

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

“I am the light of the world”
(John 8:12).

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." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:27-29

Doubt Not

Doubt not, Thomas.
Behold love's scars
in hands,
in feet,
in side.

He lives who once had died.

Doubt not, Christian.
Behold these prints
in Temple resurrected
your forgiveness
have perfected.

Doubt not, Christian.
Behold this pledge
of body, bread,
blood, and wine
confers God's grace
divine.

Doubt not, Christian.
Behold the Prince
of Peace,
of Love,
of Life
has spoken:
"With Me you'll be
in Paradise."

From: *And Then, Eternity—Poems From a Pilgrim on the Narrow Way*, by Chad M. Seybt

Jesus — the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God

Pastor Mark Gullerud · Bowdle, South Dakota

One of the distinctive ways the one true God reveals Himself in Holy Scripture is by referring to Himself as the great “*I AM*” God. When the LORD appeared to Moses in the burning bush to call him as one of His prophets and Moses asked Him to give His name by which He is to be known, God said, “*I AM WHO I AM*” (Exodus 3:14).

By identifying Himself with this remarkable name, the LORD was revealing Himself as the very special personal divine being who always was and always will be.

The Son of God who appeared to Moses on this occasion (Exodus 3:2-4) is the great “*I AM*” God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In John’s Gospel record, we find Jesus referring to Himself in various ways as the “*I AM*” God. To this unique name Jesus added special descriptive identifiers such as “*I am the bread of life*” (6:35), “*I am the light of the world*” (8:12), “*I am the good shepherd*” (10:11), “*I am the resurrection and the life*” (11:25), and “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (14:6).

In each of these cases, Jesus makes known wonderful truths about Himself which serve for our blessing and are a source of great comfort. For example, when Jesus tells us He is the bread of life, He helps us to understand that He is spiritual nourishment for our souls, who gives us spiritual and eternal life so that we will never die.

As the light of the world Jesus sheds the light of God’s saving grace in our minds and hearts so that in following Him in faith we have the light of life.

As the resurrection and the life Jesus made it possible for us to be raised from our graves on the last day to an everlasting life of glory in heaven.

As the way, the truth, and the life Jesus is the only One through whom

we have access to God the Father and can gain entrance into His eternal home.

Jesus' identification of Himself as the good shepherd is especially comforting and reassuring to us in physical and spiritual ways, as well as temporally and eternally. Recognizing our sheep-like tendencies and needs, we know that we are totally dependent upon the Lord for our bodies and souls, and we confidently believe that Jesus faithfully takes care of everything in our lives. The psalmist David knew this about the good shepherd and so penned by inspiration of God: "*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want*" (Psalm 23:1). With Jesus as our good shepherd there is nothing that we truly lack in this life.

Jesus as good shepherd is also referred to as the lamb of God in Revelation 7: "*the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*" (v. 17). To the unlearned it may sound confusing to hear that Jesus is both a shepherd and a lamb.

Jesus helps to remove any confusion when He declares, "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...And I give them eternal life*" (John 10:11,28). As Jesus lovingly and mercifully laid down His life for all the lost and condemned sheep, He was serving as God's sacrificial lamb whose precious blood atoned for the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Only the great "*I AM*" God could pay the costly price for our redemption as the sacrificial lamb and at the same time take care of all our needs as the good shepherd until we are brought safely into heaven.

Praise be to our "*I AM*" God, who is both the good shepherd and the lamb of God!

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A Rite of Passage into Spiritual Maturity

Pastor Theodore Barthels • Austin, Minnesota

“...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” (Ephesians 4:14-15)

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:13-14)

Let us take a moment to place our confirmation customs into a larger context.

While in some denominations there may be very little Bible instruction preceding confirmation, that is not true within confessional Lutheranism. As children our confirmands would have received a regular soft diet of the milk of God’s Word. Their Sunday School lessons were designed to lay a foundation of knowledge in Bible History and a good grasp of the facts of the life of Christ.

However, we are well aware of what this world holds in store for them. They will face many challenges to their faith, and the world can be very cunning and tricky with the “facts” from science and its worldly wisdom. It is important for our children to be prepared to meet the world so that they are not so easily tossed about by every wind of doctrine, blowing first one way and then another. So in our CLC congregations we have set a course of instruction that often takes three or more school years to complete.

Then it comes time for our children to be moved from the milk of the Word to solid food, to get into the meat of God’s truth about Christ and our salvation from sin. We lay open before them the Holy Scriptures and Luther’s *Small Catechism*, and we present glorious gems of truth to treasure for the rest of their lives.

We study the law of God and how it shows us our sin. We teach them about the attributes of God and how He wondrously created and preserves

us. We introduce them to the truth of the personal union of the two natures of Christ, and how He is God and Man in one person, and why that is essential to our salvation. We consider the glory of Jesus' *active* obedience, the grace of His *passive* obedience, and the cost of our redemption. We consider carefully how the Holy Spirit calls us to faith and the complete wonder of grace that falls under the broad umbrella of *sanctification*. We find comfort and assurance of salvation in knowing the universal *justification* found in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We relish the joy of knowing and holding this justification in our own hearts as children of God. Yes, we introduce our children to an increasingly stronger diet that is no longer only the milk of the Word, but the "solid food that belongs to those who are of full age."

In connection with their confirmation our young people are "examined" that they might demonstrate a sufficient knowledge of the Truth, confirm their baptismal covenant, and then pledge with the assistance of the Holy Spirit a fidelity to God's Word as it is taught both in Luther's Catechism and in our synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

This is the confirmands' introduction to solid food. Where will they go from there? Will they continue in a grown-up diet? Will they revert back to merely drinking milk?

These questions should be applied to us all. Are we content with only a quick drink of milk, or do we continue to search the Scriptures by attending Bible classes and feeding upon a diet that encourages spiritual strength, growth, and maturity?

If much of this seems foreign and forgotten, then let's improve our spiritual diets. Don't settle for only the milk but look for some meat. In that way you will not "be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), but will be "of full age...who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 4:14).

May the Spirit of God bless us with a hunger for His Word that our souls may be richly nourished unto eternal life.

May the Spirit also bless our study of His Word that we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).



Blessed Reception of the Lord's Supper

Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

In preparation for the Lord's Supper we do well to engage in self-examination. Martin Luther's "Christian Questions" help in this regard:

"Do you believe that you are a sinner?"

(Ans.): "Yes, I believe it; I am a sinner..."

"Are you also sorry for your sins?"

(Ans.): "Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God..."

"Do you also hope to be saved?"

(Ans.): "Yes, such is my hope..."

"In whom then do you trust?"

(Ans.): "In my dear Lord Jesus Christ."

"What then has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?"

(Ans.): "He died for me, and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins."

Note the *personal* nature of confession and the accompanying expression of faith and hope.

Part and parcel of blessed reception of the sacrament is *personal* acceptance in faith of what is received. As Luther quotes the words of institution spoken by "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul," he recalls the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ "in, with, and under the bread and wine" (Luther's *Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, Qu. 299, p. 195).

In the catechism Luther reminds us, "He who believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."

The wonderful miracle and blessing that is in the Sacrament boggles the mind and defies reason. But it is not for us to question how, but simply to believe the words and promises of our Lord, "*This is My body*

given for you...this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins.”

Scripture says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8,9). Confession of sins is an integral part of the Christian’s daily life and worship.

In our regular Sunday worship service the pastor intones from Psalm 32: “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,” whereupon the congregation responds, “And You [the Lord] forgave the iniquity of my sin.” This is followed by the pastor leading the congregation in its confession: “We poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You....” Absolution follows with the announcement that the Almighty God, our heavenly Father, “has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins” (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 5).

What a blessing to be assured that my fellow-communicants and I have been forgiven all our sins through Christ. This reflects the truth that the Lord does not desire the death of any sinner, and that Jesus has died

for all people, as the Lord laid upon Him the sins of us all! (This Scripture truth is reflected also, as we would expect, in the liturgy of *WS2000* (pp. 1, 22), both in the confession as well as in the absolution.)

Any liturgy including one that a pastor might write for a particular service should surely include a *clear and unequivocal* confession of sins and absolution.

In contrast to what some might see as a corporate confession of sins, the confession in the communion liturgy (*TLH*, p. 16; pp. 47, 48) is individualized. The pastor introduces the confession of sins from Psalm 32, after which the worshiper confesses “...*I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have offended*

“...I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have offended You... But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them...and I pray You... to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being”

You...But *I* am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them... and *I* pray You... to be gracious and merciful to *me*, a poor, sinful being” (cf. *WS2000*, p. 12).

The absolution by the pastor follows, “Upon this *your* confession... I forgive *you*...” In the context we understand “your” and “you” as addressed to individuals. Whereas in the regular service the liturgy represents the Lord as saying, in effect, “Go in peace, *My children*, Your sins are forgiven” (cf. “them” in Leviticus 4:20,21), in the communion liturgy it is as if the Lord says, “My son, my *daughter*, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven” (compare 2 Samuel 12:13, Matthew 9:2).

The difference between the two confessions does not lie in the substance of the blessing and assurance but only in the individualized nature of the pronounced absolution. In both cases, the worshiper may depart in peace, because (as the Catechism says): “... where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

Day by day the penitent Christian will go to the Lord confessing sin. As we believe the gospel, we may lie down in our beds, and ultimately in death, with peace and confidence. As the Sacrament is offered, the question for the penitent Christian is not really whether to receive or not receive the Lord’s Supper on a given day. Instead a Christian will say, “As one who sins daily and indeed deserves nothing but punishment (Fifth Petition), for my *personal* comfort and peace I will receive the sacrament today.”

Day by day the penitent Christian will go to the Lord confessing sin. As we believe the gospel, we may lie down in our beds, and ultimately in death, with peace and confidence. As the Sacrament is offered, the question for the penitent Christian is not really whether to receive or not receive the Lord’s Supper on a given day.



“HONOR YOUR MOTHER”

Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer • Spokane, Washington

In the early 20th century a woman from West Virginia named Anna Jarvis began petitioning prominent leaders, including President Woodrow Wilson, to establish a national holiday which honored mothers. By 1914 “Mother’s Day” in America had taken root. Yet it comes as little surprise that less than a decade latter, Ms. Jarvis decried the commercialization of Mother’s Day.

Is this holiday really necessary for the Christian? That is, do we need a special day which encourages us to “honor our mothers”? After all, hasn’t our Lord commanded us to honor our mothers every day?

Listen to what the LORD says about breaking His fourth Commandment: *“For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him”* (Leviticus 20:9). The death sentence was to be carried out for those among the children of Israel who would speak curses against their mothers.

In Deuteronomy chapter 21, the LORD says if a disobedient son would not listen to the voice of his mother (or father) even when they disciplined him, the parents were to bring their son to the elders of the city and say, *“This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard”* (21:19). All the men of the city were then to stone that rebellious son for dishonoring his mother and father. The hoped-for effect was that all Israel would hear and fear the LORD, knowing that He is serious about our giving love and respect to those He has placed over us.

By the days of Christ, the Pharisees were teaching the people that it was a greater work to serve God than to honor one’s parents. Yet Jesus echoed the words of Moses, *“For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death’”* (Matthew 19:5). That which God commanded to be etched in stone by Moses was re-emphasized by the Son of God 1500 years later!

Speaking to New Testament believers, the Apostle Paul repeats the importance of the fourth Commandment for our lives in Christ.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Confronted with the law of God, we shudder to think of the times that we have disrespected and dishonored our mothers. Maybe it was that foolish choice we made which made her ashamed that we were hers. Maybe it was those quick-tempered, unloving words we spoke which brought her to tears. Maybe it was our laziness which frustrated her so that she needed to tell us several times to turn off the TV and clean our rooms. And this for the woman who carried us in her body for nine months and then painfully brought us into this world! Needless to say, “honoring” and “your mother” have not always gone together in our lives. The mere fact that we need a “Mother’s Day” to remind us to honor our mother speaks against us, doesn’t it?

Here too we are reminded of one more reason why the Son of God became man. He came to be a Substitute for us in every way. This includes being the perfect child. We read in the Gospels that from childhood on, Jesus (though Himself their God and Lord) was submissive to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51).

Even in His wretched, dying hours, the Son of Mary honored His mother by making sure she would be taken care of, telling His beloved disciple John to look on her as his own mother. *“Woman, behold your son!”* Then He said to the disciple, *“Behold your mother!”* (John 19:26-27) Is this not a wonder?! There on the cross, being punished for all the times we BROKE the fourth Commandment, Jesus Himself was KEEPING it as our divine Substitute! What amazing grace!

No, we should not need a day to honor our mothers. Yet what a wonderful reminder of Jesus’ substitutionary perfection in always honoring His mother for us and His substitutionary sacrifice to cleanse us for failing to honor our mothers every day and in every way.

May the Lord richly bless our mothers who bore us, cared for us, and loved us. Let us thank Him for our Christian mothers who brought us the good news of the perfect Son of Mary! For this, especially, we thank the Lord for you, Mom!

May the Lord help us by His Holy Spirit, that we may always bear the good fruit of faith of honoring our mothers in word and deed! Amen.



"...The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me."

(JOHN 10:25)

Raising the Daughter of Jairus

Pastor Andrew Schaller • Watertown, South Dakota

And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him... While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

(LUKE 8:41-42, 49-56; CF. ALSO MATTHEW 9:18-19, 23-26,
MARK 5:21-24, 35-43)

It is evident from Holy Scripture that the Lord Jesus, the Christ, did not set out to become or be known as a 'miracle worker.' Rather, the Son of God in human flesh worked miracles in order to plainly prove Him to be fully God.

While in some cases Jesus' miracles were done before a crowd on a majestic scale (cf. Lazarus' resurrection, John 11:1-44), in other cases they were quietly and personally done—as much as supernatural events can said to be quietly done—for the benefit of individual sinners. When Jesus turned water into wine in Cana of Galilee (cf. John 2:1-11), only a handful of people even knew that a miracle had been worked.

The miraculous raising of the daughter of Jairus is also an example of a miracle with a personal touch. This supernatural event is described by three of the four Gospel writers. While each Gospel gives details,

the Gospel of Luke seems to paint a more detailed picture. It is believed that this miracle took place in Capernaum.

Jairus was the ruler of a synagogue, which meant that he was in charge of the congregation's orderly worship of Jehovah. He selected those to lead in prayer, those to read the Scriptures, and those to 'sermonize' in connection with it. He was a man who was likely well-acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures.

Jairus was also the father of a twelve-year-old daughter. When she became sick, surely Jairus—whose name means 'Jehovah enlightens'—brought the matter to the Lord in prayer. When her health failed and she was about to die, he brought the matter personally to Jesus of Nazareth.

By reading all the parallel accounts, you can see the persistent faith of Jairus. When he came to Jesus, his daughter was on the brink of death. While traveling with Jesus to her aid, the word came that she had passed away. Still, he urged Jesus to come (despite his servants, cf. Luke 8:49), believing that if He laid hands on her, she would live (cf. Matthew 9:18).

Jairus was an important man. When he arrived home, there were already mourners present (cf. Matthew 9:23). The assembled crowd was sent outside while Jesus and three disciples entered the house with Jairus and his wife (Mark 5:40). Directed by the Spirit, Peter, James, and John who witnessed these miracles, would later write of the gospel in their epistles so that we too might witness the personal and private love of Jesus for sinners. They watched as Jesus took the hand of the dead girl.

"Talitha Cumi" ("Little girl, arise!") was all the Savior said, and it was all that was necessary. The cold, lifeless body was reanimated as she awakened from the sleep of death. Jesus returned her alive to her parents.

We don't know for certain if Jairus' daughter believed in Jesus, for the Scripture doesn't reveal the thoughts of her heart. We do know that all those who trust in Christ—along with all the dead—will arise from their graves at the sound of His voice (cf. John 5:28-29).

Whereas Jairus' daughter passed again through death, those who trust in Him will pass through death into eternal life. While the joy at her rising was felt by a handful, our joy will be shared by all the saints triumphant in Christ.



“...Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (9:27-28)

“BETTER” LIVING THROUGH CHRIST

Paul Fleischer, pastor emeritus • Red Wing, Minnesota

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (HEBREWS 1:1-4)

Our on-going studies in the New Testament epistles bring us now to the letter to the Hebrews.

It has been said that epistles like Hebrews, Romans, and Revelation are best left to Bible Classes, for they get so deeply into Christian doctrine. We understand. The books mentioned take us more into the “meat” of God’s Word than into its “milk” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). That said, we will surely also discover that the rich doctrinal menu of a letter like Hebrews will be invaluable for building up the spiritual muscle (strength!) of our holy faith.

So, let’s go for it—understanding that we can hardly cover every detail that might come up in a Bible Class with your pastor.

Who wrote the book is uncertain. Many attribute it to St. Paul, though there are arguments both for and against his authorship. What is not in dispute within the Church is the book’s divine inspiration. We say with complete confidence that the Author of the letter to the Hebrews is God the Holy Spirit.

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The date of the book is assumed to be around the year of our Lord 65. That is so because the book’s contents show it was written to encourage Christian Jews who were in danger of backsliding in the face of

BRIEF OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

Introduction: the doxology of praise of Christ's eternal glory (1:1-4).

1. **Christ's majestic betterness** (superiority) over God's creation (1:4-2:18).
2. **Christ's glorious betterness** (superiority) over Moses and the law (3:1-4:13).
3. **Christ's sacrificial betterness** (superiority) over the priesthood (4:14-10:18).
4. **Christ's faithful betterness** (superiority) because He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (10:19-13:19).

Conclusion: The benediction (13:20-25).

increasing persecution for their newfound faith (the destruction of Jerusalem and Roman Emperor Nero's persecution happened in A.D. 64-70).

Among many rewards resulting from a study of this holy book will be renewed appreciation for the "betterness"—in the sense of superiority—of Christ, and all that Christian believers have in Him in contrast to the Old Testament rites, rituals, and worship. One Bible study guide says: *"Today man-centered, luxurious, materialistic living, together with the rapid advancements of science, all make the Christ of this epistle almost passé. The fact is, however, that underneath our highly advanced and specialized life, there is a sense of emptiness. In the midst of all the remedies and opiates offered, Christ still stands as the only sure anchor of hope."* (emphasis ours)

An accompanying list [see page 17] gives the many "better"—again, in the sense of "superior"—passages found throughout the book. It soon becomes clear that the Holy Spirit wants God's believing children to know and believe that in Christ they have a better hope, better promises, a better sacrifice, better possessions, a better resurrection, a better country, and so forth, and all this because undergirding everything is a better covenant than what Old Testament believers had. All this

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“betterness” is sure to be seen as our faith is fed on the rich spiritual diet which the epistle serves up.

How significant is the epistle’s opening verse! Consider how

the Old Testament begins with God speaking and thus creating; John’s Gospel in the New Testament opens with Jesus as “the Word” participating in creation and then becoming flesh; and now here in the first verse of Hebrews we hear again of God speaking. And how? *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...”*

Throughout the first chapter—as well as through the entire book—the emphasis is that Christ was and is God’s supreme Revelation! We are reminded of what the Father said from the cloud at Jesus’ transfiguration: *“This is My beloved Son, hear Him!”* (Luke 9:35)

As the opening doxology of praise to Christ continues, we come quickly to the first “better than” passage. What’s the exact setting? Well, since the Jews generally believed that angels had done much for their forefathers and could also do many things for them, some of them in time of persecution and affliction probably wondered whether angels might be more effective for them than Christ—who Himself had been persecuted and put to death. So the holy writer meets this misunderstanding head on, showing that Christ was *“much better than”* the angels.

In fact, in verses 2-4 he piles up phrases proclaiming Christ as *“the heir of all things,”* as the Creator, as “very God of very God” (Nicene Creed), as the providential Sustainer of the universe, as the Redeemer who purged us from our sins, and as the One who is now the exalted Ruler of the universe. No angel compares!

Summarizing, when the going gets rough, fellow beleaguered Christians, why yearn again for the fleshpots of Egypt (Exodus 16:3)? Why would you ever want to return to the Old Testament laws and ways? No need whatever, for you have “Better Living Through Christ” who as Prophet, Priest, and King is *“something [way] better”* (11:40), yea, far superior to the angels.

What a spiritual menu in this opening doxology! – Stay tuned for more spiritually rich fare.

John’s Gospel in the New Testament opens with Jesus as “the Word” participating in creation and then becoming flesh.

Better — a key word in the Epistle to the Hebrews (NKJV)

1. "Having become *so much better than the angels*, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (1:4)
2. "But, beloved, we are confident of *better* things concerning you..." (6:9)
3. "Now, beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the *better*." (7:7)
4. "For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a *better hope*, through which we draw near to God." (7:19)
5. "By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a *better covenant*." (7:22)
6. "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a *better covenant*, which was established on *better promises*." (8:6)
7. "Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with *better sacrifices than these*." (9:23)
8. "For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a *better and an enduring possession* for yourselves in heaven." (10:34)
9. "But now they desire a *better, that is, a heavenly country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (11:16)
10. "Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a *better resurrection*." (11:35)
11. "God having provided *something better* for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us." (11:40)
12. "To Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks *better* things than that of Abel." (12:24)

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

(Martin Luther)

THE CONCLUSION TO THE COMMANDMENTS

Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch · Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Who would want to fall under God's **CURSE** rather than receive His **BLESSING**? *"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods..."* (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

It's a fair deduction that the choice between blessing and curse is an either-or choice with no middle ground or fence-sitting allowed. Immediately following the First Commandment, God set Israel up to make the right choice: Because I am your God, you should choose My blessing for your future.

Contrariwise, going against God will bear an awful penalty: *"If you by any means forget the LORD your God...I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish"* (Deuteronomy 8:19-20). *"The LORD your God...will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face"* (Deut. 7:9-10).

This "repayment" includes drought, famine, and ethnic extermination (Deut. 11:17). Read Deuteronomy chapters six through twelve for some shattering details of the curse.

God also made the alternative crystal clear, the choice that would bring His blessing on their earthly endeavors. *"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments"* (Deut. 7:9); *"therefore you shall keep every commandment...that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land...and that you may prolong your days in the land...a land flowing with milk and honey...I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled"* (Deut. 11:8-9, 14-15). Obviously this was the better choice.

How did Israel respond? *"And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient'"* (Exodus 24:7). Good choice.

Soon, however, the prospect of earthly prosperity with fair weather and good crops went down the tube because of their unfaithfulness. As a nation Israel lost its God-sponsored prosperity.

The CONCLUSION

What does God say about all of these commandments?

He says, “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6).

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who do not obey these commandments. Therefore we should fear His anger and not do anything against what He commands.

God also promises grace and every blessing to those who obey these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust Him and willingly do what He commands.

Since “*whatever things were written before were written for our learning..*” (Romans 15:4). The Conclusion of the Ten Commandments applies to us also.

What does it mean for us?

It means that His compassionate love and merciful treatment have won us over so that we as repentant and forgiven sinners are able to respond: “*All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient*” in ways that honor and serve Him. It means that since we are bonded to Him by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26), we have a heart for our Father’s will and intend to be His good children.

That’s who we are, and that’s how we intend to live.

Please notice, by the way, that God never even hinted that obedience to His law could save anyone from hell. He didn’t intend that compliance would justify, redeem, or save us. That’s perfectly clear from God’s Word:

“If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law” (Galatians 3:21).

So when our Catechism says that God promises grace and every blessing to those who love Him and keep His commandments, it’s not indicating a second route to heaven, but rather that God will grant all sorts of blessings to make life pleasant during one’s earthly pilgrimage.

The Holy Spirit has taught us to distinguish between God’s completed act of justification and the never-finished process of our earthly sanctification.

It is still Jesus’ perfect obedience and self-sacrifice that constitute our righteousness—totally and exclusively—and therefore we respond to God’s redeeming love in ways that honor Him and serve our neighbor.

In conclusion, God encourages His children to love and trust Him and willingly do what He commands. To this help us, dear Father in heaven!

AMEN!

EDITOR’S NOTE: With this article our on-going series on the Ten Commandments concludes. We thank the respective writers, and pray that the holy Christian faith of each of us has benefited from their instruction according to the Word of the Lord.

Not a Boast but a Cause for Rejoicing

Pastor Paul Fleischer · Cheyenne, Wyoming

Beloved members of this Christian Congregation,

When I was installed as your pastor in April 2002, this congregation celebrated its 50th anniversary. As now I retire after nigh fifty years of service in the public ministry (1964-2014), some parting thoughts.

We can only begin with the confession that a review of the past reveals many sins and weaknesses of both pastor and congregation for which repentance is called for, and for which we seek cleansing in the blood of our Savior. Yet by His grace we continue to believe and confess that *"the Holy Scriptures...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:15f).

...We thank the Lord of the Church for His continued blessings among us—chief of which would be the propagation of His pure gospel...

Yes, we thank the Lord of the Church for His continued blessings among us—chief of which would be the propagation of His pure gospel (*"go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them..."*), as well as its preservation from false teaching (*"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"*) (Matthew 28:18-20).

These blessings are never to be taken for granted! At the beginning of the 21st century, attacks against the Bible as God's divinely inspired, pure, and unadulterated Word have continued apace and even accelerated. How woeful that even within the church which identifies itself with the name of the great Reformer, politically-correct approval is more and more found for such anti-biblical

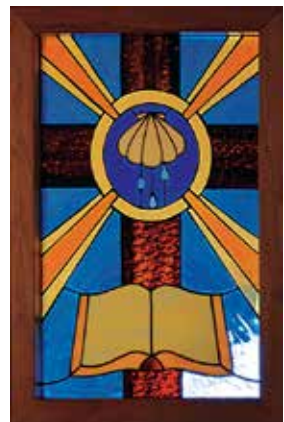
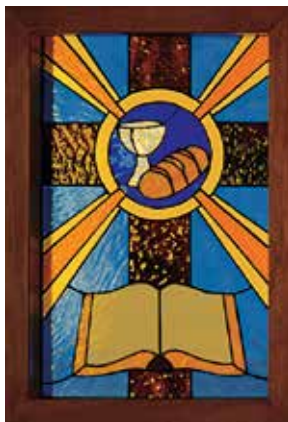
teachings as evolution, the practice of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, "easy" divorce, women clergy, and others.

Behind this all is the selling out of the doctrine of the divinely inspired, verbal inspiration of the Bible. Not surprisingly, tied to that is the fact that science—whose role is not to discover how, and how long ago, the world came into existence, but rather to investigate, explore, and utilize God's marvelous creation for the good of mankind—has become a veritable god not only for atheists, secularists, and humanists but for much of society, and that due largely to the influence of god-less government-run (read: Common-Core-like "Next Generation Science Standards") schools. Saddest of all, many in the nominally Christian and even Lutheran communities have allowed the theories and postulates of science and human "wisdom" to trump biblical truths/values/morals.

It's against such a backdrop that we say it is truly a blessing of Almighty God that this Christian congregation—together with its sister churches in the Church of the Lutheran Confession—continues

**Ultimately, what
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At the family's request, CLC Pastor David Reim made stained-glass windows in memory of long-time Christian Day School Teacher LeRoy Greening (1930-2002). The windows depict the Means of Grace—the Word of God, Baptism, and Lord's Supper. They adorn the chancel doors at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming.



to stand four-square on the Word of God in all its truth and purity!

God forbid that such a stance is proffered as a feather in our own cap. Rather, it has well been said: "Having the Word of God in its truth and purity is not a boast, but a cause of rejoicing." Thus we rejoice that God has brought it about that we still trust in Him and His Word as the repository of His only-saving gospel.

As was said at the outset, individually and collectively we exist for the sole reason of proclaiming and preserving to ourselves and our posterity the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again for the justification and reconciliation of the whole world. "*(Christ) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification*" (Romans 4:25). "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ...*" (2 Corinthians 5:19f).

Ultimately, what are sixty-two years of the existence of a Christian congregation or fifty years of a pastor's ministry but mere blips on the screen of eternity? Yet in the grand scheme of things those years are significant as far as our respective lives are concerned. God who predestinated us to be His own "from eternity to eternity" has done His gracious work in our individual lives. It is He who has brought us to saving faith in His Savior-Son and kept us in it that one day soon we might dwell with Him in the eternal mansions Jesus won for us. "*Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...to the praise of the glory of His grace....In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will....*" (Ephesians 1:4ff).

Now we go forward confidently in our respective callings, not boasting but rejoicing in the holy fact that God's Word remains among us in its truth and purity. Our joint prayer is that we continue to be Christ's ambassadors, witnessing by word and deed to the Good News of fallen mankind's justification and reconciliation with God through Him.

Beloved members of God's family, may God's love, peace, and joy be with you 'til we meet again—either here or on that glorious day when the Savior takes us one by one from this vale of tears to our heavenly home.



“Blessed is He who comes to save!”

1

*“Blessed is He who comes to save!”
“Hosanna in the highest, Lord!”
With palms and cloaks the people pave
The road to death, though not abhorred.*

2

*In servant’s form He travels on;
No trumpets sound for God’s own King.
Forward He goes ‘til vict’ry’s won.
“Blessed is He,” we join to sing.*

3

*A sinner’s cross becomes His throne,
A wreath of twisted thorns His crown;
The sins of all become His own.
“Hosanna!” Let the hymn resound.*

4

*What hidden pow’r! What selfless might!
The Son of God rides forth to die.
The pow’rs of hell He puts to flight.
“Hosanna to our King!” we cry.*

Composed by CLC pastor Frank Gannt, this hymn fits the meter and tune of Duke Street. Better known as TLH #200 *I Know that My Redeemer Lives*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference

May 13-15, 2014, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Phoenix, Arizona

Agenda:

- + A study of *Yahweh* and its translation, etc. How should it be translated into English? How can we bring the significance of this term to our people?
— Pastor Terrel Kesterson
- + Book Review: *The Theology of the Cross*. — Pastor Steven Karp
- + Review: Fundamental & Non-Fundamental Doctrines, Open Questions, Etc.
— Pastor Robert List
- + Review of Sydow/Pieper statements on the humiliation of Christ, specifically His incarnation — Pastor Caleb Schaller
- + Brief Review of the *Formula Of Concord*. — Pastor Paul Naumann
- + Old Testament Exegesis (exegete’s choice) — Pastor David Naumann
- + New Testament Exegesis (exegete’s choice) — Pastor David Reim

Conference Chaplain: Pastor Douglas Priestap

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer

ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUED

NOMINATIONS FOR PRESIDENT OF IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE

The Board of Regents announces the following nomination for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College: Professor Steven Sippert. The term of the call for President of Immanuel Lutheran College is for two years, extending to the end of Academic Year 2016.

The call committee for educational institutions of the Church of the Lutheran Confession will meet on the evening of April 28, 2014, in Eau Claire, Wis. Members of CLC congregations are invited to comment on the nominee; comments should be submitted in writing and must be mailed or E-mailed no later than midnight April 23, 2014 to: Mr. Craig Ryan
499 Country Lane Fulda, MN 56131
E-Mail: cryan@page1printers.com

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

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