

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



Meet Pastor Mark Tiefel

At the request of the *Lutheran Spokesman*, Pastor Tiefel sent a brief biographical sketch.

He is serving at Bethel Lutheran Church, Morris, Minnesota.

His wife is Gretchen (nee Noeldner) and they have a son Micah.

We thank him for this report. — Editor

*“He has shown you, O man,
what is good; and what does
the LORD require of you but to
do justly, to love mercy, and to
walk humbly with your God?”*
(Micah 6:8)



way through college at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and back again to Immanuel as a seminary student.

Along the way the Lord has blessed me with the gifts of wise friends, a loving family, a godly wife and son, and continual reminders of forgiveness and grace through His Word and Sacrament.

As I enter the public ministry, I know that God certainly expects me to show justice, mercy, and humility in my life. As I examine the tasks ahead, I can only rejoice that I do not need to rely on myself to accomplish these things, for it is only God’s showing me what is good that will allow me to have any confidence of being a faithful shepherd.

The greatest revelation God has shown through His Son—given into death and raised to victory in the world’s stead—fulfilling all my failures to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly. With this truth as my hope I continue on in Christ’s service until the day when I receive the crown of life that He has purchased for me.

This verse from Micah always impresses upon me the great responsibility I have as a Christian and even more so the responsibility I now have in the public ministry. For God has indeed shown me and the rest of the world what is good, and He continues to do so through His Word.

This realization first came to my heart as the Spirit created a home there through the Sacrament of Baptism as an infant member of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Sister Lakes, Michigan.

This same Lord continued steadfastly with me through eight years of Christian day school at Messiah Lutheran in Eau Claire, Wis., guiding each step as He eventually solidified my faith through Confirmation. During four years of high school at Immanuel Lutheran this same Lord began to show me a path to serve Him with my life—leading my

LEPERS FOR CHRIST!

Pastor David Fuerstenau • Ketchikan, Alaska

In Bible times and places leprosy was rather common and oft-mentioned.

A few people were struck down with the contagion as punishment for their rebellion against God—Miriam and King Uzziah of Judah coming to mind. Many lepers were miraculously healed, including the notable Naaman of Syria. And which Christian has not heard of the ten lepers healed by Jesus, only one of whom returned to give Him thanks?

Jesus gives as proof of His Messiahship the very fact that lepers were being cleansed by Him (see Matthew 11:5)!

But where are the leper missionaries? Granted, it would be a challenge if—as happened with lepers—a missionary were quarantined and isolated from society. One might assume Naaman told of his miraculous healing by the true God of Israel. And the thankful leper comes to mind.

But where are the others? Did they all keep silent?

Actually, the Bible tells of four lepers in particular who became missionaries (2 Kings chapter 7). In that day the capital city of Samaria was under siege by the Syrians. Food became so scarce that a donkey's head sold for about \$80. People were eating bird droppings, and at least one mother boiled up her son for dinner.

Into this already horrendous picture four lepers are painted, who reasoned they might as well surrender to the enemy. The worst that could happen was that they would die. Death by starvation or by the sword—not a happy prospect either way.

But when the lepers arrived at the enemy camp, they found it had been completely deserted, for the Lord had caused the invaders to hear noises of horses and chariots. The enemy had fled in fear, leaving all their provisions and possessions behind.

These spoils of victory now belonged to those four lepers who had nothing to do with the rout. At first the four ate and drank their fill. Then they started looting—hiding gold, silver, and fine clothing. But that ended when they agreed, "*We are not doing what is right. This day is a day*

of good news, and we remain silent... Come, let us go and tell the king's household" (v. 9).

And so they reported the lifting of the siege and the abundant food supplies now available in the deserted enemy camp. Eventually many people were saved alive.

A Spiritual Application!

In a spiritual sense—not only is the whole human race infected with the leprosy of sin, but it is also under siege by Satan and death. Terrible spiritual starvation exists, with people dying eternally.

But Easter morning changed part of that! The women found the tomb empty. Christ had arisen from death and the enemy was defeated. Great were the spoils of His victory, spoils for the taking—forgiveness of sins, hope, peace, joy, salvation and eternal life. Thus the angel instructed the women to go back to Jerusalem and tell this good news to others.

Christians have discovered the victory of the cross and at the grave. The power of Satan, the curse of sin and death, have been vanquished. We know this; what will we do?

A first reaction is to feast on the spoils, grab the treasures for ourselves and even hide them. But this should not be! Many are those still eating the dung of human wisdom and gagging on the donkey heads of human pride and selfishness—even killing their own children (!) in an effort to have the good life.

While thousands, even millions, are starving spiritually, do we keep silent and hide the treasures of God's grace? Rather, let's be reporting that "this day is a day of good news!" As our Master commands, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel [good news!] to every creature*" (Mark 16:15).

Though the starving people inside the stricken city had difficulty believing them, yet the four lepers persisted in their message of deliverance. They were sure of what God had done. They were evangelists—"knocking" on people's hearts, inviting the starving to check it out.

And the starving would find relief if only they believed the message. Sad to say, one who had questioned the prophet Elisha's earlier prediction of cheap food saw the prophecy fulfilled but did not get a chance to eat. He was trampled to death at the city gate (v. 20). Unbelief killed him!

There are many amazing features about salvation of and by grace, with sinners playing no active role in its completion. All starving sinners are invited to eat of (believe in) Him, the true and living Bread from heaven (John 6:35,51). Christ has conquered and offers the spoils of His victory to all.

How amazing also that He has chosen to use us "lepers" as messengers of His grace! For though our souls have been cleansed by His blood, we still suffer from and contend with our diseased sinful nature. But how golden are the tongues and beautiful the feet of those who persistently proclaim the good news of salvation.

How blessed and beautiful are such lepers for Christ!



EVANGELISM

Be Ready to Answer!

Pastor Theodore Barthels • Austin, Minnesota

In Peter's first epistle we are encouraged to "*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter 3:15).

As children of God we need to understand that this is one of God's primary purposes for our presence here on planet Earth.

However, reminding people of this truth often brings that "deer caught in the headlights" look. Many are afraid of being the one who is to speak up in defense of their Christian hope in life.

We should not assume that such an individual is "afraid of being found out" by the world or being ridiculed as a fool; rather, it is often a fear of failure. The person might be afraid of not saying the right words, or not being convincing enough.

Let us not be intimidated, but rather let us trust that the Spirit will bless us. He will not only provide the words we need (Matthew 10:19-20) but will also lend His power to our words so that others may come to share the hope that lives in our hearts through faith in Christ Jesus.

One may wonder how others could know about the hope that we have in our hearts. After all, many of us are not openly demonstrative in

revealing our faith. We don't walk around crying out "Praise the Lord!"

Christian friend, our conversation as well as our entire manner of life reveals more than we know! Our lives are adorned with the fruits of the Spirit. As we "*crucify the flesh with its passions and desires*," we will also be walking in the Spirit so that His fruits will be evident in our lives. "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Galatians 5:22).

The Spirit brings these fruits into our lives in hard times as well as in easy times. Others see these fruits in our everyday lives as well as in exceptional times. These fruits are an integral part of our Christian witness. People will notice. People will ask. We need to recognize the question as the opportunity provided us to explain the hope that lives in our heart.

When asked, "Tell me, how are you?" or "How are you coping?" or "What keeps you going?", rather than saying something like... "Well, you know, just taking life a day at a time," we can answer with something more spiritually substantive, such as:

"Jesus is still with me. He's the One who gives me the hope of eternal life, and that hope is what keeps me going. He died, and He lives forevermore."

Or...

"Jesus, my Savior, knows my trouble or pain, and He has promised to deliver. He has never dealt with me in anger as I truly deserve, but according to His mercy and grace. He is faithful, and He promises that all things will work for my good. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That's why I have hope. That's why I know it's all good."

Those are just examples which speak of the love of Jesus who came into the world to deliver us from sin and death. They are statements from God's Word which the Holy Spirit can use to reveal the reason why our hearts and minds are alive unto God.

As we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, the Spirit will lead us in our defense of the hope that is in us. Others will see our faith; they will perceive the hope that lives within our hearts; they will ask—and we will share our faith with Spirit-blessed words.

By the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, others also will come to share that blessed hope of salvation that fills our hearts to the glory of our Savior God!

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

God's Urgent Invitation

Pastor Andrew Schaller • Watertown, South Dakota

Reading through the book of Second Corinthians, we find the above words follow one of the most beautiful expressions of the gospel—the good news accomplished by God through Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Then it is that the Apostle Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, pleads with the believers in Corinth: *"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."*

When the Holy Spirit calls us to faith in Christ, His ultimate goal is that we remain in faith until our time of grace—our life—is concluded. In fact, it is God's earnest desire that everyone hear the good news of what Christ has accomplished by His perfect life and sacrificial death and, believing, remain in faith until death (see John 6:40).

However, the Bible makes clear that it is possible for people who believe in Jesus to fall away over the course of time for differing reasons (consider the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15).

Is it really possible for us Christians to receive the grace of God in vain? Yes, for we too can be deceived by Satan's lies.

Let's face it—for different reasons we procrastinate; we put off doing things we know we should do, and some of the things we put off really aren't that important.

However, avoiding or refusing what GOD would have us do is always spiritually dangerous. The devil in cahoots with our sinful natures is especially good at getting us to set aside faithfulness to God...and then getting us to justify that unfaithfulness as a 'temporary thing.' Who of

us hasn't been tempted by the thought, "I can go to church next Sunday"?

The Devil at Work!

We need to recognize the voice of our adversary and not minimize spiritual procrastination. It is the devil who would have us put God's patience to the test. The devil would have us think that God's offer of grace will always be there.

Consider then the urgent invitation of our God when He says: *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

In an attempt to get us into the store, a sale will often be listed as 'a limited time offer.' In other words, if we wait too long, we will miss out on the deal!

God's offer of grace is also a limited offer—limited to our lifespan, to our time of grace! If a person dies without faith in Christ, it's too late; there is no second chance offer.

God's invitation has always been an urgent one, for the words of verse two are quoted from the divinely inspired writings of the Old Testament Prophet, Isaiah (49:8). Catch the urgency when the LORD God says, *"NOW is the acceptable time; NOW [TODAY!] is the day of salvation."*

The devil wants us to disregard God's invitation. He contradicts God, urging us to "wait until tomorrow." Are there not times when we have thought that worshiping in God's house isn't as important as — let's say — vacation, family time, sleep, or recreation? [A suggestion for our high-tech day: When we miss a worship service because of work, we can make a point of going to the pastor or to the church website to read the bulletin or listen to the sermon; of course, we can also take up our Bible and read it devotionally.]

The Lord Jesus was quoting the Old Testament Scriptures when He said to the tempter, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4).

None of us is in the habit of starving our bodies. None of us skips eating for days because "I can always go to the fridge later." Yet this is exactly the kind of thinking Satan would have us adopt when it comes to feeding our souls.

Where we have failed, let's take comfort from the fact that God's offer of grace still stands. TODAY is the day of salvation!



"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught..." (Titus 1:7ff)

Confidence For The Ministry Committed To Us

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

(Titus 1:1-4)

Titus, Paul's valued assistant, had been left behind in Crete to "set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city..." (1:5).

Unlike Timothy, another assistant of the apostle, Titus' task was to consolidate and organize newly created congregations on the island of Crete. It was an important task which demanded attention to details in view of the circumstances.

On Crete Titus confronted those "whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain" (1:12). In our day we might equate those mouths with "feel good" preachers who proclaim a "how to" gospel—how to live, how to get rich, how to be happy—rather than the gospel which "shows our Savior" (SOS) and "shows our salvation" (SOS) in Christ Jesus.

Have you ever seen a poverty-stricken television evangelist? Is it not interesting that such preachers who titillate the mind and whims of troubled "seekers" will fill arenas, while those who preach "hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (1:2) frequently find their pulpits in "mere" living rooms and storefronts?

The fledgling congregations in Cretian cities were in need of encouragement, strengthening, and confidence in Christ Jesus since they were surrounded by—and were the targets of—those who spread "Jewish fables" and other heresies.

This was the field in which Titus worked!

In the establishment of Christian congregations as well as in nurturing such congregations, there is only one divinely approved approach; it is an approach rooted in the substance of God's support: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, TEACHING them to observe ALL THINGS THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU*" (Matthew 28:19-20a, our emphasis).

Upon the exercise of such mission work, the Lord God stamps His authority and gives the assurance, "*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20b). Whatever physical, technological, or out-reach means we might use, it is still the case that the Spirit accomplishes the Father's saving purpose only through the divinely appointed *means of grace* and the faithful ministrations of those means (see Isaiah 55:11).

As in Crete, so today! The ministrations of the gospel meet all manner of opposition, and God's faithful servants must contend against the deceit of those who bring another gospel. There must be strenuous contending for the heart and mind of people whom the Lord loves. In support of Titus' work, and for his strengthening in faith toward the fulfilling of his task, the apostle—who was "*sent to help God's chosen people to believe and to know the truth which promotes godliness, hoping, as we do for everlasting life...*" (1:1-2, Beck, AAT)—lent his apostolic authority.

Titus had not sought this responsibility; it had been laid upon him. God called him to it! Going forth with apostolic authority, he knew he went forth with the blessing of the Lord.

Further, those to whom he spoke could know that Titus was not a fly-by-night preacher out to enrich himself, for he came under the authority of the apostle who had himself been called to service by the Lord (Acts 9:15). Paul was "*determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Titus was to confidently set forth this "common faith" he held with Paul.

Our task as a body of Christ-believers in this world is the same as that of Titus. Our task meets with the same obstacles and opposition. In such circumstances we dig deep into the Word. We remember whom we serve. As surely as we appreciate the truth that we share the faith with Paul and Titus, we can plant and nourish confidently "*in hope of*

eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to [us] according to the commandment of God our Savior" (1:2-3).

The cause is not ours but the Lord's! Our purpose is to proclaim "the truth which accords with godliness," content with the knowledge that "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior" will accompany us to the end of the age!

To our own blessing and for the sake of those who are still in the shadows of death, we pray that the Lord will keep us faithful and give us confidence to proclaim the Word which overcomes all foes!

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

"...The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (John 10:25)

Christ Himself Is The Miracle!

Pastor Em. Warren Fanning • Sun City, Arizona

But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

(Mark 1:30-34)

In the four Gospels our Lord Jesus Christ and His life are seen as one huge miracle of God.

Using our Church Calendar, this miracle begins nine months before Christmas. March 25th ("Annunciation Day") could well be considered "Incarnation Day." Holy Scripture tells us that back then Jesus received His body and soul in the Virgin's womb by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

Nine months later, at the Festival of the Nativity, the emphasis is on the visible fact that God has become man. He has already been in His

“state of humiliation” since His conception. That state does not at all refer to His becoming a man, but rather to the lowly life He lives as a man, all the way to the cross!

In this state of humiliation He does not always or fully use the divine attributes available to (our theology books use the words “communicated to”) His human nature. But when He does, there can be no denying that this Man is true God.

That is the point of His miracles—that God’s gracious rule has come to Earth! As with His words, so with His actions, He is here to say and demonstrate something about Himself—for our sakes, for our eternal welfare.

This is why, from the Twelfth Day of Christmas onwards (namely, from Epiphany on) we observe the fact that “this man truly is God”! Both words and actions will testify to that. His words and actions are not for some “earthly show” to “wow” the crowds. Everything He says and does points ahead to Calvary—and beyond!

Our Scripture reference above mentions Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law. This miracle is also reported in Matthew’s Gospel (chapter 8:14-15), together with other miracles before and after that account. And it includes an interesting quote from Isaiah’s “crucifixion chapter” (53:4)—where Matthew says that Jesus’ miracles took place in fulfillment of Isaiah’s inspired words: *“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”*

So here, as with all of Jesus’ miracles, we see Him absorbing into His body all that has gone wrong in this sinful world—including, and above all, all the sins of the whole world.

That’s the Miracle! His name is Jesus! Peter and his wife were undoubtedly delighted. Wherever they went on their missionary journeys together (see I Corinthians 9:5), they would likely mention this miracle Jesus had done, and then use it to introduce the Miracle Himself, and what He has done with sin and disease and even death, once and for all, on Calvary.

Now in His state of exaltation this Miracle God-Man continues to give us the Spirit to declare Him.

So we do it!



Popularity Priorities

Prof. John Pfeiffer, speaker

"Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ"
(Colossians 3:22-24).

It seems to me that if the President wants to be popular, he should not be the President.

A number of people are trying to become President of the United States. Day after day they entice the people with promises of peace, pleasure, and prosperity. In one part of the country they tell the voters what they want to hear. Then they go to another location and adapt their message to the desires of the voters that live there. They are trying to be popular with everyone in order to get elected.

However, after a person becomes President, he must change his way of doing things. No longer can he allow popularity to be the focus of his presidency. If popularity is his focus, he will never be able to make the kind of decisions that are required. Rather, he will always be testing the attitudes of the people and then make decisions that will keep them happy. The results will be disastrous.

Imagine if Jesus Christ had made popularity the focus of His work on Earth. He would have jumped down from the pinnacle of the temple when the devil tempted Him. How popular He would have been, floating down to the ground like Superman! The people would have loved it.

But no; that was not what He was here for. He was here to achieve redemption for the whole world. To do this He had to live like a man—not a super man. He was our substitute. He had to live as we do, be tempted as we are, suffer as we do, and die as we do. But He had to do it without sinning. And so He did—and so we are forgiven!

If popularity was important to Jesus, He would have tried to please the scribes and Pharisees. However, Jesus was here to speak the truth, not to shape His teachings in order to make Himself popular. The leaders were leading the people toward eternal destruction. Therefore we hear Jesus saying, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"* (Matthew 23:13)

Jesus wanted to be popular only with God. It is as some said of Him: *"Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one [anyone's opinion]; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth"* (Mark 12:14).

Speaking Truth

The fact of the matter is that the truth is not popular. The majority of people don't want to hear the truth. That's why most churches don't teach the truth. *"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 Timothy 4:3).

What about on this campus? Should popularity with the students be the main concern of your teachers? Should they tell you what you want to hear or rather what you need to hear? When they have to make decisions, should they do so based on what will make everyone happy, or rather on what is best for you?

How about you? How important is popularity to you? Is the need to be popular the driving force in your life? If someone here at ILC gets a bad idea, do you go along with him because you want to be popular with that person and his friends? When you are away from school and in the company of ungodly people, do you join in their sinful behavior because you want to be popular?

Some people are chameleons; they change "color" depending on the company they are keeping. Good company, good behavior; bad company, bad behavior. It's all because they want to be popular with this group or that one. *"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

The passage that I read at the beginning is addressed to servants. However, the principle applies to us all. *"...Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."*

The heathen are men-pleasers, continually saying and doing

things that will please some particular group of people so that they will be popular. What this usually means is sins and lies.

We are not like them. Our Lord Jesus has redeemed us from our sins and from the empty lifestyle of the world. Therefore our focus is not on popularity with men, but on popularity with God.

God help us all to do what is good and right in His eyes, even if it makes us unpopular in the world.

PRAYER: “Lord, we are not of the world, for You have chosen us out of the world. Help us to live to Your glory and not to our own popularity. Amen.”



This We Believe

475TH 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)

6. Of The Gospel And Sacraments

(Part III - Articles IV-VI)

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

The glorious work of Redemption would save no one if its blessings were not conveyed to the sinner. Martin Luther wrote: “The passion of Christ occurred but once on the cross. But whom would it benefit if it were not distributed, applied, and put to use? And how could it be put to use and distributed except through Word and Sacrament?” [*Luther's Works*, Phila. Edition, Vol. 37, p. 193] The gospel—the Good News of

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 (in this issue)
- #6 Of The Gospel and Sacraments**
- #7 Of Keys and Confession
- #8 Of Ordination/Traditions/Conclusion

Jesus—is the means whereby God brings the blessings of redemption to the individual sinner. Only the gospel can convert the heart

of a sinner, bringing him to faith and forgiveness—“*By grace you have been saved, THROUGH FAITH...*”

(Ephesians 2:8).

“*You are all children of God THROUGH FAITH in Christ Jesus*”

(Galatians 3:26).

Why did Luther choose to discuss the Means of Grace?

The gospel is the essence of our salvation. It is crucial in the conversion of sinners and in our Christian life. If we are to fulfill our Savior’s commission to “*make disciples*” (Matthew 28:19), we need to know how to do that—with the gospel!

If we want to “*exhort one another*” (Hebrews 10:25) we need to know what is the profitable tool for such exhortation—again, the gospel!

Simply put, children of God and Christian congregations need a proper understanding of the Means of Grace in order to serve in God’s kingdom, or else the wrong tools will be brought to the task.

What truths does Luther set forth?

Luther identifies five ways by which God offers the gospel for counsel and help against sin:

1) The spoken Word by which forgiveness of sins is preached and taught;

2) The Sacrament of Baptism;

3) The Sacrament of the Altar;

4) Using the authority which Christ gives to believers to forgive the sins of penitent sinners (Office of the Keys);

5) The mutual edification, encouragement, comfort, and spiritual aid which like-minded believers give one another as they make use of the gospel among themselves.

In regard to the Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—Luther reaffirmed that the earthly elements and the Word of God are the essential parts of both sacraments, and that the Word of God is the “active ingredient” bringing God’s grace through the sacrament.

Thus the effectiveness of the sacrament does not rest on the faith of the person administering the sacrament but in the power of God’s Word!

It is also affirmed that in the Lord’s Supper the body and blood of Christ are received by all who commune—those who take part in it properly toward their blessing, but those who are unprepared receive it to their spiritual harm.

This truth underscores the importance of proper examination prior to receiving the Lord’s

Supper (cf. I Corinthians 11:27ff).

What doctrinal errors does Luther specifically address?

Luther does not address any specific errors regarding the gospel itself. However, doctrinal errors are refuted indirectly by his strong presentation of the truth.

On the basis of Holy Scripture Luther rejected the teaching that God has given spiritual power to the water element of Baptism—instead, the power is in the Word! He rejects the notion that Baptism washes away sins by the will of God apart from the Means of Grace. And he reaffirms the command to baptize infants and the blessings they receive, thereby refuting all contrary claims.

In connection with the Lord's Supper Luther rejected the practice of withholding the wine from communicants; he rejected the practice of not using bread and wine; he rejected the false teaching that the bread and wine stop being bread and wine and are actually changed into the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation).

How does this apply to us today?

A Christian congregation's understanding of the Means of Grace will determine its mission, priority, and the essence of its ministry. Since the gospel is the means by which sinners are

brought the redemption won by Christ, the gospel is rightly our focus.

Many distractions can pull at a congregation's resources and clamber to be on the congregation's "to do" list; but as we seek to faithfully fulfill the work our Savior has given us to do, we do well to continually evaluate all our efforts to be sure that they are serving the gospel ministry.

A congregation's proper focus is the preaching and teaching of God's Word to bring the gospel to law-stricken hearts. All else pales in importance when compared to this soul-saving endeavor.

Within Christianity in our day Baptism is widely misunderstood and under-esteemed. Baptism is frequently made into an act of confession, an expression of faith, or a decision of loyalty to Christ—each of which is something the sinner is doing. Put another way, lost is the blessed truth that, far from being something we do, Baptism is the gracious work of God—a gift of grace and salvation to sinners.

Parents who have been led to know the dire spiritual need of their children and the profound depth of God's love offered through Baptism will not neglect bringing their children to receive

The Book of Concord *The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [Tappert Edition]

Excerpts from THE SMALCALD ARTICLES

Part III, Article III – Of Repentance

[The gospel] offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in His grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the particular function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the Keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren. Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered...)

Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water, commanded by the institution of Christ; or as Paul says, “the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:26... as for infant Baptism, we hold that children should be baptized, for they, too, are included in the promise of redemption which Christ made, and the church should administer Baptism to them.

We hold that the bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians...we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with Scriptures, as St. Paul himself states, “The bread which we break” (1 Corinthians 10:16), and again, “Let a man so eat of the bread (1 Corinthians 11:28).



this blessing. Rather, they will treat it as a great priority and will give honor to Baptism—in how they approach it, in how they talk about it, and in how they keep their children in remembrance of it.

Children of God are under attack by Satan; they are polluted with their flesh; they are wooed by the world. As such they need the strengthening the Lord’s Supper gives—and they need it regularly!

Only through a thorough understanding of the power of the gospel in the Sacrament of the Altar will God’s children know that it is exactly what they need in their sin-wearied lives. Only through a scriptural knowledge

of the Lord’s Supper will they take seriously the warning against receiving it to their harm; only then will they treat it with the reverent awe it deserves and make use of proper examination.

In all the ways God brings the gospel to us, that gospel is our spiritual lifeblood! It is the substance of our salvation, the tool of the Holy Spirit to preserve us in faith, and the comfort we need in this world of sorrows.

As the Reformer wrote in his 95 Theses, the gospel is “the true treasure of the Church, i.e. believers in Christ” (thesis 62). When we truly know the gospel, we understand fully why this is so!



"Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled..."

Pastor Paul Fleischer, Cheyenne, Wyoming

I suspect there are others among our readers—Christian people to whom the Bible is special as God's very own Word!—who don't appreciate a nationally-known television news personality/commentator misusing our title-line as his daily newscast "sign off," just before he passes a multi-colored football to someone off camera. In fact, he has made the line his signature phrase/motto, even peddling Tee-shirts proclaiming and coffee mugs spouting "Let not your heart be troubled!"

The phrase not only sounds like but appears to be lifted from the holy dissertation of the Lord Jesus Christ who told His disciples on a certain occasion: *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you..."* (John 14:1).

What a wonderfully comforting, uplifting word and promise from Jesus that is to His Christian believers! Behind the saying (and the One who says it and what's behind His saying it is key to this discussion) is a whole package of rock-solid gospel truths undergirding a child-like Christian faith in the face of any and every trying circumstance the Savior's disciples can and will encounter in a gone-to-the-devil, unbelieving world!

As far as this writer is concerned, the use of this sign-off line on a national newscast grates like fingernails on a chalkboard. For one thing, the not-so-subtle implication is that whatever comments were passed along to the listening/viewing public the past hour or so were a prescription for a good and worry-free night's rest. Really?! The ingredients of a daily newscast on what's happening in this world—often

including philosophical and political interpretations of reported events—can hardly afford such restful repose!

Consider, dear readers: our title-words were and are intended as a *spiritual* catharsis—a calming word and a wonderfully reassuring promise from the eternal Savior to His little flock of believers as they live their faith and witness to it in a world ever hostile to the gospel.

And far from having to do with earthly politics, what the Lord Jesus was speaking about is His future return to glory after completing His mission to Earth of redeeming sinners by innocently dying for them on Calvary's cross. And once that glorious, saving mission was completed, He promises, in turn, to come again to take His own with Him to the Father's "house (of) many mansions..."!

Truly then, come what may,
"Let not your heart be troubled...!"

"Come what may," we say! The Savior never left His little band of followers with baseless "pie in the sky" hopes and dreams for their futures in this world. Instead, going forward on their Christian faith-journey through this world of sin, He let them know that they should expect the same kind of scorn, ridicule, and persecution from the gone-to-the-devil world that He, their Master, experienced.

So it was foretold, and so it will ever be! But through it all—through countless troubles and trials, even to the point of martyrdom (!)--how often haven't Jesus' disciples found comfort and encouragement from promises such as...

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to

you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22).

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Truly then, dear Christ-believer: *"Let not your heart be troubled..."!* Hallelujah!!



ANNOUNCEMENT

Joint Reformation Service

The Minnesota Delegate Conference would like to announce that its Joint Reformation Service is scheduled for Sunday, October 28, 2012, at 4:00 p.m. at Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, with a fellowship meal to follow.

— Teacher Chad Seybt, Secretary

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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

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