

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

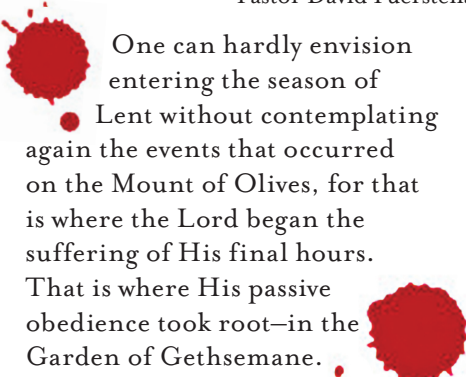
"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN" — JOHN 10:35

**"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son
cleanses us from all sin."**

(I JOHN 1:7)

Sorrow and Glory at Olivet

Pastor David Fuerstenau • Ketchikan, Alaska



One can hardly envision entering the season of Lent without contemplating again the events that occurred on the Mount of Olives, for that is where the Lord began the suffering of His final hours. That is where His passive obedience took root—in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The first biblical reference to Olivet¹ is in connection with our Lord's lesser father—King David. A thousand years earlier, Israel's second king—a forepicture of Christ—was forced to flee Jerusalem for his life (2 Samuel 15:30). David's son Absalom had conspired and rebelled against his father, and the king was forced to make the journey down into the Kidron Valley, up the mount on the other side and, with much weeping and sorrow, on toward the desert.

As it would be with his greater Son, David did not at that time fight offensively against the forces of evil arraying against him. We can well imagine him stopping along the path and, with tears in his eyes, looking back upon his beloved city.

And as Jesus later prayed, so

David prayed. He prayed that the counsel given to Absalom would be turned into foolishness. God heard and granted his request.

A thousand years later Jesus also wept over the city of Jerusalem, the people of which would not have Him as their King. He wept also on the Mount of Olives.

David's future had looked bleak indeed. But as Jesus retraced the footsteps of David, He went forth into the darkest night of soul which anyone ever could and would experience. Here He would meet the temptation to 'give it up.' Here He would meet the fierce onslaughts of the Rebellious One—trying his best to crush the Redeemer before He was even brought to the cross of sacrifice. As the Lord Himself put it, "*This is your hour, and the power of darkness*" (Luke 27:53).

And much like David before Him, Jesus struggled with His own human soul. Most of the bitter cup of which David drank was of his own making, but not so with Jesus. He was sinless. He drank of the dregs His Father set before Him and He did not rebel. He drank of the sorrow

¹Olivet is not so much a mountain as it is a rounded, limestone ridge, extending about a mile from north to south on the east side of the city of Jerusalem. Between lies the Kidron Valley—the bottom of which is 300-400 feet below the level of the city and the overtopping ridge to the east.

and suffering because He had to drink of it. He must drink if He was to bear God's wrath upon the sins of all.

He had to do it,
for this was His mission.

No Sorrow Like This!

David went up Olivet weeping, but he had loyal friends who wept with him. Jesus also took His friends along, but they fell asleep and then ran away. The Lord's distress became so great that we will never be able to understand the depth of His agony in Gethsemane. He Himself said that His soul was 'exceedingly sorrowful unto death.' So great was His agony that He fell flat on His face to the ground, and His sweat became like great drops of blood.

Was there ever such sorrow as this?! This was way beyond weeping; this was unimaginable.

Jesus seemed defeated and begged for an out. But the cup of suffering must be drunk. Finally, strengthened by His Father through an angel, He won the battle over His human feelings and went forward to meet His betrayer, His accusers, His mockers, His executioners, His taste of hell.

What suffering and sorrow
He endured for us as our
Substitute—for our redemption;
what commitment: "*Thy will be done.*"

King David eventually defeated his rebellious enemies and returned to Jerusalem triumphantly—perhaps using the same route over Olivet. Jesus also ascended triumphantly into heaven from that same Mount, having defeated His enemies and ours: sin, death, and the devil.

Yet the story is not finished. Centuries ago Zechariah (14:4) prophesied: "*Behold, the day of the LORD is coming...and in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives*" [figuratively].

Instead of a mount of sorrow, there would be a mount of rejoicing, with living waters flowing from Jerusalem. "*And the LORD shall be King over all the earth*" (Zechariah 14:9).

Zechariah and the prophets, Jesus and His apostles are firm in this. "*Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You*" (14:5). He would reign. He would be with His Church of believers to protect them and will surely come again to deliver them.

Sinners, climb to Olivet!
Behold the Man of Sorrows. Weep
with contrition over your sins!
Watch and pray lest you fall into
temptation!

Saints, stand on Olivet! Behold
the King of Glory. Rejoice over
your redemption won! Watch and
pray, for your Savior will come for
you with great power and glory!



“Surely He has borne our griefs”

Pastor Theodore Barthels • Austin, Minnesota

*“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”*

2 Timothy 2:15

Our text is one of the verses of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah which we often associate with the Lenten season.

Much grief and many infirmities do not come upon us just “out of the blue.” Troubles and sorrows come our way because sin entered into the world. The Scriptures say, “...and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

While death and grief are strongly connected, that is hardly the limit of the grief which because of sin has come into the world and into our individual lives as well. We could make an almost inexhaustible list of sources of grief in our lives, all because we live in a world corrupted by sin.

The Lord Jesus came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, and He did this long before those last hours which we refer to as His passion. We read in Matthew's Gospel: “When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who

were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses’”(Matthew 8:16-17).

Sin Had To Be Removed!

However, the root cause of all the grief and infirmities which Jesus took upon Himself—which in His great compassion and power He healed and removed—that root cause remained. Sin had to be taken out of the way. Sin had to be removed.

And so we pay close attention to the remainder of our fourth verse from Isaiah 53 which reads: “Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”

Jesus was cursed by God for our sins. Look at the cross and the suffering He endured there. Yes, we know that Roman soldiers drove nails through Jesus' hands, but the greater hurt was His being forsaken by His Father in heaven.

We look to the cross and we see Jesus stricken and afflicted by God. We see the wrath of God poured upon Jesus—the wrath of God for the sins of the world.

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“Jesus ... went forward”

(John 18:4)

Pastor Paul Krause • Markesan, Wisconsin

By the time candidates for public office have thrown their names into the ring, they have already thought things through long and hard. They know from previous election cycles just what to expect on the campaign trail, especially when running for the presidency. Knowing what is ahead, they have to decide if they want to go forward in spite of all.

It wasn't a mere political election Jesus was facing, for His passion was about to begin. Knowing that, these words—recorded only by the evangelist John—fill us with amazement: *“Jesus ... went forward”* (John 18:4).

Didn't He know **WHAT** was coming?!

Yes, He did know! The records of the other evangelists report that only moments earlier Jesus had prayed in agony, *“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me...”* (Mark 14:36).

He knew exactly what was coming; He Himself had announced it plainly to His disciples on their final trek to Jerusalem: *“The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they*

will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him...” (Mark 10:33-34).

Jesus knew that the approaching suffering and death was something He needed to endure. *“Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”* (John 18:11)

Well then, if Jesus knew **WHAT** was coming, is it possible that there in the Garden of Gethsemane He didn't know **WHO** was coming?!

Yes, He knew that too! True, the man who was coming out to the Garden of Gethsemane with the *“detachment of troops”* (John 18:3) had feigned ignorance earlier that night. He had hidden His plans so well that the eleven disciples were completely in the dark as to why Jesus had sent Judas Iscariot out at that moment before the Passover meal. *“Some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast,’ or that he should give something to the poor”* (John 13:29).

But Judas didn't fool Jesus. Earlier (in John 6) Jesus said to His disciples, *“Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him...” (vv. 70-71).

So what then? If Jesus knew **WHAT** was coming and **WHO** was

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Simple Words — Great Gifts

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

In the Bible we are told how Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, came to Elisha the prophet to be healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5).

Elisha did not even come out of his house to meet Naaman but sent a servant with a set of simple directions. Naaman was to go to the Jordan River and there wash himself seven times.

High-ranking official that he was, Naaman was at first insulted by Elisha's conduct and seemingly foolish directions. He went away in a rage. But Naaman's servants were wiser. What the prophet had told him to do was so simple and easy, so why not do it? After all, if the prophet had told him to do something hard—say, to climb a high mountain—Naaman probably would have done it.

The Syrian commander decided that they had a point. He went to the Jordan and washed seven times in its waters.

Naaman's diseased and wasted flesh was restored so that it was like that of a child! He knew the source of the healing power. He returned to Elisha, exclaiming, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel."

It is God's way to work through channels and instruments that are simple, seemingly weak, and even foolish to man's way of thinking.

We see this also in the sacraments that Jesus has given us. Holy Baptism appears to be no more than the application of a little water and the speaking of a few words. But what does the Bible say of it? It is "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

The same is true of the sacrament of Holy Communion. It appears to be no more than the eating of a bite of simple bread, the drinking of a single sip of grape wine, and the recitation of a few words, "Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins... Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the remission of your sins."

But what does the Bible say of it?

The cup of wine, together with the words of Christ, is "the cup of blessing... the communion of the blood of Christ," that is, a real sharing in the blood that He shed on the cross to redeem us.

The bread that we receive together with the words of Christ is "the communion of the body of Christ," that is,

Human reaction to these simple instructions can often be similar to Naaman's first reaction to Elisha's directions for healing from leprosy. "What can a little bread and wine and a few words do for me?" people ask. "It must be just a symbol, a picture, a reminder," ...

an actual receiving of Christ's body, the very body that He offered on the cross as a sacrifice to God to atone for our sins (1 Corinthians 10:15).

Christ's instructions to His disciples about Holy Communion could not be simpler. In effect He says, "Do this; eat bread and drink wine and say the words that I have said."

Human reaction to these simple instructions can often be similar to Naaman's first reaction to Elisha's directions for healing from leprosy. "What can a little bread and wine and a few words do for me?" people ask. "It must be just a symbol, a picture, a reminder," some say.

What they do not take into account is the power of words spoken by the Son of God. The New Testament reveals that the Son of God is the Word by whom all things were made (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:1,2). There too it was

also with just a few words, "*Let there be...*"

By telling us that He is the Creator is not Christ saying to us, "Don't underestimate the power of words that come from My mouth, though they be simple and few"?

Is He not telling us not to despise the simple things that He has told us to do?

Is He not teaching us that the power in Holy Communion is not in what we do but in the words He has given us to use with the eating of bread and drinking of wine?

We admit that what we do in Holy Communion is small and weak. But we also insist that what Christ does for us in His Word is mighty. His Word is powerful.

With it the Holy Spirit awakens in us faith in Christ, and by faith the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us.



“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Stay Healthy

Warren Fanning, Pastor Emeritus • Sun City, Arizona

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 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; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

There are about seven billion of us in the world, which means there are also about seven billion religions on the planet created by the spiritual clones of Adam and Eve, people deceived into thinking that they and we are gods. Everyone since then has some kind of religion, even if they don't know it or deny it. People are gregarious—which means they like to gather, to share their views on things, often religious views, and even to gather for worship.

A world traveler recently counted nine thousand various religious groups in the world. There is even a group—started in Wisconsin several decades ago—called the “ffrf” (Freedom From Religion Foundation). This group is quite militant with its

views—almost religiously so!—and have a newspaper, websites, radio broadcasts, conventions, and a billboard in our city of Phoenix! It consists of atheists, agnostics, humanists, non-theists, and freethinkers. To read or listen to their stuff, you could say “they sound very religious to me” (as the late CBS’ *Sixty Minutes* curmudgeon Andy Rooney might have put it).

Given the mixed-up and diseased world religious situation here and abroad, it is always amazing to witness the penetration and durability of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In our churches we tend to “take it for granted”—which means we think of it as “a given thing.” Here we find faithful proclamation, explanation, and application of the Word of God. We “take for granted”

...His Word will be here to the bitter end. And it will be doing its work right to the end, wherever and whenever it is faithfully spoken.

good preaching, good hymns,
good liturgy, good prayers, good
Bible versions, good pastoral care,
and so on.

Never forget, it is all a gift!

Spread the Vigor!

And that gift does wonders!
Twice in this epistle the Apostle
Paul refers to word and doctrine as
"sound." Sound word and doctrine
is healthy, certainly in itself. It
promotes and sustains spiritual
health and life in a world that we
have just described as having a lot
of "sick" religious views—sick unto
everlasting death.

The odds have always been
stacked against the Word of God,
just as they were throughout the
Old Testament time period; just
as they were against Christ and in
the outreach decades that followed.
But just as Jesus was restored, after
death, to health and robustness,
so His words bore and created that
same vigor—and they still do!

That health is still transmitted
from pastors, teachers, and
parishioners to people all around
them. Saint Paul, by the Spirit
of God, instigated much of this
spread. And He charged and
encouraged Timothy and others to
do the same. And all in the face of

problems, detractors, and
despisers of God's holy Word!

Paul's encouragement to
Timothy, as to himself, was to
proclaim the written Word, to be
faithful to the divinely inspired
teachings. These words give hope
and joy; they destroy the influence
and advances of the devil, the
world, and the sinful nature
(even our own!).

Jesus says that His words shall
remain even when heaven and
earth pass away (Matthew 24:35).
The gospel shall be proclaimed
in all the world, and then the end
shall come (Matthew 24:14)—which
means that His Word will be
here to the bitter end. And it
will be doing its work right to the
end, wherever and whenever it is
faithfully spoken.

Our basic work remains—to
promote those words, to stay
spiritually healthy through Word
and Sacrament (the "means of
grace"), and to offer eternal life
and health to a sin-sick,
diseased world.

The world cannot heal itself.
That's where we come in. Stay
healthy in order to spread the
vigor. As Paul and Timothy, so
we have a ministry to fulfill!

JESUS, THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH

Please read John 20:1-31 in box below

Pastor Andrew Schaller • Watertown, South Dakota

On the wall in our fellowship hall hangs a portrait given in memory of Mabel Lenning, a child of God.

The artwork was produced by Roger Loveless, and is simply entitled, “My Redeemer Lives.” It captures the familiar scene that is a portion of the reading you just completed from the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John.

Looking at the portrait, one can almost hear the word of Jesus to

Mary Magdalene: “Mary!” In this artwork, Mary is turning to see if her ears deceive her; her handkerchief is in mid air. There, standing near the open tomb, is the Conqueror of Death.

I realize that this artwork is just the product of an artist’s imagination. Only when we look into the Scriptures do we see the real portrait of Jesus, the Conqueror of Death. This portrait—the one found in Scripture—is the one that

1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know

the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. 11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to

we sinners love to view; it's one that we need to see every day... not just on Easter Sunday.

As this devotion is being written, two other children of God in our midst seem to be near death. Perhaps by the time you read this, they will have gone to be "with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

Death is something we don't like to think about or consider. It's a subject that often causes anxiety and not a little fear. Each of us well



knows that temporal death is in our future (unless the Lord Christ returns first). Still, we very often don't think about it until we must. In our country people spend billions of dollars every year in an attempt

Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. 19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other

disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. JOHN 20:1-31

to avoid death. We exercise to stay healthy, go to the doctor, and take pills—all in an effort to prolong life, to live.

Yet we can't avoid death. We can't escape it. All the tears in the world won't resurrect a loved one. Death hurts. Those who enter into death often experience pain. Those who must say good-bye at a loved one's passing feel pain. The Lord Jesus Himself groaned inwardly and wept at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:33-35).

What makes death painful is not merely the rending of soul from body or the physical separation from loved ones—but it is sin, borne witness to by the Law (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56).

For those who die in unbelief, there is the further anguish and pain of suffering forever in hell apart from God's goodness. On the other hand, for those who die believing in Christ, there remain eternal joys in the presence of God.

This is why we in life, and especially at death's door, look in hope and with confidence to Jesus, the Conqueror of Death.

This chapter in John's Gospel is an intimate portrait meant to give each of God's children a buoyant hope in the resurrected Christ.

These words reveal plainly that Jesus triumphantly rose from the dead the third day after His crucifixion. He plainly revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene and to the disciples first without—and again with—Thomas. He invited them to touch Him and see that He who was dead was alive. He is the one who holds the keys of the grave and of death (cf. Revelation 1:18).

The open and empty tomb is proof that Jesus is the Conqueror of Death! As the angels sitting in the tomb said to Mary, "*Woman, why are you weeping?*" (v. 13)

Take a look! The Scripture paints the picture of Jesus, the Conqueror of Death! "*Peace to you!*" the risen Lord said to His disciples (v. 26).

As the Conqueror of Death told Thomas, "*Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (v. 29). Praise God that one day we will see Him face to face!



Portraits of Christ in John's Gospel:

Ch. 1 The Son of God	Ch. 8 The Defender of the Weak	Ch. 15 The True Vine
Ch. 2 The Son of Man	Ch. 9 The Light of the World	Ch. 16 The Giver of the Holy Spirit
Ch. 3 The Divine Teacher	Ch. 10 The Good Shepherd	Ch. 17 The Great Intercessor
Ch. 4 The Soul-Winner	Ch. 11 The Prince of Life	Ch. 18 The Model Sufferer
Ch. 5 The Great Physician	Ch. 12 The King	Ch. 19 The Uplifted Savior
Ch. 6 The Bread of Life	Ch. 13 The Servant	Ch. 20 The Conqueror of Death
Ch. 7 The Water of Life	Ch. 14 The Consoler	Ch. 21 The Restorer of the Penitent

WHAT IS TRULY LUTHERAN?

Pastor Daniel Fleischer, retired • Oakdale, Minnesota

Upon the death of the Reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, differences arose within the Lutheran Church—a name assigned to those who held the doctrines he had taught from Scripture.

Consequently in 1577, the *Formula of Concord*, the defining confession of the Lutheran faith and teaching, was written as an effort to settle disputes that had arisen. Thousands of Lutheran pastors subscribed to the *Formula*. In the introduction to the symbolical books in the *Concordia Triglotta* we read, “Accordingly Lutherans, the natural advocates of a truly wholesome and God-pleasing union based on unity in divine truth, will not only themselves hold fast what they possess in their glorious Confession, but strive to impart its blessings also to others, all the while praying incessantly, fervently, and trustingly with the pious framers of the Formula: ‘May Almighty God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant the grace of His Holy Ghost that we all may be one in Him, and constantly abide in this Christian unity, which is well pleasing to Him! Amen!’” (F. Bente, *Historical Introduction*, p. 256).

Nevertheless, over the centuries divisions arose within Lutheranism. While we hesitate

to call them minor differences—because no departure from God's Word is minor!—in the context of the chasm that divides Reformation Lutherans today from Lutherans in name only, past differences may by some be described as minor.

What Lutherans teach today is not easy to describe since many church bodies within Lutheranism have to a great extent forsaken the Scriptures and the confessions of Reformation Lutheranism. Today we are in an era best described by Bente in these words: “Wherever and whenever, in the course of time, the Formula of Concord was ignored, despised, or rejected, the Lutheran Church fell an easy prey to unionism and sectarianism...” (ibid., p. 254).

We will not mince words. Any Lutheran Church which claims the name Lutheran while teaching and promoting a cafeteria “pick and choose” theology—as well as claiming to hold to the Lutheran Confessions while denying the Scripture doctrines set forth therein—is lying and is hypocritical! Such churches are free to believe what they want and to twist the Scriptures as they want—God will judge them—but they are not truly Lutheran!

Questions need to be asked:

Do we know what we believe and what it means to be genuinely Lutheran?

Will we call a spade a spade when we see the doctrine of Christ, our faith, and the Lutheran name abused?

Martin Luther resisted papal tyranny and suffered as a consequence, yet the gracious Lord preserved him steadfast in faith and delivered him to his heavenly home.

We are living in an age in which—if we care for the cardinal doctrine of salvation, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, for that is what is at stake—we must stand up without

fear against the enemies of our souls including those who may arise from among our own selves (Acts 20:30).

Luther said, “*Our church will not be endangered as greatly by the oppressive measures of tyrants as by the indifference of our own people*” (*What Luther Says*, Vol. II, p. 870).

We are being confronted in our day with tyrants in the government and in society. But our greatest enemies are those who, bearing the Lutheran name, have forsaken the genuine Lutheran faith and deceived many.

May the gracious God give us faith to love the truth, and strength to confess it! Amen.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

475 TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SMALCALD ARTICLES

“...The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.” (Luther, SA, Part II, Art. II)

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SMALCALD ARTICLES (SA) (First of Three)

I. Establishing our “Confessional” Identity

Pastor Paul Fleischer

The plan is to use valuable space in our little magazine, beginning next month, with a series of articles on one of our Lutheran Confessions—the *Smalcald Articles* (see box). As one historian has put it: “*The least known of all the confessions in the Book of Concord are the so-called Smalcald Articles. But they should not be, since their author is Martin Luther.*” Luther wrote this confession in 1537,

Lutheran Confessions found in the Book of Concord of 1580:

- 1) *Apostolic Creed*
- 2) *Nicene Creed (325)*
- 3) *Athanasian Creed (450)*
- 4) *Luther's Small Catechism (1529)*
- 5) *Luther's Large Catechism (1529)*
- 6) *Augsburg Confession (1530)*
- 7) *Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1530)*
- 8) *Smalcald Articles (1537)*
- 9) *Formula of Concord (1577)*

making 2012 its 475th anniversary year.

That said, we realize we are living in a day which doesn't look favorably on reviewing the past. Even in many religious quarters the "ancient" creeds and confessions are frowned upon, if not discounted, as not useful for our "advanced" day and age.

We have a stark example of this in a pamphlet picked up at a Christian church in our city where we audited a creation seminar last fall (the seminar sponsored by *Answers in Genesis* was great!). The host church introduced people to their church with words such as these:

*Just who and what is... [our] Church?
Our beliefs are simple:
God is God... always has been
and always will be.*

*Jesus is God's Divine son [sic]!
The Holy Spirit is real and has his very own
personality, personhood, and purpose.
God said it - we believe it - which settles it!*

[Following a listing of Bible passages which this church purports to believe, this "statement of belief" is given:]

We are a family of believers who seek to follow Christ only, to be Christians only. We purpose to restore the church to what is described in the New Testament. Therefore we accept no human creed or confession of faith. Christ is our creed (Matthew 16:16), the bible [sic] is our only rule of faith and practice which leads



Title page from 1580 Book of Concord

us to and [sic] ever growing relationship with its author, our Lord and Savior: Jesus Christ.

Is there anything amiss with such a statement? Perhaps not on the face of it, yet the "face" of a religious statement may camouflage a whole lot of unsavory things—as a mask may cover some ugly scars and blemishes.

So it is that Lutherans who strive to walk in the footsteps of Dr. Luther are much inclined to follow his lead when it comes to statements of religious belief.

We count ourselves among such Lutherans. We are conscience-bound not just to say "this we believe" on the basis of the Bible, but at the same time

to spell out—as did Dr. Luther and the rest of our confessional forefathers—exactly what it is we believe on a given Bible teaching, then adding “this we reject” to all that is in conflict with God’s Word of truth on the matter. Our confessions approach the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures that way, and so do we, because any “humanly inspired” false teachings are spiritually harmful and even deadly to blood-bought souls (see Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:17–18, 2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

Consider: “After Jesus had asked His disciples about the false ideas others had of Him, He turned to them and said, ‘Who do you say I am?’ They confessed, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ (Matthew 16:16). In the face of error, Christians confess the truth that the Holy Spirit has taught them in Scripture. A Christian says, ‘This is what I believe; this is what I have learned from Scripture; this I am convinced is the true meaning of Scripture.’” (Martin Luther: Reformer, A. Schuetze, NPH, 2005, p. 93).

So, in stark contrast to what is asserted in the “statement of belief” above, we of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) have always been and remain a creedal/confessional church in a “deeds not creeds” day. We stand with Luther and those confessing Lutheran Christians who over four centuries ago penned the Confessions contained in the *Book of Concord*.

Consider further: “Occasions for confession were frequent for Luther. There was Rome with its numerous errors. There were those who claimed to be reformers but departed from the truth: Carlstadt, Zwingli, the Anabaptists, and the Sacramentarians. Luther was not a heresy hunter. But Satan raised opposition everywhere, and the Reformer had to contend and say, ‘Here I stand.’ By confessing the truth in the face of error—by confessions he wrote as occasions demanded—Luther gave the emerging church an identity. It was necessary that the Lutheran church become a confessing church. If it is to remain faithful to its Lord, it must continue as such.” (Ibid.)

Stay tuned, dear readers, as we take a closer look at Dr. Luther’s *Smalcald Articles* in coming months. We hope to grow together in appreciation of our identity as a confessional Lutheran church/synod.

— To follow —

- 2) Historical Setting of the SA
- 3) God’s Word Alone the Rule of Faith

Planned series on the Smalcald Articles:

- #1 Of the Divine Majesty/Redemption/
Salvation by Grace
- #2 Of the Mass
- #3 Of Cloisters/Papacy
- #4 Of Sin and the Law
- #5 Of Repentance
- #6 Of the Gospel and Sacraments
- #7 Of Keys and Confession
- #8 Of Ordination/Traditions/Conclusion

Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Prof. Paul Schaller, Speaker

Some men came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:3-5

Friends Indeed

This is one of my favorite times of the year, not because the weather is always perfect, but because usually at this time of year (September—ed.) there are not too many on campus who are sick.

Of course, being sick can have an up-side too. A gentleman in the hospital had severe back pains, so that he could not even lie on a hospital bed. He had to lie, without moving, on a gurney that was hard-as-a-board. When asked about it, he said, "You know, it has given me time to think about what's important in life, and it isn't spending all my time and energy selling insurance!"

Being sick can break up your daily routines and allow you to think about spiritual relationships that so easily get pushed to the side in daily life. Washing windows, scrubbing floors, or raking leaves on a Saturday morning can also give you a chance to think. Alone

with your thoughts, you might remember some of the unkind words that you used to hurt a friend or the selfish thoughts behind some hidden deeds.

Perhaps that was the case for the paralyzed man in Capernaum. He was dependent on four of his friends to transport him around the community, but he could still think, couldn't he? Maybe he realized that his heart could also be paralyzed at any time, and he needed to be ready to meet God. It's true of all of us, but we seem to think of it more easily when we are afflicted in some way. Maybe the man even thought that his paralysis was punishment for some sin that he had committed, not an uncommon idea in those days—or these. At any rate, he was apparently troubled, and his friends thought that Jesus could help.

Maybe they thought healing would help, and knew Jesus could

do it. Maybe they saw that he was troubled and did not know what would help, but thought that Jesus could. No matter what lay behind it, these were not your average, run-of-the-mill friends.

So often in this life “friends” have instead carried friends away from Jesus to worldly solutions: cheating, stealing, looking to inner strength, or...“you look like you could use a drink!” But these men were going to bring their friend to Jesus even if it meant digging the tiles off the roof (creating another burdensome job for themselves later to repair the damage). Yet, even if it made them look foolish and impractical, they were going to bring their friend to Jesus!

Jesus saw their faith, how far they were willing to go, trusting Him to do the best thing, and He turned to their helpless friend with the power of God unto salvation: “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*”

Do you have friends like that? Many of you could start with your parents. When you were a helpless infant—and a vocal portion of Christendom was saying, “infant baptism does no good”—they carried you to the font to receive the washing of regeneration.

Do you have friends like that? Many in our country last week watched a video of people lifting a burning car to drag a stranger to

safety from under it. They did not ask themselves if the car was hot or about to explode. Some of them did not even know if the driver was alive or already dead. They saw someone paralyzed, helpless, and they moved a great obstacle to help him.

Do you have friends like that? Better! I hope here at ILC you will not remain strangers to those friends around you who will see when you are troubled and in need, and will take you to Jesus, no matter how hard the task may seem! Sometimes you may be the one who makes it hard for them if you are not aware that your real problem is that you need to hear His voice say, “Child, your sins have been put away from you.”

But God knew what you needed and sent His Son to befriend you as no one else could, laying down His life for you, taking the bullet that you deserved so that you might live! And now He also sends friends to you who consider you to be a gift to them, and who daily take you to the throne of grace, praying that you might be blessed.

If you have friends like that, it is no accident. It is a gift of God to you. And even if you do not feel it, but feel numb, helpless, paralyzed in the face of life’s challenges, you will be blessed. You have His Word on it!!

Amen!



Surely He has borne our griefs

Continued from Page 4

And the sin which lay at the root of our griefs and sorrows has been dealt with once and for all. Sin—with the wrath and curse of God on account of that sin!—has been removed forever!

In Jesus we find the cure for the grief that afflicts us in this life.

We turn to Jesus because He is our Redeemer who cares for us and willingly bears our infirmities.

We turn to Jesus in confident prayer because we know He hears

our prayers and has demonstrated for us how much He cares.

We turn to Jesus because He has shown that He has the power to deliver us from sin and all its consequences.

In Jesus we find hope and deliverance for this life and, even more importantly, for the life to come where *there will be no more death, sorrow, or crying, for the former things will have passed away* (Revelation 21:4).



Jesus ... went forward

Continued from Page 5

coming, could it have been that He didn't know **WHY** these things were coming?

Yes, He did know! And it was for that very reason that "*Jesus ... went forward*"!

The Savior knew why the soldiers and officers were there to take Him—as Matthew records in his Gospel, "*All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled*" (26:56).

Knowing the **WHAT** and the **WHO** and the **WHY**, Jesus went forward, as the entire verse puts it: "*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward...*" — FOR US!

He went forward so that salvation could be gained for the world of

sinners. He went forward "*for this purpose*" that as the Son of God "*He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8).

He went forward, taking our place, bearing "*our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed*" (1 Peter 2:24).

*Therefore I will forever
Give thanks continually,
O Jesus, loving Savior,
For what You did for me.
I'll spend my breath in praises
For Your sad cry, Your sufferings,
Your wounds, Your guiltless death.*

(CW #109:4)



Announcement

ILC REGENTS CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Board of Regents of Immanuel Lutheran College invites nominations for the office of President of ILC. The current term of Professor John Pfeiffer expires June 30, 2012. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2012. Nominations must be written or E-mailed no later than midnight April 15, 2012 to:

Mr. Craig Ryan, Secretary
ILC Board of Regents
499 Country Lane
Fulda, MN 56131
cryan@page1printers.com

Special thanks this month to:

Roger Loveless who is a professional illustrator on a national basis.

He has enjoyed working with clients from the entertainment industry, publishing, advertising, including Milton Bradley, Nickelodeon, and Paramount Studios. We thank Roger for allowing our little publication to print his painting "My Redeemer Lives" (page 11) in this month's issue.

About the cover:

Matt Schaser art directed and designed this month's cover, and if you are a veteran reader of the *Lutheran Spokesman* you saw a similar cover back in March 1996. He designed that cover as well, but back then, he didn't art direct and design the layout of the publication. Matt wanted to bring back this cover design so that it could be incorporated throughout the issue. If you have photos and art (in digital formats) send them to mschaser@sbcglobal.net and they will be considered for use in future issues.

Lutheran Spokesman www.lutheranspokesman.org

"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN 55113 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537.

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 (CLC), 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@qwestoffice.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Art Director/Designer: Matthew Schaser; Staff Artist: Nate Ude, Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Warren Fanning, Daniel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Nathanael Mayhew, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Andrew Schaller, Thomas Schuetze. 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 BennoSydow@yahoo.com. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$22.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$42.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$62.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00. • Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org Printed in U.S.A.