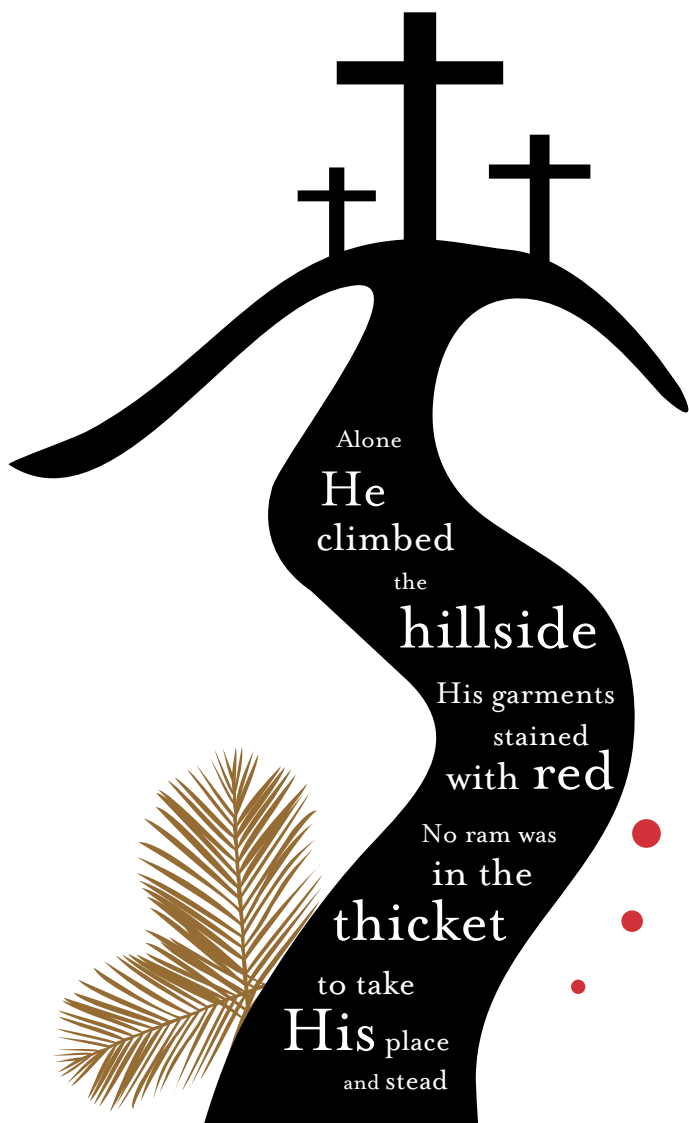


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” — John 10:35



HEAV'NLY FATHER, SEND THY BLESSING



Heav'nly Fath-er, send Thy bless-ing On these sol-lemn days of Lent



That great hosts, their guilt con-fes-sing, Bow be-fore Thee and re-pent.



Par-don them and grant them heal-ing, For the sake of Thy dear Son



Who, in death Thy love re-veal-ing, Ev-er-last-ing life has won.

STANZA 2:

Jesus, Savior, to Thy glory,
In this solemn Lententide,
May we tell the Passion story
To the people far and wide!

Have them see how
Thou didst languish
While upon the shameful tree,

Thus to save us
from sin's anguish,
And from death
to make us free.



STANZA 3:

Holy Spirit, in this season,
Open Thou our hearts and mind,
That the deepest hidden reason
Of the Passion we may find.

Give our faith
the sure foundation;
All the richest fruits reveal
Which were wrought
for our salvation,
And our fainting
souls to heal.

Words: W. E. Schuldt, of Freedom, Pa. first published in the February 24, 1925 issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. It can be sung to the melody of Hymn #145, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941).
Tune: Erbaulicher Musicalischer Christenschatz, Basel, 1745. Public Domain.
(Submitted by Pastor Em. Arthur Schulz)

Noah, Daniel, and Job can't save!

Pastor Paul Krause, Markesan, Wisconsin

"...Even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in [the land], as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

(EZEKIEL 14:20)

What do Noah, Daniel, and Job have in common? Each was well known for his righteousness. We read that “*Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations*” (Genesis 6:9). Of Job we are told that he was “*a blameless and upright man*” (Job 1:8). And by the time of the prophet Ezekiel, Daniel’s life had also shown him to be a righteous follower of the Lord in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (see Daniel chapter 1).

And why are these three men in particular mentioned in the book of Ezekiel? For the simple reason that, as our text says, even if they were in the land, they would not be able to save the Jews from the destruction to come at the hands of the Babylonians.

God had sent prophets through whom He warned, encouraged, and pleaded with His people, but still they continued their idol worship. In His loving grace the Lord had shown great patience with them, but the Jews continued to rely on themselves for strength, to depend on their physical ancestry as an “in” with God. Since Jerusalem remained standing, they assumed that God still supported them—even though their lifestyle was anything but God-pleasing (to discover how corrupt the Jews had become, read Micah chapters 2-3 as well as Ezekiel chapters 2-3).

But now, as the prophet Ezekiel tells us, the time for the

long-threatened judgment had come. There had been a time when righteous Abraham interceded for the righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis ch. 18), but the time had run out for the people of Judah. Not even righteous men such as Noah, Daniel, and Job could spare them now.

In our day we do not face an Old Testament threat from an earthly power. Instead we face eternal condemnation in the fires of hell because of our sins. And no person on this Earth, no matter how righteous, can spare us from what our inborn wickedness deserves. Noah, Daniel, and Job could not save themselves, nor the Jews, nor us from anything. In fact, they had no righteousness of their own. Their righteousness was not that of human works, but it was a gift of God's grace received by faith.

What a wonder to hear again during this Lenten season that true righteousness is the righteousness He gives. Our righteousness does not depend in any way on ourselves and our good works, for we are saved because of what Jesus has done and endured. Throughout His Passion Jesus was giving His perfect life into death so that we might be redeemed from all our sins! Because of Jesus' satisfactory ransom payment, God's righteousness is given to us. "*HE was wounded for our transgressions, HE was bruised for our iniquities...by HIS stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53).

May God's Holy Spirit keep us from depending on anybody else's supposed righteousnesses—much less our own, which are but filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). Instead, may we rely on Jesus' righteousness alone.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress; ...
Who died for me, e'en me t'atone,
Now for my Lord and God I own.
(TLH 371:1a, 3b)



...no person on this Earth, no matter how righteous, can spare us from what our inborn wickedness deserves. Noah, Daniel, and Job could not save themselves, nor the Jews, nor us from anything.

LENTEN... JOY?

Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer • Spokane, Washington

“...(Jesus) who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(HEBREWS 12:2)

The term *joy* is not one we typically associate with the seven weeks of the Lenten season. Joy is an emotion usually reserved for the seasons of Christmas and Easter.

The emotions of godly sobriety and repentance are usually associated with Lent—and rightly so. Our thoughts focus on the need for forgiveness of sins, as we consider the suffering, sorrow, shame, and death our Lord Jesus endured to reconcile sinners unto God.

Also, Lenten hymns generally reflect a more somber attitude. Hymns such as “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” (TLH #153) or “Go to Dark Gethsemane” (#159) certainly do not convey the feeling of joy. Even the hymn “Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing” (#155) speaks of “all our sins on Jesus laid.”

Then too, the Holy Week events of Maundy Thursday evening and Good Friday were certainly not “joyful” for the Savior. If there were some other way sinners could get to heaven—other than through the beating, crown of thorns, agony of the cross, and death which lay ahead for Him—Jesus pleaded in the Garden of Gethsemane that the Father would take away His cup of suffering.

But there was no other way! And so the “Lamb [went] uncomplaining forth, the guilt of all men bearing” (TLH #142:1).

So it is very fitting that we soberly and somberly meditate upon the Passion of our Lord. After all, it was our sin that required

Jesus to endure spitting, whipping, mocking, a crown of thorns, nails, and finally death, for the LORD “*laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6b).

Yet there is joy to be found in Lent! In our text from the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, we read of Jesus that “*for the JOY that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Jesus found joy—joy in the outcome of Lent, in doing His Father’s will, in accomplishing God’s plan of salvation! He found joy in redeeming us, in purchasing us back from hell and Satan, and in giving us eternal life.

Jesus also found joy in knowing what would come after the horrors of Good Friday. Whenever He spoke to His disciples of what was going to happen on Good Friday, He always ended by saying, “*And the third day He will rise again*” (Mark 10:34). Life would result from His death!

Therefore, we also find joy amid the need for somber reflection and repentance which the Passion history impresses upon us.

Knowing that Jesus endured everything He did because He wanted us to spend eternity with Him and His Father, we find the joy of our salvation!

We find joy knowing that “*by His stripes we are healed*” (Isaiah 53:5).

We find the joy of knowing beyond a doubt that God loves us—for look at what He was willing to do to reconcile us to Himself!

Hallelujah (“Praise the LORD”)! Amen!

*Thou hast suffered great affliction
And hast borne it patiently,
Even death by crucifixion,
Fully to atone for me;
Thou didst choose to be tormented
That my doom should be prevented.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.*

(TLH #151:6)

**He found joy in
redeeming us, in
purchasing us back
from hell and Satan,
and in giving us
eternal life.**

“Everybody Loves a Parade”?

Pastor Mark Gullerud • Bowdle, South Dakota

(MATTHEW 21:1-11; MARK 11:1-10; LUKE 19:29-40; JOHN 12:12-15)

It has been said that everybody loves a parade. Large crowds of people young and old flock curbside to watch Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, the Rose Bowl Parade, or the St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

What makes parades popular are beautiful floats, waving celebrities decked out in finery, marching bands, and giant-size balloon characters. Many say they like parades because of the fun-filled entertainment and positive atmosphere.

But is the statement “Everybody loves a parade” always true? Does everyone love any and every parade? The answer is “no.” Depending on a person’s belief system or moral values, the theme of a parade and its participants can run counter to one’s sensibilities. For example, many Christians are offended by the shameless pre-lenten Mardi Gras parades or by in-your-face parades which celebrate the immoral LGBT lifestyles. Similarly, those who do not accept Bible teachings and precepts may be affronted by parades which display a Christian theme.

The “parade” (so to speak) that took place on the road to Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday was remarkable in many ways. Its focal point was just one Person, Jesus of Nazareth. He didn’t look like anyone special. Jesus wasn’t dressed in finery but in plain, ordinary clothes. He was riding on a little donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey, on which no one had sat, and it was accompanied by the colt’s mother.

Even though there was only this rather lowly looking Person to view in this “parade,” Jesus attracted a great multitude who went before and followed after Him. They gave Him a royal welcome by covering His pathway with their outer garments and palm branches, and they hailed Him by crying out, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that*

comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9, John 12:13, Luke 19:38, Mark 11:10)

Why did so many join in glorifying God and acknowledging Jesus as the promised Messiah and King of Israel who had come to bless them with salvation and peace? The evangelist Luke said that they “*began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works [the miracles of Jesus] they had seen*” (Luke 19:37).

As for the many who had not witnessed Jesus’ mighty works, we know how the masses can be easily carried along by the stir and emotions of the moment. Even Jesus’ disciples didn’t fully understand “*these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him*” (John 12:16).

How many professing Christians today rightly understand who Jesus is and what He is all about? Yet there is no greater body of information than the Bible which reports the good news of the Savior and His blessed gifts of forgiveness of sins, spiritual life, and eternal salvation.

**How many professing
Christians today
rightly understand
who Jesus is... ?**

Not everyone loved this first Palm Sunday “parade” and the way Jesus was hailed by the multitude. In his Gospel Luke reports that “*some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples’*” (19:39). In blind unbelief the Pharisees had rejected Jesus as the promised Lord and Christ and refused to acknowledge the fact that they needed Jesus as the Savior who would take away their sins and deliver them from the punishment of eternal condemnation in hell.

And why was that? Because, like so many in our day too, they were deluded by the notion that they could make their way to heaven on their own without any help from heaven above.

We celebrate the Christian festival of Palm Sunday each year with mixed emotions. We rejoice that Jesus humbly made His way into Jerusalem so that we could be exalted on high through His redemptive work on the cross. But then we also mourn the tragic state of affairs that so many still do not possess the joy of salvation through Jesus Christ.

May God have mercy and bless more and more people with the gift of faith in the one Savior of the world, Jesus Christ! †

“...Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood be for my soul the highest good!”

Pastor Thomas Schuetze • Coloma, Michigan

Picture the scene.

The date is approximately 1600 B.C.

The Israelites are living in Egypt, suffering as slaves at the hands of brutal taskmasters. Pharaoh had refused to let the Israelites leave his country though God has commanded him to do so, and He had sent nine plagues to try to lead him to comply.

Now the LORD resolved to send one more plague. He revealed that on that very night every firstborn in Egypt would die, *“from the firstborn son of Pharaoh ... to the firstborn son of the slave girl...and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again”* (Exodus 11:5–6, NIV).

Would the families of the Israelites suffer the same fate? No. For the LORD had a plan to deliver them. He told Moses to have each Israelite family take a lamb from their flock, a one-year-old male without defect. At the end of four days the animal was to be killed and some of its blood brushed on the doorframes of their houses. The meat was then to be roasted and eaten in a special meal with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

When the LORD came that night to carry out the tenth plague, if He saw the lamb’s blood on the doorframes of the Israelites’ homes, He held back His hand from striking them and passed over them.

Fast forward to Maundy Thursday, the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion. He was gathered with His disciples in the upper room celebrating the Passover in remembrance of the gracious deliverance God had worked for His people. During supper He took a piece of unleavened bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying: *“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me”* (1 Corinthians

11:24, NIV). Next He took a cup of wine, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying: “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me*” (1 Corinthians 11:25, NIV).

As we compare these two events—separated in time by some sixteen centuries—we discover some important and soul-refreshing heavenly truths!

By the one-year-old lamb which the Israelites were to kill—which had no defects, whose blood they were to put on their doorframes, and for whose sake the LORD passed over their homes—God was picturing His holy Lamb whose blood would be shed on the cross and for whose sake He has forgiven our sins and remembers them no more.

And just as the Israelites had been freed from their cruel Egyptian taskmasters, so we have been freed from the dominion of the cruel taskmaster, Satan, through Christ our Passover Lamb who was sacrificed for us. Because of Him—and through faith in His blood—death can no longer hold us in its grip. The prison house of hell holds no terror for us, as Jesus assures us: “*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!*” (John 8:36, NIV).

Further, we understand the deep significance of the Lord's Supper and the priceless treasure it is. Jesus instituted this meal to provide us with the personal assurance that all the above is unmistakably true... **for me personally!** I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of my sins. **I have been reconciled** to my heavenly Father. **I have been freed** from the power of Satan, from the grip of death, and from hell itself!

May each of us then treasure the LORD's Supper and receive it penitently and joyfully. As often as we partake of it, let us draw comfort, knowing our Savior will use it to convey His precious gift of forgiveness, to bolster our faith, to increase our love for Him, to confirm our hope of heaven, and to give strength for our walk as His disciples—till the glorious day when we eat and drink it with Him anew in His Father's kingdom.

**What higher gift can
we inherit? It is faith's
bond and solid base;
It is the strength of
heart and spirit, The
covenant of hope and
grace. Lord, may Thy
body and Thy blood
Be for my soul the
highest good!**

(TLH #315:9)



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

How's your “Wow” doing?

Pastor Em. Warren Fanning • Phoenix, Arizona

And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” (MARK 2:1-12)

Both the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture record many miracles of God.

These mighty acts weren't done for the purpose of having people say “Wow!”—and then, in turn, go on living as before. In many cases, people misinterpreted the miraculous signs. Knowing that very well, Jesus avoided the “wow” crowds.

We don't know what the biblical equivalent was for the word “wow”—but several words used make us think that people might

have said it. In many cases after the miracles or sayings of Jesus, we read that people were amazed or astonished or full of wonder or marveled.

That's the way it was in this case. After Jesus had both forgiven and healed the paralyzed man, the people were amazed and glorified God, saying: "*We never saw anything like this!*"

Then as now, the forgiveness of sins is the all-important thing. Did people get the point? If so, did they retain it? How about people today? How about you? How's your "wow" doing?

During a review of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* in an Adult Bible Instruction Class some years ago, we re-read the explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed:

"I believe that Jesus Christ...has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death, that I should be His own, and live under Him..."

After we reviewed this, one woman blurted out: "Wow! I just can't believe it!" We all knew the lady was a believer and we realized that the "wow!" was a marvelous declaration. It led us right into Dr. Luther's explanation of the Third Article:

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me...sanctified...and kept me in the true faith...."

What a delight it was to that woman and to the rest of us—to have such Christian joy and peace, such faith, comfort, and hope.

And to think that these gifts come to us by God's pure grace now through the Means of Grace, the gospel in Word and Sacraments. And there is more to come in heaven!

We all felt "Wow!" It was one of those rare moments.

By the Spirit of God this amazement and astonishment continues throughout our lives in worship, song, prayer, service, giving, and witnessing. That's the whole point and purpose of Jesus' miracles here and elsewhere in the Bible.

And this is an eternal "Wow!"—not just a temporal one! It's amazing.



“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught...” (TITUS 1:7FF)

Adorning the Doctrine

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. (TITUS 2:1-10)

The first chapter of St. Paul’s letter to Titus concludes with reference to the “unbelieving” (1:15) who “*profess to know God, but in works deny Him, being an abomination, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work*” (1:16). As a follower of Jesus Christ as well as a spokesman of God, Titus was to be different. “*But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine*” (2:1).

Sound doctrine is drawn from the Holy Scriptures. Its substance is the law and the gospel—the law which uncovers sin and convicts the sinner, and the gospel which pronounces upon the sinner forgiveness through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. This gospel also works in the heart the will to live to the glory of God.

God’s Word is the life-blood of the Christian hope and life. God’s Word and doctrine (teaching, precepts) are absolutely pure and holy. The Word and doctrine are integrally essential to the Christian life.

To **outward appearance** there is no distinction between the life and “good” works of the heathen and the life and “good” works of the Christ-believer. However, to the Lord God what is “good” is born alone of faith

(Hebrews 11:6). Faith is a consequence of the Spirit of God working through the gospel. The source from which the Christian life proceeds is what distinguishes the life and actions of the believer in Christ from those of the heathen.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “*Should not a people seek their God...To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isaiah 8:19,20). Inasmuch as God’s Word and doctrine have been entrusted to us, we hold the Word sacred, teaching it faithfully without addition of human wisdom, philosophy, and opinion.

Both Teaching and Living

We need not rehearse again how many within outward Christianity have perverted the Word of God, distorting law and gospel, turning upside down right and wrong, and fostering immorality.

What the apostle of the Lord wrote to Titus was intended also for all believers in Christ. Titus was commissioned to tell people what is right according to sound teaching. There is something in this chapter for old and young, men and women, husbands and wives, masters and slaves [today we would say, “employers and employees”] (vv. 2-6,9).

What is written in the context of husbands and wives actually applies to everybody. All Christians are expected to live sanctified lives “*that the word of God may not be blasphemed*” (v. 5). Every expression of our Christian faith glorifies the Father. Conversely, every evil thought, word, and action blasphemes God whose name we Christians bear. God, for Jesus’ sake, forgive us!

If what the apostle Paul exhorts here was to reflect sound doctrine—or if our own witness is to be effective in this decadent world—it follows that a Christ-believer will be “*a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned...*” (2:7,8).

Sanctified living before God is created only by the Spirit working through the Word of God, and it is nurtured through sound doctrine—the whole counsel of God. If our teaching and life is inconsistent with what we profess, then “sound doctrine” may fall on deaf ears and give lovers of sin an excuse to speak evil of us and our God.

The world may speak evil of us because we speak the truth in calling out sin and teaching what is in accord with the Lord’s will, but let us not give the world reason to speak evil of us because we have played the hypocrite or reflected badly on our Lord and Savior.

Continued on page 17 under *Adorning...*

"As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to those of his household."

(Martin Luther)

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Prof. Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

The Third Commandment is the only commandment with a significant difference of meaning for Old Testament children of God and New Testament believers. In both cases, however, the commandment serves God's holy purposes.

Old Testament

Through Moses God declared to the children of Israel, His chosen people, that the seventh day of every week should be a day of rest. In the Hebrew language the word for rest is "sabbath." On the seventh day of the week God rested after the six days of creation (Exodus 31:17).

This rest day served several purposes for the children of Israel. Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin in the Garden of Eden, obtaining daily bread was toilsome; it required sweat and labor (Genesis 3:17-19). For physical reasons a rest day was necessary. Physical rest was intended to rejuvenate all workers and the beasts of burden as well, for God said regarding the Sabbath, *"In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your*

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

daughter, nor your man servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:10).

The sabbath rest also served as a means of setting God's people apart from the heathen Gentiles around them. It served as a reminder that their God had sanctified them—set them apart, made them holy—just as He had set apart a holy day of rest (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Ritual sacrifices and the rite of circumcision served the same purpose.

The most important purpose of the Sabbath rest for Old Testament believers, however, was that it served as a reminder of the eternal rest that was to come. The LORD had rescued them from their Egyptian oppressors and granted them a

new home in the promised land. He had provided for their daily needs in the wilderness for forty years by supplying them with food, drink, and leadership. He had taught them to rely on Him by not providing food on the Sabbath Day but allowing them instead to gather extra on the previous day (Exodus 16:29-30). He was also the One who would send His Son, their Savior, into the world to rescue them from the oppression of sin, death, and the devil.

These lessons proved difficult for those of the children of Israel who did not trust the LORD but disobeyed Him. The punishment was severe—death (Exodus 31:14).

New Testament

Jewish church leaders of Jesus' day lost the focus of the true purposes of the Third Commandment. They polluted it with Pharisaic man-made rules and regulations with which they attempted to trap Jesus. We can rest assured, though, that Jesus fulfilled God's holy law perfectly in connection with all the commandments, including the Third. In the epistle to the Hebrews Jesus is described as "*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*" (7:26). Jesus alone has kept this commandment perfectly.

So, how then is the Church of the New Testament era to obey the Third Commandment?

Holy Scripture clearly teaches

that certain rules and regulations of the Old Testament, including those governing the Sabbath Day, no longer apply. "*Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*" (Colossians 2:16-17). And again, "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*" (Galatians 5:1).

Although the time and day of worship are no longer prescribed for us (see Romans 14:5-6), Scripture does provide many principled guidelines for worship. In regard to the church setting we are told, "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Christian congregations heed this directive when establishing the times, days, and locations of public worship.

New Testament believers are also directed to receive the Word of God with meekness (James 1:21), with joy (Psalm 122:1), with ready ears (Ecclesiastes 5:1) and ready hearts (Luke 11:28). We are encouraged to listen, as Mary did, to the "*one thing needful*" by sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His Word (Luke 10:38-42). We are privileged to search the Scriptures daily, as the Bereans did, to ensure that what's being taught to us is truly God's Word (Acts 17:11).

We are also instructed to join together with like-minded Christians for mutual edification and fellowship, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some” (Hebrews 10:25). We are told to “let the Word of Christ dwell in [us] richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). In other words, with the Spirit’s power and urging we are directed to look for every opportunity to find joy, peace, and rest for our souls in the gospel message of the forgiveness of sins through our Savior.

I conclude with some of Dr. Luther’s thoughts on this commandment: “Whenever God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or meditated upon, then the person, day, and work are sanctified. This is not because of the outward work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore, I constantly say that all our life and work must be guided by God’s Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled” (*Large Catechism, The Ten Commandments*, para. 92).

*In every season, every place
May we regard Thy Word of grace
Until, when life’s brief day is past,
We reach eternal joy at last.*

*And keep with angels in Thy rest
The endless Sabbaths of the blest.
This grant to us through Christ,
Thy Son, Who reigns with Thee
upon Thy throne.*

(TLH #7:3-4)



Adorning...

Continued from page 14

We are not called to live unto ourselves in this world, but rather to live unto Him who redeemed us by His blood. Truly reflecting the redeeming love of God, we will “instruct men of all ages and classes by word and example in that wholesome conduct of life which God’s universal grace in Christ has made possible; the life of the redeemed people of God is to be a living preachment of that enabling grace...” (M. Franzmann, *Concordia Bible with Notes*, p. 424).

Our Heavenly Father for Jesus’ sake has forgiven us our sins and daily blesses us with the peace of forgiveness and certain hope of heaven. In view of that, we prayerfully ask Him to give us the will and the thankful spirit to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (v. 10) through both our teaching and our living.



The Beauty and Joy of Christian Fellowship

Pastor Em. David Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

(Sixth of eight installments)

As we continue to consider the beauty and joy of Christian fellowship, we recognize that the biggest threat to such fellowship is the intrusion of false teaching. Our Lord has told us what to do when false teaching takes over some earthly organization. We are to take note of such a group and avoid it in order to remain faithful to the teaching of our Lord.

But we need to remember always that this avoiding of persons who promote false teaching is not the same as excommunication. We are not declaring that those who are in groups where false teachers are tolerated are unbelievers. That is a determination only the Lord can make. Christ our Lord declared the congregation in Sardis to be a “dead” church, and yet He said: “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy”



(Revelation 3:1, 4). He had His own also in the congregations in Pergamos and Thyatira where false teachers called Nicolaitans were tolerated, contrary to His will. “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent...” (Revelation 2:15-16).

We need to abide by the two watchwords which St. Paul gave to Timothy. “The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity’” (2 Timothy 2:19).

We know and believe there is a Christian community in the world known only to God. It consists of all the believers in Christ. All of these are in fellowship with God and with their fellow-Christians in an inward fellowship of which we also are part as believers in Jesus, although we cannot practice fellowship with all such while on the Earth. Martin Luther could not outwardly express his fellowship with the adherents of the pope or the followers of Zwingli or the many that were misled by the Anabaptists and other sects. Yet he confessed in his *Large Catechism*: “I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, and yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses” (*The Book of Concord: Large Catechism*, Third Article, #51 – Kolb-Wengert Edition, pp. 437-438). As Christians we rejoice whenever we hear Christian truth from any source and when we see evidence of truly Christian behavior.

But we dare not forget the second watchword, where we are told that every Christian should “depart

from iniquity.” False teaching is such iniquity, and our Lord does not want us to make common cause with adherents of any kind of false teaching. Such a stand in obedience to the Lord’s Word has often brought about accusations of pride, arrogance, selfishness, and stubbornness from those who want to be tolerant of false teaching. Think of how often the people of Israel mistreated God’s prophets among them. Think of the persecutions endured by the apostles of Christ. Those guilty of persecution may not only be persons outside the churches but also persons calling themselves Christian. Jesus once said to His apostles: “*The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service*” (John 16:2).

We should not be unduly troubled by false accusation, verbal threats, or even physical persecution, for as long as we are trusting in Jesus for salvation and following His Word, we are part of His fellowship and true partners with all true Christians in the whole world.

In the midst of earthly distress we long for the day when we shall be able to enjoy the perfect **beauty and joy of Christian fellowship** with all Christians everywhere—after Jesus returns to take all of His own to be with Him forever.

(to be continued)

“A Different Kind of Church”

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

The title above is the notice on the bulletin board of a non-denominational church in our city. Though we do not know what this church claims as its noteworthy difference, we commend its frankness.

Nevertheless, that description loses some of its originality in the general religious climate of our day, for if the measure of a church is determined by its faithfulness to Holy Scripture, a “different kind of church” has become all too commonplace. We are more concerned about being faithful than being different. However, if **remaining faithful** identifies us as different, we are in good company, “*for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name*” (Revelation 3:8).

A faithful church respects the Triune God and acknowledges no god besides the God defined in Scripture as a “jealous God,” the holy God who punishes those who love sinning. Conversely, it acknowledges and proclaims the God of mercy who has compassion on all who repent of their sins and trust in the Savior who died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6) and gives eternal life to all who believe in Him (John 3:16). With this foundation, a church deserves to be called Christian.

A faithful Christian church does not compromise these fundamental truths to win friends, attain popularity, or gain followers. It draws its doctrine and practice from the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16); it does not tolerate or promote the theory of evolution concerning the origin of the universe.

A faithful Christian church is also a compassionate church. Consequently, it not only proclaims the law of God to expose sin in order to save precious souls from the consequence of dying in unrepented sin—it also proclaims the love of God in Christ (the gospel) in order to comfort the hearts of those who are troubled by their sin and through the Holy Spirit are anxious to turn from sin and reflect the new sanctified life in Christ.

A faithful and compassionate Christian church assures the repentant sinner that Jesus Christ died for all and reconciled all unto God (2 Corinthians 5:18–19). It assures repentant sinners that the shed blood of Christ has washed away sin and its remnants and that the precious gift

of life is the present and future inheritance of everyone whose trust is placed in the Savior who died for us and rose again.

A compassionate and faithful Christian church is one that has the mind of Christ and therefore cares for the well-being of the neighbor as well as the welfare of the nation. It prays for all—the widow and widower, the fatherless children, the sick and the needy, as well as the forsaken and distressed. It remembers and prays for those who place themselves in harm’s way to secure our safety and security. It has concern for all, especially for those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

In all this the faithful, compassionate Christian church never abdicates its prime purpose of preparing redeemed sinners for a glorious departure from this vale of tears to heaven. Determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), it prays for the heathen, that the door of faith be opened to Israel and all who are outside the kingdom of God. Therefore it takes seriously the commission to “*go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:16).

From our Lutheran perspective, a faithful Christian church is one that holds fast to Holy Scripture as the norm and source of all doctrine and faith, and with its faithful forebears confesses the doctrines of Scripture as set forth in the *Book of Concord* of 1580. The faithful Lutheran church takes seriously the exhortation, “*stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you shall find rest for your souls...*” while it laments those who disagree, saying “*We will not walk in it*” (Jeremiah 6:16). Therefore we do not adapt its message to the times but proclaim the faithful Word of the faithful God to bring hearts under its influence. “*And he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully*” (Jeremiah 23:28).

Our God does not change. His Word does not change, and neither does the Savior God’s desire for the salvation of souls change. Therefore, the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16) does not change. Consequently, in all the changing scenes of life, we are bound by the Word—and our consciences are bound to that Word—not to reconfigure our purpose nor to change our message.

The faithful, compassionate Christian church is described in the book of Acts: “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and*

fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). That is the kind of church we desire to be and remain.

On today's church scene and in the religious confusion of our age, we are the genuinely "different kind of church" as we hold fast to the Word and apostolic teaching. That lays a responsibility upon us, one that we take seriously and with appreciation, because only as we continue in the Word will we remain such a church of God!

"God, be with us, and keep us faithful! Surely without Your gracious presence and help we cannot stand. Amen!"



CHAPEL ADDRESS

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE, EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

"Jesus Makes the Difference"

Prof. John Pfeiffer

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (HEBREWS 10:31)

What a Bible passage! There is nothing comforting about this statement. The word for "fearful" is always used in a negative way. Likewise, the word for "fall into" is used negatively. It is not like falling into the arms of someone who loves you.

Three verses before this the same word is used. There the holy writer speaks of "*a certain fearful [terrifying] expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.*"

"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such words should make us tremble from the top of our heads to the bottom of our feet. Indeed, at the second coming of Christ the vast majority of people of this Earth will be terror-stricken. Millions and millions will "...say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" (Luke 23:30) In panic "*they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the dread of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to terrify the earth*" (Isaiah 2:19). For them, falling into the hands of the living God will be a terrifying thing.

"For them," I say, but what about you? Are you terror-stricken at the

thought of falling into the hands of the living God? Well, as long as I put it that way, the answer should be "Yes."

However, then we hear Jesus' words about the hand of God. "*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand*" (John 10:28,29). Suddenly, the hand of God no longer appears to be a frightening thing.

So, what makes it different? Why is it a comforting thing in this passage and a terrifying thing in the other passage?

The difference is found in a stable in the little hamlet of Bethlehem. There in a feeding trough we see two tiny hands sticking up into the air. We want to come, walk up, and put our big fingers into those tiny hands...to feel the warm grasp of this little baby.

The difference is to be found out in a field when parents were bringing their little ones to Jesus. "*And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them*" (Mark 10:16). Such hands of blessing we would want upon us. "*When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them*" (Luke 4:40).

The hands of our Lord are healing hands. Everywhere we look we see the hands of our God as hands of love.

Then came that day when Jesus' enemies drove nails through those loving hands, fastening them to the cross. There He suffered. There He died. For us He suffered. For us He died.

Three days later "*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.'* When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20:19-20). They heard Him say, "*Peace be with you.*" Then they looked and saw His nail-scarred hands and they were glad.

Their final sight of the hands of the Lord was near the village of Bethany. "*And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven*" (Luke 24:50-51).

The image that Jesus left on the minds of the disciples was that of His hands raised up in blessing.

What loving hands...hands that would even bear the cruel nails of

crucifixion, so that we would never have to fear those “hands of the living God.”

Yet does not the Scripture passage say, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God”? Yes it does, and yes it is. But we have learned what the difference is. The difference is Jesus. Without Jesus, a man will be terrified by the hands of God, because His hands will be seen as hands of wrath—hands ready to throw them into the everlasting fire of hell.

But with Jesus we are safe. With Jesus we see the hands of God as hands of comfort and blessing and healing and salvation.

The divinely inspired writer of our text is giving warning to all who are willing to cast aside Christ in favor of lives of sin...people who cling to their sin and refuse His forgiveness. This is all that he can say to them, for it is all that remains. Reject Christ, and there is only the terrifying anticipation of judgment.

But for us who have experienced how the hand of the Lord heals from sin and death, there is no terror. Redeemed, restored, forgiven, we are safe and secure in His hands. Jesus is the difference.



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Correction In our February 2013 issue the Memorial article (pp. 23-24) honoring Adelgunde Schaller, lines 14 and 13 from the bottom of page 23, should read: “...for forty-one-and-a-half years in classroom and library, ending with her retirement in 2001 at the age of eighty-nine.” — Editor

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“... THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.” — JOHN 10 : 35

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