sarah shall have a son"* (Gen. 18:14).

Faith Acts: After God revealed Sodom's impending doom, Abraham confidently prayed to God on behalf of the city and particularly on behalf of Lot, who lived there. Abraham's faith was such that he felt bold—though humble—to approach God with his prayer. In answer to Abraham's prayer, God promised that He would not destroy the city if He found fifty believers there. Abraham continued praying and, after God

promised that He would not destroy the cities if there were ten believers, Abraham went back to his tent confident that the Lord would do what He had spoken.

The pattern which emerges from Abraham's faith-life is consistent and true for God's children today. God's promises and Word of grace come to the hearts of sinners and create faith.

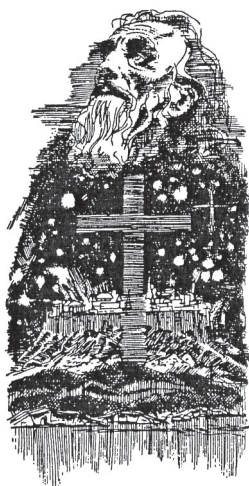
As we make use of God's Word, His gospel promises wash over our souls in each of life's circumstances. This includes those times when our weaknesses combine with impatience, and we fall into sin. It is the Word of God that will reassure us when our confidence has been shaken. It is God's promises that will renew hearts that have begun to lose hope. It is God's unfailing faithfulness that will answer every doubt.

In addition to His Word, God gives visual aids as reminders as He did for Abraham—the Sacraments. Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper contain the gospel and therefore offer the forgiveness of sins, but both also have a visual element to add a reminder and reassurance to our senses concerning that which His Word promises.

A faith that is thus produced and sustained by God bears fruit. As Abraham did, we seek to give testimony to the love of God and the work of our Savior in how we conduct our lives. As Abraham did, we seek to act in faith so that we can say with James, *"I'll show you my faith by my works"* (Jms. 2:18).

Similarly, the faith which God gives prompts us to go to Him in our prayers, confidently believing that He will hear them and answer them.

Thus when we go to our "tents" at the close of the day, we know, as did Abraham, that the day's activity was done under the guiding hand of God and that the night and the next day's events will likewise unfold according to His will for His Story.



*Oh, for a faith that will not shrink
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;*

*A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That, when in danger, knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;*

*Lord, give us such a faith as this;
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste e'en now the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home. (TLH #396:1,3,6)*

*—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
Mankato, Minnesota*



CROSS PURPOSES



FOR NOW OR FOR ETERNITY?

What is the foundation of your faith-life and the focus of your hope?

That is a question we must ask of ourselves as we observe the general direction of the external church today. Is our primary concern that we attend or hold membership in a church whose preaching and teaching prepares us only for now or one which helps us focus on eternity?

Frequently we wonder what it is that attracts people to a church? What is the benefit they seek to obtain through the church to which they are attracted—whether they join it or are occasional visitors?

A case can be made that the main focus of the majority of church seekers is perceived benefits for the present rather than the real benefits—blessings—of eternity.

Consequently, the majority of church seekers and attendees are not interested in Bible doctrine. They are not interested in the foundational teachings of God's inspired Word—such as creation, the person and nature of Christ, sin, justification, law and gospel. They see the study and application of the doctrines of Scripture as boring and stuffy and a waste of time—not relevant to now.

The Apostle Paul said to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for

themselves teachers" (2 Tim. 4:3).

Years ago Dr. Francis Pieper spoke of "those who insistently call for an 'undogmatic,' a creedless Christianity" (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 96). He said that such seekers reduce the "real" work of the Church to the "social gospel."

Social gospel adherents promote the present world at the expense of the other world. Thus we have churches that bless dogs and cats "because they too are God's creatures." People gravitate toward "how to live" churches which stress sanctification (this world) at the expense of the message of salvation (the other world). Consequently, they distort both and have neither! Still others are comfortable in "fun and games" churches where everyone loves one another but no one is expected to believe anything substantial. They have no problem finding preachers who will tell them what they want to hear and churches that call for no commitment to divine truth. They are interested primarily in the now.

We believe that one who attends our worship services should hear both law and gospel, sin and grace. No one should leave our services without having heard the message of salvation.

The doctrine (teaching) of salvation begins with the preaching of the law, by which one sees oneself as a sinner and recognizes the eternal consequence of sin. Essential to rescue from

sin and condemnation is the doctrine of repentance—sorrow over sin and faith in Christ. The doctrine of Christ—His person, His nature, His work—brings comfort to the troubled heart as the gospel is preached and the Spirit makes application to the penitent heart.

We do not teach doctrine as in a vacuum, but as the foundational teaching that creates understanding and faith as well as the assurance of salvation. Our emphasis is on the "other world" and how we attain to the blessing of heaven.

Are we unconcerned about now? Are we dismissive of the doctrine of sanctification? No! But the fact is that

those whose primary interest is the present are not preparing people for the future! They are self-centered and preoccupied with the Earth. On the other hand, since we believe it is our responsibility to prepare souls for the other world, we preach Christ—God become man—the Savior.

Without apology we preach for eternity. We preach Christ, the Savior of the world—the Christ of the cross, the risen and ascended Lord whose anticipated return dictates our NOW as we preach and prepare FOR ETERNITY.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas



The LORD, our Shepherd!

"The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want..." (Ps. 23:1)

Are there more familiar words in all of the Bible?

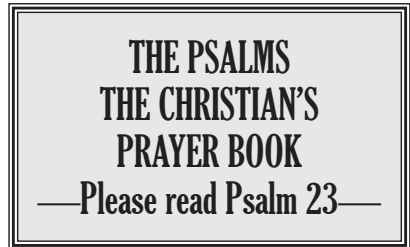
These words have been the subject of numerous books. They are the chosen text for many funerals. They appear in much Christian artwork. They have become so familiar, however, that unfortunately they can pass through our minds and over our lips without much thought.

Yet the words speak so eloquently to our relationship with God and His relationship with us. They are both a profound confession and a confident affirmation.

A Profound Confession:

"The LORD is my Shepherd!"

When we confess "the LORD is my Shepherd," we are confessing two



things. First, we confess that we are sheep subject to our God. Second, we acknowledge that God rules over us as our Shepherd.

Sheep can be and often are contrary animals. If there is a hole in the fence, a sheep will find it. If there is a noxious plant in a pasture, a sheep will eat it. If there is an alternate path to the correct one, a sheep will take it.

According to our sinful nature we are just like sheep! We look for loopholes. We imbibe, both physically and spiritually, things that are not good for

PSALM 23
A Psalm of David

THE LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

2 HE MAKES ME TO LIE DOWN IN
GREEN PASTURES;
HE LEADS ME BESIDE THE
still waters.

3 HE RESTORES MY SOUL;
HE LEADS ME IN THE PATHS OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS
FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.

4 YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE
valley of the shadow of
death,
I will fear no evil;
FOR YOU ARE WITH ME;
YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF, THEY
COMFORT ME.

5 YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME
IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES;
YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL;
MY CUP RUNS OVER.

6 SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY
shall follow me
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE;
AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE
OF THE LORD
FOREVER.

*Scripture taken from the New King James
Version. Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
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sage cited above: "The LORD laid on Him [that is, Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6b).

By God's grace and through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, we have been saved from our waywardness and brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Consequently, He is our Shepherd. It is to His voice and none other that we are to listen (cf. Jn. 10:4-5)! He has purchased us with His own blood, and so we belong to Him (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). He has pledged Himself to guard and keep us, and to lead us through this life all the way to heaven (cf. Jn. 10:27-28).

A Confident Affirmation:
"I shall not want!"

A brief word of explanation—the word "want" here means "lack." When each of us affirms that "I shall not want," we are saying that, with the blessing of Lord, we will lack nothing.

There indeed may be many things in life that we desire, but in the Lord we will always have what we need!

us. We like to march to the beat of our own drum rather than that of the Lord. Isaiah was so very accurate when he wrote: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Is. 53:6a).

How thankful we can be that our God has graciously redeemed us in spite of our contrary natures! Indeed, as Isaiah stated in completing the pas

This affirmation reflects the promises of God. Jesus urges: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33).

This affirmation also reflects the reality that is God. James reminds us: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (Jms. 1:17). Our Shepherd possesses the authority and power to provide for our every need, which He does each day in so many ways!

This affirmation speaks to the confidence that we, as the Good Shepherd's sheep, can and do have in Jesus.

We know that He will provide us with food and clothing (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8).

We know that He will be with us at all times—the good and the bad (cf. Mt. 28:20).

We know that He will forgive all our sins (cf. 1 Jn. 1:9).

We know that He will provide us the wisdom we need to meet each day's challenges (cf. Jms. 1:5).

What comfort is ours as we each both confess and affirm that "the LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want!"

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting
Mankato, Minnesota

Editor's note: We thank Pastor Nolting for his article. If space allowed, I'm sure he could expand on the balance of this familiar psalm. What would be found is that each verse in its own way is a further "confession" of some aspect of our Christian faith, as well as a "confident affirmation" of our Savior-God's all-encompassing care for each of His sheep.



CLC TEACHERS' CONFERENCE



The teachers met in October 2008 at Berea, Inver Grove Heights, Minn. A Field Trip took them to the Minneapolis Art Institute. Ladies shown: (l-r) Kelly Beekman, Barb Gurgel, Lila Brown, Gail Schaefer, Susan Hulke, Eileen Tiefel, Beth Sydow.

The Word From Immanuel
Chapel Talks to the student body of Immanuel
Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

CROSSING OUR JORDAN RIVER

Lord, show us the pathway of life and give us the desire and the strength to walk on it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The children of Israel were standing on the verge of Jordan, staring across the river to what would be their home. Ready-built houses waited for them to occupy. Fields of waving grain waited for them to harvest. Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle waited for them. It was a land flowing with milk and honey...a land in which they could raise their children...a land in which they could become rich on the fat of the land...a land in which they could grow old in peace and enjoy their children's children.

Moses would not enter the land with them because he had acted unfaithfully against the Lord at the waters of Meribah-kadesh and failed to hallow the name of God before the sons of Israel.

So what would Moses say? What would be his parting words? "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days..." (Deut. 30:19-20).

Of all the things that they had experienced in the wilderness or that they

would experience in the Promised Land, the only things that really mattered were these two: life and death.

There is a Jordan River for each one of us. It is the river that stands between the barren wilderness of sin and the fruitful land of righteousness. On one side is death; on the other is life.

However, can you recognize the moment when you are standing on the banks of that river? When is that time when you can look at one side of the river and see where you have been and then look to the other side and see where you could be?

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Now? Today? What makes this particular day the accepted time? What makes this the day of salvation?

This is the time, because this is the day that I declare to you in the name of the Lord: your sins are forgiven. Jesus has made peace between you and God through the blood of His cross. All is well. Your Joshua has parted the river and you may cross over from death into life.

For each of us "the accepted time... the day of salvation" is when the words of the gospel are proclaimed to our ears and our hearts. That is the moment when the Spirit calls out to us: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose

life, that you may live."

The Spirit's call is an enabling call. He not only tells us to choose, He also gives the power to make the choice. This is what makes it so vitally important to choose life when it is handed to us.

The first generation of Israel that came from Egypt to the Promised Land was given the same choice. They decided that they wanted to go back to Egypt. In other words, they chose death, and death they received. All of that generation died in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb.

"...Indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

Everyone in this room has heard the call of the Spirit. Time and again we have heard the gospel message. As I look out over this crowd, I cannot tell who actually believes the message, but I can tell you that Christ died for every one of you. He paid the price, so that you can have life everlasting.

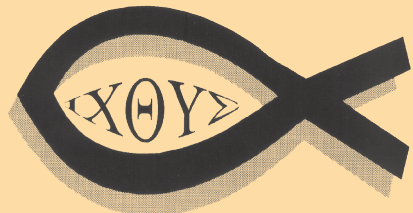
When I was a teenager, a young man told me, "I want to have fun while I am young. When I get old, then I will get religion." Did he ever get old? I don't know. If he did, was God waiting for him to help him "get religion"? I don't know. I do know that there was a moment in his life when the Lord was reaching out to him, but he chose death. He chose to remain in the barren wilderness of his sins.

What about you? Perhaps you passed through the river of Christ's blood long ago and have been enjoying the fruitful life of righteousness and peace. Praise God if you have. If you have not, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "I

call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that...you...may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life...."

Let us pray: "Lord God, heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to pay the price for our redemption. Thank You for sending Your messengers to proclaim the good news of forgiveness to us. Thank You for leading us out of death and into life. Grant that all who hear this message may choose life and not death. Even so cause the gospel message to be heard throughout the wilderness of death. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen."

—Prof. John Pfeiffer



ΙΧΘΥΣ

ιχθυζ (ixthus) = fish

The five Greek letters are the first letters in the following words:

Ιησουζ (Iesous) = Jesus

Χριστοζ (Xristos) = Christ

Θεου (Theou) = God's

υιοζ (hios) = Son

σωτηρ (soter) = Savior

———— SURVEYING CLC HISTORY ————
FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET (1985)
“REFLECTIONS...PROJECTIONS”

Number Two: THE ORGANIZATION OF OUR CLC

In the late 1950's numerous pastors, teachers, and congregations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod had become very much disappointed and upset about the departure from the Word of God in the actions of their respective church bodies. At one time these three church bodies had confessed correctly the biblical teaching of termination of church fellowship, but then they changed their position to teaching and defending error. Many of these spiritually distressed Lutherans of the Synodical Conference soon discovered each other and began to meet and consult with each other on what action to take under these conditions that would be in keeping with the Word of God.

At these meetings, which were held intermittently over a number of years and at various locations in the Midwest and the western parts of the United States, they diligently applied themselves to the task of formulating a document that clearly stated the biblical teaching of CHURCH FELLOWSHIP and under what circumstances such fellowship must be terminated. A second teaching of Scripture which in their opinion likewise needed clarification and scriptural definition was the doctrine of the CHURCH AND MINISTRY as a part of the Ministry of the Keys.

As the Lord progressively blessed their diligent efforts with success in accurately stating these teachings of His Word in their confession of faith, the participants in this task also experienced the joy of being drawn together into a new fellowship by the working of the Holy Spirit. The common bond which they had been sorely missing during the last years of their former church associations was now being graciously given to them in their new fellowship in accord with the Word of God: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

The formal organization of their new church body under the carefully chosen and significant name CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION was accomplished as they were the guests of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church at Watertown, South Dakota, August 9-12, 1960. As then, so also at this time, TO GOD ALL PRAISE AND GLORY!



—Pastor George Barthels (1914-1990)

CLC EXPLORATORY SERVICES

Last revised: December, 2008

This is a list of "start-up" congregations who are being served by an off-site pastor. Some meet in homes, others in rented facilities. Visitors are warmly welcomed. Those who are considering a move, or are just traveling through the area, are encouraged to contact these groups and worship with them.

LOCATION	PASTORAL CONTACT	LAY CONTACT
Alaska, Anchorage	Rev. David Fuerstenau 907-225-2842	
California, Pasadena (L.A. area)	Rev. Neal Radichel 650-964-5915	Mr. Mike Collins 818-883-1749
California, Modesto	Rev. Steven Karp 510-581-6637	Mr. Roy Cameron 209-772-0934
Florida, Orlando	Rev. John Schierenbeck 863-299-4084	Mr. Paul Kuehne 407-595-5589
Iowa, Sioux Center	Rev. James Albrecht 507-853-4417	Mr. Roger Ver Mulm 712-722-2805
Michigan, Cadillac	Rev. Tim Holland 616-532-0198	Mr. Bob Remus 231-832-2097
Michigan, Iron Mountain	Rev. Ed Starkey 906-265-2124	
Minnesota, Chaska (SW Twin Cities area)	Rev. David Schierenbeck 651-454-1915	Mr. Adam McLaughlin 952-445-7317
Minnesota, Minnesota Lake	Rev. Wayne Eichstadt 507-344-0898	Mr. Brian Stearns 507-462-3123
Missouri, (Kansas City Area)	Rev. Todd Ohlmann 636-225-3458	Mr. Dan Schierenbeck 660-429-3263
New Mexico, Albuquerque		Mr. Robin Vogsland 505-892-6934
Ohio, Cleveland	Rev. Walter Schaller 248-677-7242	
Oklahoma, Oklahoma City	Rev. Matthew Hanel 973-733-4535	
Tennessee, Monterey	Rev. Nathanael Mayhew 866-962-9034	Mr. Wayne Everhart 270-618-4387
Texas, Austin	Rev. Luke Bernthal 281-353-2533	Chuck Kurth 512-794-8991
Virginia, Fairfax (Washington DC area)	Mr. Glenn Oster 803-926-0603	Mr. David Loop 703-250-2020
Washington, Withrow	Rev. Terrel Kesterson 509-327-4203	Mr. Ray Lillquist 509-683-1192
Wisconsin, Green Bay	Rev. Paul Krause 920-398-2778	



“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord...And Jesus said to Simon: Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men. So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5:8ff).

CLC TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

The 2008 CLC Teachers' Conference met at Berea Lutheran Church and School, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, on October 15-17.

Chaplain Chad Seybt began our conference theme "Joy in the Lord" with three devotions teaching that our only real joy is in Christ and living our lives for Him.

The first devotion was "Jesus is Our Yes." Jesus is all-trustworthy and all His promises equal YES. The second devotion was "Jesus is Our Yearning." When our yearning is in Jesus, we increase. Looking to ourselves can only lead to a decrease in all we do. Rather, when we focus our ministry on Jesus, He will provide success. Finally, "Jesus is Our Yesterday, Today, and Forever." Hebrews 13:8 was read, illustrating the "consistency" of Jesus. What a wonderful example to follow! Following this theme, Hymn 343 was sung.

On Wednesday Pastor John Hein turned our attention to Bible passages encouraging our youth to serve. As teachers we want to be examples of service, even as Jesus Himself came not to be served but to serve. We also need to foster a sense of engagement, for it is vital to keep our youth involved. Our final goal will be our everlasting joy in heaven.

Professor Joseph Lau presented a paper entitled "Teach your children to pray." Many examples were given of the importance of prayer. We then divided into groups for discussion.

A curriculum review on science textbooks was presented by three dif-



**Chaplain
Seybt**

ferent faculties. The faculty of St. Stephen's (Mountain View, Calif.) did its review on the Bob Jones series. While this series is done from a Christian perspective, it was not very beneficial in other areas. The Gethsemane (Saginaw, Mich.) faculty reviewed the Abeka series. Overall it seemed like a good series with an emphasis on creation. The Luther Memorial (Fond du Lac, Wis.) faculty gave a review on Houghton Mifflin. Many of these texts were impressive, although it is necessary to be aware of and counteract the teaching of evolution. The text was user-friendly, with plenty of extras included. The cost of this series was a negative.

Two book reviews were presented. Doug Bester led a discussion on *Boundaries With Kids*. Tom McGlaughlin led another group in discussing *Gospel Motivation-More Than "Jesus Died for My Sins"*.

That evening a communion service was conducted by Pastor David Schierenbeck. The children sang, and there were two choir songs. Spirits were lifted as we sang God's praises and were reminded that our joy is found only in the Lord.

On Thursday an ideas exchange



Marion Fitschen, W. Columbia, S.Car., was recognized by her colleagues for 45 years of faithful teaching.

took place. The time is never long enough for teachers to share stories and get some great ideas. The creativity was really great!

A very talented artist, Patty Schwartz, gave a presentation on "Art Across the Curriculum/Enhancing your Curriculum with Art." She expressed the importance of keeping art alive as well as using colors while teaching art.

In keeping with the art theme, a field trip took the teachers to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, where Patty explained one of many paintings, and we viewed the art forms of various cultures. (Photo, p.18)

That evening the teachers enjoyed a battle of volleyball, using Berea's facilities. That was followed by a roaring bonfire at the home of Berea member David Aymond.

On Friday Karen Squires presented a paper on "Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities." We were shown how dyslexic children see things when they are trying to read. She also spoke of the signs to look for with dyslexia, and the misinformation that surrounds it.

Noel Voss had information on "Special Ed. Laws." Help needs to be sought for our students and fighting for their rights (this is the law). Anyone

with questions should feel free to call her for advice.

A special "thank you" to the staff and congregation of Berea, for they made our enjoyment possible with many meals, by opening their homes and, in general, giving the teachers a great welcome.

What a blessing to be edified with the fellowship of the teachers from many directions, for all have one common goal—to teach Jesus' little lambs the one thing needful. We went on our way with JOY in our hearts which comes from faith in Christ Jesus.

—Submitted by Teacher Amy Mielke
Messiah Lutheran School,
Hales Corners, Wisconsin



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