

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

“in everything give thanks”

(I Thessalonians 5:18)

NOVEMBER 2014 VOL 57 NO. 5
ONLINE VERSION AT WWW.LUTHERANSPOKESMAN.ORG

Missionary David Koenig gives behind the scenes looks at happenings in our overseas mission endeavors.

The following report arrived under the date of October 2, 2014. Let us all be praying with the hymnwriter* of “SPREAD, OH, SPREAD, THOU MIGHTY WORD” — Editor

Spread, Oh, spread, thou mighty Word,

Spread the kingdom of the Lord,
Wheresoe'er His breath has giv'n,
Life to beings meant for heav'n.

Tell them how the Father's will
Made the world and keeps it still,
How His only Son He gave
Man from sin and death to save.

Tell of our Redeemer's love,
Who forever doth remove
By His holy sacrifice
All the guilt that on us lies.

Tell them of the Spirit giv'n
Now to guide us up to heav'n,
Strong and holy, just and true,
Working both to will and do.

Up! The ripening fields ye see,
Mighty shall the harvest be;
But the reapers still are few,
Great the work they have to do.

Lord of Harvest, let there be
Joy and strength to work for Thee,
Till the nations, far and near,
See Thy light, and learn Thy fear.

TLH #507:1-6



Photo of Missionary David Koenig by Pastor John Hein

Grebenhain, Germany, Free Conference.

This month yet again we commemorate what God did through the Lutheran Reformation. What better way to celebrate God's work of restoring to the church so many basic truths of His Word than to preach and teach these truths?

We did just that at **Grebenhain, Germany, on August 29-31**, when various conservative Lutherans gathered for a Free Conference. On the first day there were twenty-four in attendance while on the second there were at least thirty-two. While we came from different Lutheran backgrounds, we all had the same goal of upholding the truth of God's Word. But because we did not know if we agreed completely, we did not practice fellowship. We did hear eight essays and had lively floor discussions. There was also that entirely wholesome chatting at meals over a variety of matters.

The distances travelled from the Swiss border, the Dutch border, Berlin (and so on) were worth the effort to sit and hear and speak of God, His will, His Word and work. The CLC—or as we are known in German, the KLB—was glad to sponsor the meeting.

While in Germany I also had the pleasure of visiting several homes and witnessing the faith of the people and their desire to continue in the Word.

**May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us,
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us....**

TLH #500:1



* Words: Jonathan F. Bahnmaier, 1827 (Walte, fürder, nah und fern); translated from German to English by Catherine Winkworth, Lyra Germanica, second series, 1858. Music: Gott Sei Dank, Neues geistreiches Gesangbuch, by Johann A. Freylinghausen (Halle, Germany: 1704)

‘Going All In’ with Thanksgiving

PASTOR DAVID FUERSTENAU • KETCHIKAN, ALASKA

‘To the max,’ ‘pedal to the metal,’ and ‘nothing in reserve’ are several more slang terms that express a total commitment to a cause or undertaking.

If one were to poll Americans as to what that means for them in connection with their Thanksgiving Day activities, no doubt many would answer they were ‘going all in’ with a day of football or ‘leaving nothing behind’ on the dinner table.

King David would have been amazed, if not shocked, for he put high value on actually giving thanks. Many are the psalm verses where he gives praise and thanksgiving to God for His wonderful works and words.

But there is one incident in David’s life when he especially ‘gave it all he had.’ It is recorded in the second book of Samuel (chapter 6), with a parallel account in I Chronicles 16.

Years before, the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines. Because the ark had caused them nothing but trouble, these heathens finally sent it back to Israel just to be rid of it. There *“the LORD...blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God”* (2 Samuel 6:12). This was so because the ark was the symbol of God’s presence among His Old Testament people.

David was determined that the ark should be brought to its rightful place—Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. But before the procession to take it there had gone six paces, it was halted as the king sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf—so much was his heart full of rejoicing and thanksgiving! [When was the last time we stopped in the middle of our drive to

church—or of doing something else important—to remind ourselves of God’s forgiveness, goodness, and mercy?]

After the impromptu sacrifice the procession resumed. Godly emotion and joy prevailed. David took off his royal garments and donned the common clothes of a priest. Then the king danced before the Lord with great might: pedal to the medal, nothing held back, giving it all he had!

Nothing in the record indicates God was displeased with this exuberant display of joy and thanksgiving. In fact, God inspired His king to compose Psalm 105 in connection with this very occasion. *“Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the people. Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works”* (vv.1,2).

Nevertheless, there was one who was very displeased with David’s public behavior—Michal, his wife. She thought it thoroughly undignified and shameful that the king be seen leaping, twirling, and dancing before the Lord—and not wearing his kingly robes to boot. Obviously, she showed herself to be Saul’s daughter—having no appreciation for things that make glad the hearts of God’s people. *“How glorious was the king of Israel today...shamelessly uncovering himself,”* she needled.

To this sarcastic and biting comment David responded: *“It was before the LORD.... Therefore I will play music before the LORD. And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight”* (v. 21). Nothing was going to stop the king from giving praise and honor to his God, certainly not his wife, and not even more self-abasement.

Michal paid a great price for her indiscretion, for she *“had no children to the day of her death”* (v. 23). What a warning against taking true thanksgiving lightly!

Many will celebrate Thanksgiving Day with family feasts [nothing wrong with that; even David later distributed to every person a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins.] Some might sarcastically remark to us: ‘You mean you’re going to church?’—obviously failing to recognize that God is in His house and that the sacrifice of praise

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and thanksgiving surely ascends to heaven with a pleasing savor.

David gave thanks for God’s covenant faithfulness and His wondrous works. To Adam and Eve, Israel, and the Gentile nations God was indeed faithful in sending His own Son to be the atoning sacrifice for all sin. Christ Jesus ‘went all in’ for us with His substitutionary obedience and death. As He delivered Israel from her physical slavery, so through Christ He has set us free from slavery to sin, the power of Satan, and the curse of death. Bless the Lord, O my soul! God is in His Zion. Glory in His holy name!

Surely there is reason enough for speaking, singing, shouting, making a joyful noise and even some dancing before the Lord. The New Testament apostles encouraged the same attitude by exhorting us to *“give thanks in everything”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18); to give thanks *“continually”* (Hebrews 13:15) and *“always for all things to God the Father”* (Ephesians 5:20); to have hearts *“overflowing with joy”* (2 Corinthians 8:2), *“singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:19).

Okay, so no mention of dancing, but surely, surely, ‘going all in’ with Thanksgiving!



Page 3 Photo of an Illustration: King David by the dance - painting from St. Mark church. Florence, Italy
Photo taken on March 19th, 2010
© Sedmak | Dreamstime.com

Reason to Give Thanks *Every* Day!

PASTOR EMERITUS DANIEL FLEISCHER • OAKDALE, MINNESOTA

Thanksgiving Day is not an appointed church holiday but a national celebration. Nevertheless, the church celebrates it for good reason. Surely, when we consider the blessings from our Heavenly Father from whom comes every good and perfect gift, we have reason to say every day: *“Praise the LORD. Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever”* (Psalm 106:1).

“But really?!”

Yes, there is much happening in this nation that prompts the question. As Christians we are not unaffected by the economic, political, moral, and cultural deterioration. Christians too suffer personal afflictions. On top of all, we are appalled at the terrorism that has the nations of the world on edge.

And we should celebrate a festival of Thanksgiving?

Yes! The Lord continues to be at our side. He has strengthened us. He has provided for us in remembrance of His mercy. *“For a mere moment I have forsaken you; but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,”* says the LORD your Redeemer. *For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no more go cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD who has mercy on you”* (Isaiah 54:7ff).

The Triune God (and He alone) lives to hear our prayers. As the Giver of every good and perfect gift, He delights in our expressions of thanks. Every other god is an idol that neither hears nor answers prayers. (Have you ever asked yourself, “To whom do they give thanks who pray to a god that does not exist?”)

The gospel of our Savior Jesus is the greatest reason we Christians give thanks every day. The gospel gives hope in what is otherwise a hopeless world.

We do know that so long as the world stands, sin will be with us. Even if our stomachs are satisfied on this Thanksgiving Day, the shadow of what is happening in the nation and world will still be there, and the concerns for the future will not vanish away. So we pray that our thanksgiving will have deeper roots than simply a national excuse to satisfy desire for food and companionship. The Father in heaven is not unaware of our needs, and He is well aware of our anxieties. Here we have toil and tribulation, but the Lord tells us in Hebrews (4:9) that there remains a rest for the people of God.

Remember also that the living God and Father is greater than our tribulations and anxieties: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39).

Our God will keep His believing children unto everlasting life. In the meantime, appreciate the material blessings that He provides in measure according to His will. Whatever the future holds and until He takes us home, let us be *“...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7).

“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever” (Psalm 117:1-2). Amen!



The Beginning or the End?

PASTOR JAY HARTMANN
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

The end times seem to hold a great fascination for many, and our Lord Jesus has much to say about this Scriptural matter.

He tells us, “...When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8) In so speaking our Lord teaches us that faith will grow scarce, very rare in the last days. In another place Jesus reminds us that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3).

Those words could have been written yesterday by the holy writer, for they perfectly describe the times in which we live.

Jesus also says: “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:6-7).

We need to understand that Jesus spoke not to scare us but for our encouragement—to strengthen us, to reveal the glory which will be every Christian believer’s possession through Spirit-worked faith in Jesus.

We understand that all these details describe ongoing events throughout history. We cannot know the Lord’s timing in this matter, but He ever encourages us to be mindful of the times, saying: “Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is” (Mark 13:33).

As His believing children we look forward to the

day of our Lord’s return. We rejoice in the certainty of forgiveness and salvation we have been given in our Savior and say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)

In the meantime our Savior exhorts us to stand fast and hold the traditions which we were taught (2 Thessalonians 2:15), the timeless certainties of the gospel. The end times will be tough for Christians, but the Lord promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11), so that the vast majority of humanity is offended by our Lord and His Word.

Every teaching of our God and His Word is being violently attacked in our day, and not just by pagans but by the ‘visible’ church as well! Jesus says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

False prophets include anyone who teaches falsely concerning God’s Word. Beware, dear Christian, for the evil one seeks your overthrow and will not stop his assault! The evil one walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The devil has been defeated—we understand that—yet he continues to try to take as many down with him as he can!

The way to resist the devil and to continue in the true faith is to “take up the whole armor of God...having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...” (Ephesians 6:13ff).

Fellow believers, make faithful use of the means of grace! The Holy Spirit will preserve us through the gospel, which is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

Therefore, “The end is just the beginning” for Christ-believers!



Looking Forward to Christ's Return on the Last Day of this World

PASTOR MARK GULLERUD
BOWDLE, SOUTH DAKOTA

How often hasn't it been said, "Well, at least it's not the end of the world!" ?

This statement is generally made to console someone going through difficult times. The kind of comfort it's trying to convey is that the situation could be far worse—even worse than what the troubled person is experiencing.

Even Christians have used this expression without realizing that the sentiment behind the saying is not consistent with our Christian belief.

The end of the world is not the worst possible thing that could happen but rather the very best. Think about it. From Holy Scripture we learn what will happen on the last day of this world.

For, on that glorious day...

- Jesus will descend in heavenly splendor with great fanfare, accompanied by a vast host of angels (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 25:31).
- No one will miss out on this glorious sight, for there will be a general resurrection of all the dead (John 5:28b,29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 1:7).
- Believers in Christ Jesus will stand there with perfect bodies and souls (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:42,44).
- Without the need of a space shuttle we will

be lifted up and meet the Lord Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

- On account of Christ's all-sufficient redemptive work we will hear the Lord issue this wonderful invitation, "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).
- With His almighty power the Lord will melt the present world, replacing it with a perfect, physical world which will be our eternal dwelling place (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:12,13; Revelation 21:1).
- In this heavenly world we will dwell in the presence of God, live in perfect harmony with everyone in heaven, and will never again experience any of the woes found in this present sin-cursed world (Job 19:25,26; Revelation 21:3,4; Psalm 16:11; 2 Peter 3:13).
- And this glorious heavenly life and world will endure throughout all eternity (John 3:16; 6:40,47; 1 Thessalonians 4:17b).

Mindful of what the end of the world means to believers in Christ Jesus, whenever fellow believers are experiencing any kind of difficulty we can remind them of what we have to look forward to at Christ's return on the last day.

For unbelievers it is quite another matter. We can readily understand why they are not looking forward to the end of the world, thinking it will be the worst thing to ever happen to them.

How so? Unbelievers know by nature that there will be a final day of reckoning and judgment by the One who made them. The holy law of God reveals that on account of impenitence and unbelief, unbelievers will be cast out of God's presence into the bottomless pit of outer darkness where there will be endless weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mark 16:16b; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 8:12; 13:50; 25:41).

Because of this we can see why unbelievers might use the expression "Well, at least it's not the end of

the world!” They are trying to console themselves, realizing that nothing can be as bad as the coming judgment of this world.

So rather than using the misguided statement to console people, let us try to remind everyone, both believer and unbeliever, that Jesus is the Savior of the world who washed away all our sins to give His believing children the blessed gift of eternal life in heaven.

This gospel message supplies comfort no matter what problems we human beings are faced with in the here and now.

In the second last verse of the Bible, we hear Jesus say, “*Surely I am coming quickly.*” In response to this glorious promise, we join the inspired writer John in saying, “*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” (Revelation 22:20)



“Bible Sunday” — NOVEMBER 23, 2014

PASTOR PAUL KRAUSE • MARKESAN, WISCONSIN

It was December 1941. Two noteworthy things were about to happen within hours of each other.

First, there was the kick-off of the first-ever National Bible Week, which was to begin on Monday, December 8th. The National Bible Association had been making plans to have Scripture read nation-wide over the airwaves on NBC. Various political leaders across the country were to take part in what the Association desired to be an annual promotion of the Bible’s Golden Rule. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt was to be involved in the event!

But just as final preparations were being made for the week, the second thing happened on Sunday, December 7th—the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor so that the United States was plunged into World War II.

As far as I know, the Bible Association did go through with its plans for Scripture reading on that Monday. The readings were interspersed with reports on the war and probably reached a much wider audience than initially hoped for!

Over the years the dates for observing a National Bible Week have changed to what we have now—running from Sunday to Sunday the week of Thanksgiving Day, with the starting day called “Bible Sunday.”

I must admit that this day or week’s worth of

“celebrating the Bible” is not something that has ever made it on my monthly church calendar. I was not even aware that there was such a thing as “Bible Sunday.”

In the closing weeks of November the church year calendar customarily focuses our attention on things pertaining to the end times—such as the Last Judgment, eternal life, and heaven. Besides that, from our vantage point we might well say that EVERY Sunday is a Bible Sunday!

But just as it has become our custom to set aside one special day for thanksgiving, setting aside a Bible Sunday certainly has merit too!

It is a great opportunity to give thanks and praise to the Lord for revealing to us through the written Word His from-all-eternity plan of salvation! Through the pens of divinely and verbally inspired authors, the Lord caused to be recorded both the promise and the fulfillment of His Son’s first coming to Earth as Lord and Savior! Their writings, as the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “*are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Timothy 3:15). Not only that. The same apostle writes that “*all Scripture,*” which is “*given by inspiration of God,*” 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 3:16-17).

What an opportunity Bible Sunday then gives us to contemplate not just the initial miracle of divine

inspiration, but the thousands upon thousands of lifetimes which have been dedicated to the work of translating that Word into so many languages of the world. Through the work of countless men and women Jesus' directive is moving forward, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

I'm sure that many people in that first National

Bible Day/Week found comfort in that Word as their loved ones marched off to war—many never to return! Let our prayer be that many will continue to find God's Word applying personally to their hearts and lives today, whether it be for God's marvelous forgiveness and grace or for guidance for their life's footsteps!



THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

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

"Take Courage... I Am With You"

PASTOR ANDREW SCHALLER • WATERTOWN, SOUTH DAKOTA

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well. (Matthew 14:24-36)

In this series of articles we have taken note of a number of Jesus' miracles which offer incontrovertible proof that Jesus is the Son of God. We have also noted that Jesus didn't set out to be a 'side show' or merely a 'miracle worker.' In fact, not every miracle was public; some were worked privately and were known only to a few (see John 2:1-11).

However, some of Jesus' miracles were very public (cf. Matthew 14:13-21, feeding the 5000+). These miracles opened a wider audience

Stained glass window of Jesus.
© Jldelawter | Dreamstime.com

to the fact that someone extraordinary was standing before them, and they should also listen to what He had to say. By the grace of God many of those who heard Christ speak came to believe in Him as the Son of God. Jesus' miracles—even after His Ascension—served well to confirm the power and authority of His Word (see Mark 16:20).

The miracle we consider this time is also of a more private nature. It was the evening after Jesus had fed the 5000+, and while Jesus went off to pray alone (see Matthew 14:22-23), He directed His disciples to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus' disciples, some of whom were seasoned mariners, ran into some bad weather along the voyage. They were trying to make headway against the wind which required their focused attention when they saw Jesus walking to them on the surface of the sea!

They were spooked, thinking that they were seeing an apparition.

Jesus didn't want their imagination to carry them away (as the waves were), so He immediately called out to them, "Take courage; it's I. Don't go on being afraid." (author's translation—ed.)

We should take these words of the Savior with us not only when we go boating but whenever we leave the apparent safety of our homes. After all, it doesn't even take a weather event to make us afraid. We often worry about what might happen and convince ourselves that we know what is going to happen so

that, before the storm even starts, we are ready to, as they say, 'throw in the cards.'

Would it help us to write these words of Jesus on a card and keep it in our pockets or purses? Would it be helpful in the midst of a troubling day to be reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus? When the waves of life seem to be crashing into our boat, we are comforted when we remember that the same God who was with Joshua and Moses is with us, saying, "*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you*" (Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV 1984).

On this occasion Peter asked that Jesus confirm His presence by enabling him to walk on the surface of the water to Him. For a time, supported by Christ's power, Peter did just that! However, when he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the roiling waters, he

began to sink.

Let's be reminded that it's not 'my faith' that saves me; it's the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Himself. I can stand in the face of trial and trouble not because I have a strong faith, but because I have a strong Savior who supports me with His strong Word.

The strong Savior reached out to grasp Peter, saving him from himself.

Rather than looking down on Peter's weakness, let's recognize the same in ourselves. Let's also remember that the same Jesus who died to deliver us from our sins of doubt is with us day by day to personally support and protect us. †

When the waves of life seem to be crashing into our boat, we are comforted when we remember that the same God who was with Joshua and Moses is with us...



ANNIVERSARY

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Bismarck, N.Dak., observed its 25th anniversary on Sunday, September 7, 2014. Theme for the occasion was Psalm 90 and the hymn "Our God Our Help in Ages Past—Present—Future." Two pastors have served the congregation since its formal organization in 1989—Pastor Warren Fanning (six years) and the current Pastor Michael Roehl. Shown with Pastor Roehl (center) are two of the speakers, Paul Fleischer (left) and Daniel Fleischer (right), God's pastoral instruments early on in the Bismarck outreach effort; a third meditation (by Peter Reim, another such instrument of the Lord) was read by Councilman Michael McEnroe.

Wrong Loyalties

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:1-21)

While the rich young ruler went away sorrowing, and we do not know the final outcome of his life, with Nicodemus we are certain. Nicodemus also at first went away and did not follow the Lord. Later we see his faith demonstrated in his work at the burial of our Lord.

This example should give us great encouragement in that we may not see the results at first, though over time and out of our sight the Lord can work.

Nicodemus had been brought up in the work-righteousness and hypocrisy of Judaism. This has to account for his not understanding our Lord. But our Lord planted the seeds that the Spirit might later

sprout in Nicodemus' heart. On being born again (or anew) of water and the Spirit, he asks, "How can this be?" He does not at this point see that a break must be made with his past.

The Lord explains how the bronze serpent prefigured the Christ's sacrifice. This is one of many Old Testament pictures of the Redeemer. To a man like Nicodemus high in Judaism and therefore familiar with the Word, this had to leave an impression. Over and over again in the New Testament record we read of how what Christ said or did was to fulfill Scripture. Even if the person to whom we are witnessing is not familiar with Scripture (unlike Nicodemus), we can still use the prophetic fulfillments in Christ to point out how He was the Messiah, the Savior. God promised. God fulfilled.

The Lord gives a warning to Nicodemus not to join in with those who reject the Son, the Light. And it is here that we have that best known gospel passage, John 3:16. Jesus does give Nicodemus the gospel, deeming him an inquirer and not one of those who came to test or entrap. We have to make a similar determination with our hearers. And we will know by how they received our witness. One who is honestly questioning should have the gospel left with him.

Many have loyalty to the wrong thing or person. Nicodemus' loyalty was to Judaism and the Sanhedrin. In witnessing to Felix (Acts 24:22f.) Paul came across a man who had a head knowledge of the Way, while his loyalty was to Rome, power, and money. Paul tried mightily to show Agrippa the truth of Jesus and forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:1f), only to have the king fall back on his position and the Jewish people who had him for king. It is a matter of Christ or... (So very, very often many follow wrong loyalties).

Conclusion (adapted)

With this series of spiritual encounters we have seen there is so much to learn about witnessing to our Lord. Yet one thing comes out starkly — we must witness. Like the apostles we cannot but speak. Like the untimely born, woe to me if I don't. Our conscience should stab us. Necessity is laid upon us. But it is not a necessity driven from without, rather from within. We now love Him, because He first loved us and suffered and died for us. So we speak about Him. There is the inner compulsion.

This propounds in no way to be exhaustive in the study of one-on-one witnessing encounters in the four Gospels and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. But for what is here, may it serve to stimulate in a practical way.

Just to review, consider the following pointers drawn from the ten studied encounters.

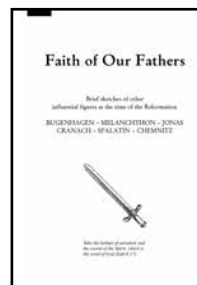
- ✧ Make witnessing a healthy part of the purpose of your daily life.
- ✧ Really reach out with the Word of God to those beyond the ones who love you and whom you love.
- ✧ Pay attention to people and be interested.
- ✧ Depending on the situation, try to use the oblique approach.
- ✧ Leave a clear witness with something to think about.
- ✧ Study God's Word and consider illustrations to get your points across.
- ✧ Try to establish a common ground for a relationship and a willing ear.
- ✧ If at all possible, end your witness on a positive note.
- ✧ When condemning hypocrisy, don't be hypocritical yourself.
- ✧ Demonstrate your love in words and in deeds.
- ✧ Work to change the conversation from the mundane to the spiritual.
- ✧ Speak the law to convict of sin, and the gospel to convince of salvation.
- ✧ Build on the religious knowledge that the prospect has.
- ✧ To the impenitent leave the law with its barbs.
- ✧ Be clear in presenting the contrasts between Christ and mammon, etc.
- ✧ Be patient, knowing the Holy Spirit will work in His own time.
- ✧ And pray about the encounter, being specific, before, during, and after the encounter.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS (THIRD OF FOUR)

These vignettes of men associated with Luther and the Reformation first appeared in connection with our CLC's daily website devotions during Reformation season, 2013.

Pastor David Schaller, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sister Lakes, Mich., reports that the devotions were adapted from a Bible Class presentation, adding that "The original booklet and slides can be downloaded from our church website at <http://www.redeemerclc.info/devotional.html> — Go down the page until you see the 'Faith of Our Fathers' presentation." — May the Holy Spirit bless our observance of this special season of the church year! — Editor



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS:

Brief sketches of other influential figures at the time of the Reformation include Bugenhagen, Melancthon, Jonas, Cranach, Spalatin, and Chemnitz.

JUSTUS JONAS

“My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.” (Psalm 119:148 NIV)

Some people have an exceptional ability to study and learn. We might refer to them as scholars, and Justus Jonas was one. Born in 1493, Jonas studied law and theology at the University of Erfurt, one of the best universities in Germany (the same place where Martin Luther had begun his study of law). In 1510 he received his Master of Arts degree and in 1517 he accepted positions at St. Severus Church (as a Canon) and at the University of Erfurt (as a professor).

We picture Jonas studying late into the night preparing for his classes. He introduced Greek and Hebrew into the curriculum at Erfurt and was eventually named head of the university. Jonas' aptitude for scholarship served him well as he studied the Scriptures and read the writings of the Reformation. A person is declared righteous by faith in Christ alone apart from good works, salvation in heaven is given as a free gift from God, the teachings of the Bible are authoritative above the ideas and customs of men—Jonas was brought to believe these truths.

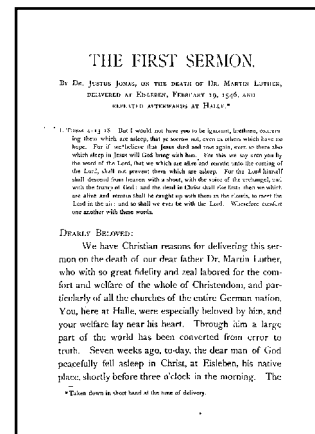
He became a close friend of Martin Luther while serving as Dean of the Theological Faculty at the University of Wittenberg from 1523-1533. Jonas was the professor of the professors.

When Luther made his historic translation of the Bible into German so the common people could have the Word of God in their own language, Justus Jonas was on hand, an indispensable help to Luther as they pored over the Greek and Hebrew texts together, meditating on the promises of God, their eyes no doubt at times staying open even through the long watches of the night. Jonas further translated many of Luther's Latin works into German, including the well-known



Jonas was born at Nordhausen in present-day Thuringia. His real name was Jodokus (Jobst) Koch, which he changed according to the common custom of German scholars in the sixteenth century, when at the University of Erfurt.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justus_Jonas



tract “The Bondage of the Will.” He also helped prepare Luther’s metrical versions of the Psalms and appears to have written the hymn based on Psalm 124, “If God Had Not Been on Our Side,” which is sometimes attributed to Luther.

In January of 1546 it was Justus Jonas who accompanied Martin Luther to Eisleben to help solve an argument there over an inheritance between two heirs of a deceased count. But at Eisleben, Luther fell terribly ill and would not survive. Justus Jonas was at

his side and asked him, “Reverend Father, are you willing to die in the name of Christ and the doctrine which you have preached?” Luther answered, “Yes.” Shortly afterward, he was gone.

Jonas preached at Luther’s first funeral service in Eisleben on February 19, 1546. He preached of the resurrection of the dead and the life to come in Christ Jesus. The sermon still survives and you can read it here: <http://archive.org/details/cu3i924029250467>

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS (FOURTH OF FOUR)



Lucas Cranach the Elder was a German Renaissance painter and printmaker in woodcut and engraving. He was court painter to the Electors of Saxony for most of his career, and is known for his portraits, both of German princes and those of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, whose cause he embraced with enthusiasm, becoming a close friend of Martin Luther.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucas_Cranach_the_Elder

LUCAS CRANACH (The Elder)

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.” (Romans 12:4-6a NIV)

Lucas Cranach was not a theological scholar like Justus Jonas. He could not summarize Scriptural truth brilliantly as Philip Melancthon could. He was not a trained pastor as John Bugenhagen was, but he stands as a reminder that Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, so often uses the gifts of Christian laymen when He carries out His kingdom work. And Cranach certainly had talents and abilities which He put to very good use in the service of his Savior.

He was born in Germany in 1472 in a region known as Franconia. He was the son of a professional artist and followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming a painter himself. So good was his work that in 1504 he came to Wittenberg and became the court artist for Duke Frederick, ruler of Saxony, whose fair-minded policies later helped Martin Luther and the cause of the Reformation greatly.

In 1508 he painted altar pieces for Wittenberg’s Castle Church (where Luther would later preach), and his paintings of Biblical scenes became well known. Cranach became a famous artist and very wealthy. His painting of Martin Luther stands to this day as one of the most recognizable portraits in all the history of art. God used Cranach’s talents to add beauty to His world and to teach Bible lessons to many thousands through pictures. Cranach provided the woodcuts for the first German translation of the New Testament in 1522.

Lucas Cranach became a good friend of Martin Luther and was moved by the gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus

He (Cranach) took his spiritual stand with those who taught that eternal life was a free gift, not earned or deserved by our own works, but bought and paid for by the death of our Lord.

Christ. He took his spiritual stand with those who taught that eternal life was a free gift, not earned or deserved by our own works, but bought and paid for by the death of our Lord. His allegiance was with the reformers. It was Cranach and his wife Barbara who, in fact, served as witnesses at Luther's wedding.

Along with his painting, Cranach was in the printing business. And if you were to suspect that his presses were busy turning out copy after copy of Luther's

writings, you would be right. His artwork, his printing company, his fame, his service as Wittenberg's mayor (many times) and as a highly respected town council member placed him in a unique position which God then used to bless those who were contending for the faith during those tumultuous years.

Lucas Cranach died in 1553 at Weimar, Germany. The calendar of the Lutheran Church remembers him on April 6.



Martin Luther, from an engraving by Cranach, published in *Life of Luther* by Julius Kostlin, 1900.
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Trinity Lutheran Church, Spokane, Wash. observed its 70th anniversary service on August 3, 2014. The theme was "70 Years of God's Amazing Grace: 'Tis Grace that brought us safe thus far & Grace will lead us home."

Main Photo: Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer (2011-present, pictured with wife, Tamar) Pastor Terrel Kesterson (1996-2011 – pictured with wife, Peggy) and Professor Paul Schaller (1990-1996 – pictured with wife, Nona).

Inset Photo: Three children of Trinity's founding pastor, M.J. Witt (served 1942-1981) [from left to right] Kathryn, Mary, and John.

The ELCA and ‘Easy’ Lutheranism*

PASTOR EMERITUS PAUL FLEISCHER • RED WING, MINNESOTA

Not long after retiring and relocating to another city, this writer had a backyard “over the fence” (literally) get-acquainted visit with a next-door neighbor. Upon my mentioning that I was a retired Lutheran minister, the friendly chat quickly turned to the subject of religion. And when I noted that I was a long-time member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), a conservative Bible-teaching Lutheran synod, our friendly neighbor responded: “I’m on the outreach board of the local ELCA church...we’re one of those easy Lutherans, you know...”, to which he added with a hearty guffaw, “and proud of it! You gotta do what you gotta do!”

After a few more neighborly pleasantries, we soon bid one another a hearty “Good day!”

We indeed think we know what our neighbor meant when he referred to his congregation and its synod, the largest Lutheran synod in the land, as the *Easy Lutheran Church of America*. As far as we are concerned, his church and synod have chosen a path of easy discipleship to Jesus Christ.

What’s not to like about such a path? “All the benefits and rewards with few if any risks or dangers along the pilgrim way?!? Count me as a ‘member’ of such a brotherhood!” [So says human nature, which is spiritually blind, deaf and dumb, dead in trespasses and sins—an ally of Satan, the god of this sin-sick, fallen world.]

More to the point, if you’re going to be an ‘easy’ Lutheran, what’s not to like about a qualified “this we believe” path of liberation theology and social gospel, even as one reduces the true gospel to the lowest common denominator of “Jesus saves” [termed ‘gospel reductionism’]?

Along the same lines, if you’re going to be an ‘easy’ Lutheran, what’s not to like about abandoning any creedal or confessional “this we reject” statements [as contrary to Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions] on the burning issues of the day, such as the divine inspiration of every word of the Bible, the matter of origins (creation or evolution), abortion, same-sex marriage, the role of women in the church—and a host of other doctrines?

To summarize:

If you’re going to be an ‘easy’ Lutheran, what’s not to like about jumping on the ‘all truth is relative’ and ‘anything goes’ bandwagon, echoing and putting into practice (“you gotta do what you gotta do, you know!”) such liberal and/or politically correct ideas as unionism’s ‘reconciled diversity’ of doctrine and practice under the spiritually hackneyed mantra of ‘agreeing to disagree agreeably’ on whatever the subject under discussion or debate?

Yes, much more could be said, but let’s take a good *hard* look at some holy facts which belie the idea that Christian discipleship—for those who wear the Lutheran label or any other would-be Christian denomination—is ever God-pleasingly ‘easy.’

According to the Master Himself, discipleship to Him involves:

† Numbing and inescapable divisions within the blood-family: “*Lord, let me first go and bury my father.*” But Jesus said to him, “*Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead’....Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household*” (Matthew 8:22, 10:34-36).

† Total self-denial and unrelenting cross-bearing: “*Then Jesus said to His disciples: If anyone*

desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24f). “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33).

Regarding what is ‘easy’ and what is ‘hard’ when it comes to entering His kingdom, Jesus put it this way to His disciples: “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:23f).

Such passages expose as devilish (!) any idea that allegiance to Jesus Christ and His Word of truth ever was, is, or will be an ‘easy’ matter.

Countless other Scriptures might be given to extend the list of “hard sayings” as far as disciples of Jesus Christ are concerned—sayings which, in fact, caused many to go away and walk no more with Him. When

Jesus asked His inner circle of disciples whether they too would abandon Him, Peter answered for them (and for us!): “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:60ff).

In closing, for all our friendly neighbors we have words of supreme hope, peace, comfort, and joy—words which teach that there is indeed something about the gospel of Jesus, the Savior of sinners, that is ‘easy.’ It is the paradoxical truth that, while following Jesus is hard, yet He adds, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

That is spoken in the context of those who, while weary and heavy laden with sin and woe, hear His invitation to come to Him in simple child-like faith to find rest—the rest of forgiveness of all sins in Him! Yes, fellow-believers, because Jesus walked the taxing path which led to our redemption—we are heaven-bound!

* An Aside: Religious RINOS

This article might be considered a follow-up to a writing which appeared in the *Lutheran Spokesman* twenty-five years ago (July 1989, authored by this writer). That article—which was titled “THE ELCA AND BANKRUPT LUTHERANISM” and is quoted on page 354 in the 1992 book *What’s Going On Among the Lutherans?*—set forth the hard evidence which revealed the ‘easy’ path mainline Lutheranism was already then choosing for itself [see p. 18ff].

The same article defended unqualified subscription to and faithful practice of a ‘hard’ confessional Lutheran stance from the standpoint of Holy Scripture as well as from the testimony of the Lutheran Confessions. As Scripture asserts (1 Corinthians 5:6, Galatians 5:9), and as church history bears out, the leaven of doctrinal error spreads inexorably through the whole church body, from the “leaders” to the lay-members. May God mercifully spare the members of the CLC from embarking on a discipleship path of ‘easy’ Lutheranism!


Please consider the following. RINOS—an acronym for Republicans In Name Only—refers to those who, rather than standing fast on their political party’s platform with its conservative stance on many ‘hard’ issues, are more interested in compromise, ‘crossing the aisle’ to make peace with those of a different and even opposite persuasion.

When it comes to the far more serious—containing eternal consequences—matter under discussion here, we would coin another word: LINOS. That would refer to Lutherans In Name Only and/or to ‘easy,’ Low Information Nominal Only disciples.

And how would the exalted Lord assess LINOS? Listen to His stern rebuke of first-century nominal Christians belonging to the church in Sardis: “...You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead....Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent....He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:1ff).

—PGF

BANKRUPT



The ELCA and Bankrupt Lutheranism

BY PASTOR PAUL FLEISCHER, JULY 1989,

REPRINTED AS AN HISTORICAL BACKDROP TO THE PRECEDING ARTICLE

An acquaintance regularly passes along to us *The Lutheran*, the magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We peruse its contents, since we are not unconcerned about what is being said (written) and done in “mainstream” Lutheranism.

The contents of the magazine are indicative to us of how far from traditional (biblical) Lutheranism the ELCA has fallen. The profile of Lutheranism painted in practically every issue is more and more unrecognizable to us as deserving of the Lutheran name. Concern for doctrine in general and doctrinal discipline in particular is almost non-existent in the ELCA. The thrust is clearly in the direction of liberation theology and social gospelism. There is a strong movement toward bringing the newly-formed church body into both the National and the World Councils of Churches, whose primary thrusts are political and social.

The ELCA is unapologetically ecumenical. We would say unionistic. When doctrinal matters and issues are addressed (for example in the “Letters to the Editor” column in *The Lutheran*—an indication that lay-people who pose the questions have doctrinal concerns), the responses given often bring to mind St. Paul’s warning against smooth and deceptive speech (cf. Rom. 16:18). The old slogan “agree to disagree agreeably” for the sake of outward church union is now rephrased as “reconciled diversity.” In spite of the fact that there is lack of agreement on what is believed and taught, altar and pulpit fellowship is not only deemed permissible but is usually encouraged. Such separation passages as Romans 16:17, 2 John 10–11, 2 Corinthians 6:14ff, and others are apparently considered inapplicable or out of step with the mission of the church in our day.

Misrepresenting the Bible

In the April 12, 1989, issue of *The Lutheran*, ELCA head Bishop Chilstrom spends a full page calling

God's Word teaches that the leaven of error, if not checked, is bound to permeate the whole.

for the synod's August convention to "affirm our Lutheran commitment to the visible unity of the body of Christ." In an article titled "The Gospel Prompts Ecumenism," Chilstrom says the synod will be considering a statement which will call on ELCA members to "be ready to recognize points of unity with other churches and even to move toward the final goal of all ecumenical ventures—full communion." The other churches referred to include non-Lutheran churches such as the Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches, as is clear from previous reports.

The Bible is enlisted as supposedly supportive of calling for and endorsing such ecumenism. The passage quoted is from Ephesians chapter 4: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." As far as we are concerned, this is a misuse of the passage. It does not call for ignoring doctrinal differences. It speaks of the unity of faith which already exists within the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, by virtue of the Spirit's on-going work in the hearts of believers.

Furthermore, the context in which this Word of God is found hardly suggests the Lord's apostle is referring to a "visible (our emphasis) unity of the body of Christ" (which Chilstrom asks for) regardless of existing doctrinal differences. Preceding it the apostle calls upon Christians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Following it, the same apostle warns believers against being like "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). Hardly is this a call for smoothing over or ignoring doctrine differences to achieve a dishonest form of outward union.

By the way, another favorite passage often used by

the ecumenists is the word of Christ in John 17: "... That they all may be one: as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." The Lord here speaks of the essential oneness He has with the Father, not some superficial oneness. By the same token, the unity He prays for in behalf of His believers hardly implies a glossing over of doctrinal differences for the sake of a superficial outward union. Consider the Lord's words in Matthew 7:15ff, John 8:31f, Matthew 28:20 etc.

The winds of doctrine have been blowing every which way in the ELCA from the moment of its formation. Since fellowship "with diversity" is the practice within the ELCA itself, it is a small but predictable step for that synod to call for outward union with non-Lutheran churches without the expectation of or demand for doctrinal unity. We say predictable because God's Word teaches that the leaven of error, if not checked, is bound to permeate the whole.

Misrepresenting the Confessions

After Bishop Chilstrom seeks to enlist the support of Scripture for his cause, he goes on to appeal for ecumenical unity on the basis of "Our Reformation Roots." He quotes from the Lutheran Confessions, specifically Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession* (AC). There, according to the Bishop, the reformers insisted that "for the unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." While the latter is a quotation, the question remains whether the Bishop is correctly representing what the reformers "insisted" on.

By the "Gospel" here is meant the entire Word of God, as Jesus used it, for example, in Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature.” As the Lord Himself explains, what is to be preached is “all things, whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20).

When one reads the *Apology* (Defense!) of the *Augsburg Confession*—which is the reformers’ own explanation of exactly what they were insisting upon in the AC—it becomes clear that the Bishop has missed the point. As the spokesman for the Lutheran reformers, Philip Melancthon leaves no question that nothing written in the AC has the intent of minimizing doctrinal error.

What is insisted upon in the *Apology* is that unity in the area of human traditions and rites should not be expected for the sake of outward union. When, it is suggested, unity in *indifferent things* is insisted upon before union, injury is done to the Gospel and to Christian freedom under that Gospel.

The position of the ELCA has rightly been termed “Gospel reductionism”—reducing the Gospel to the lowest common denominator. This means that joining with non-Lutherans, both in worship and eventually even merging with them, is desirable as long as there is agreement, in a sense, that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Differences, they say, can then be worked out later through dialogue.

As far as we are concerned, the ELCA Bishop’s misrepresentation of the message of the Lutheran Confessions is but further evidence of a bankrupt form of Lutheranism.

True Lutheranism

True Lutheranism has always accepted all of the Confessions in the *Book of Concord* of 1580 as correct expositions of the teachings of Scripture. The confessions are thus accepted because they rightly set forth Scripture teaching. Our pastors are all asked to commit themselves to this “because” stance. On its part, the ELCA talks about accepting the historic confessional writings only “insofar as” they rightly interpret the Scriptures.

This stance allows the ELCA Bishop to ignore the very reason the *Apology* was written—namely, to guard against the very kind of twisting of the *Augsburg Confession* of which he is guilty.

The following paragraph from the Confessions leaves no doubt where the reformers stood on the matter of unity and union. To it all Lutherans who can truly claim Reformation roots will subscribe:

“...We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by



faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.”
(*Formula of Concord*, XI, para. 95)

Church history has shown that, when churches or entire church bodies become guilty of error in doctrine and practice, the fault most often lies with the leaders. The leaders of the various Lutheran synods which united to form the ELCA have for years been actively promoting an ecumenism which encourages organizational union without doctrinal unity. The current ELCA Bishop is leading his new synod down the same path. We are not surprised, therefore, that mainstream Lutheranism is continuing on the unionistic path it has been traveling. Nor should we be surprised that, before long, it will claim union [in the sense of reconciliation—PF] with Rome itself.

We are alive to witness some of the saddest days in the history of Lutheranism.



CLC Teachers' Conference, October 15-17, 2014

Luther Memorial School, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin —

Theme: Keep Our Eyes Focused on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Devotions: Chaplain Nathan Wales

AGENDA (partial):

- + Lay Aside Every Hindrance: To Focus on Serving as Christ Serves You! (Pastor Michael Eichstadt, Mr. Ted Quade)
 - + Run With Perseverance: To Encourage your Fellow Workers' Focus! (Pastor Mark Tiefel, Pastor Neal Radichel)
 - + Joy in His Service: To Inspire the Youth to Focus on Serving Christ! (Pastor David Schierenbeck, Mr. David Aymond)
 - + Recognizing and Addressing Learning Disorders in the Classroom—Mrs. Lori Wirth
 - + Updated ILC Coursework for Incoming Freshmen—Principal Joel Gullerud
 - + Digital Citizenship—Mrs. Julie Busch
 - + Textbook Follow Up—Mr. Seth Schaller, Mr. Paul Tiefel
 - + XANSCAN: 3D Printing for the Classroom—Mr. Nick Marzofka
 - + The Flipped Classroom—Mr. Kevin Hulke
- Book Reviews, Title Fives, Field Trip, Business Meeting

WATCH FOR A MORE COMPLETE REPORT IN A COMING ISSUE.



CLC Teachers Conference 2014
Photo taken By Erin Radichel

Look to Jesus When the Assignment is Tough

PROFESSOR PAUL SCHALLER • EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

(John 6:9)

When Jesus proposed to His disciples the problem of feeding the great crowd of people that had come to see Jesus, there was no brainstorming session. As you know, brainstorming is when any and all ideas for solving a problem are thrown onto the table without taking the time to evaluate each one. Instead, the hope is that the ideas suggested may spark yet more ideas.

But when Jesus’ disciples came up with ideas, they immediately came up with objections to their own ideas. Jesus asked, “Where shall we buy food for all these people?”

Philip answered in effect, “Forget where! Who can afford to feed all these mouths? There must be at least five thousand men, not counting women and children! If only half of them came with families (and it could be more with the Passover holiday near), it could take almost \$20,000 for each family to share one filet-o-fish sandwich!

Now, Andrew was used to finding people. After meeting Jesus the first thing he did was find his brother Peter to bring him to Jesus. Now he finds a young boy who had brought some food: five barley-cakes and two little dried fish. Andrew quickly added, “*but what is this much among so many?*”

So we don’t have enough money, and we don’t have enough food, and we haven’t even bothered to answer the Lord’s original question “where” shall we go for food. It was obvious there was no McDonalds® in the area. A tough assignment.

Sometimes ILC has been criticized as being *sheltered* from real life. But most every school is sheltered in the sense that the assignments that are given are do-able. Oh, once in a while there may be a problem given which is well beyond the student’s ability in order to teach that there is more to learn. But by-and-large assignments come in manageable increments in the classroom.

Outside the classroom, however, problems face us that are way beyond us, even while we are still at school. We need to learn where to turn at times like those.

And outside the classroom when we are no longer enrolled, we will face challenges which we may not have realized would come so soon.

About a year after graduation, some wish they could go back and restudy some things to which they had not given their full attention because they had known them from youth. Now it was not a matter of whether they had always known it but how they might bring someone else to a knowledge of the truth.

The same could apply to all our schooling: we may not have seen a purpose in learning some materials, and sooner than we thought we are faced with the problem for real and we just cannot remember those things we once yawned at.

But even if we were diligent to make use of every opportunity to learn, we would many times still feel inadequate to teach others. We know the kind of problems they will face but not the exact circumstances. So we cannot tell them exactly the



Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wis., hosted the 2014 Great Lakes Pastoral Conference Sept. 30-Oct. 3. Front: Pastors P. Krause, N. Radichel, B. Naumann, Prof. P. Schaller (author of this chapel address); Back: Pastors T. Schuetze, R. Kanzenbach, M. Eichstadt, D. Pfeiffer, D. Ude, M. Bernthal, P. Evensen, N. Greve, M. Wilke, W. Schaller, D. Schaller, B. Huehn

words to say and the action to take in every case down the road.

Should you someday experience the blessing of becoming parents, the same will be true in bringing up your children. You can show them a lot of things and help them develop a lot of skills. But you do not know everything that they will have to face in life, and because of your own human weakness, your best efforts will finally amount to five barley-cakes and two small fish.

For what if you grow in understanding after your children have already received your mistaken advice? Or what if you look back and see mistakes you made that affected their lives? Or what if you did not really understand what you were doing at the time?

Then look to Jesus who not only loves you and gave

Himself for you for the forgiveness of your sins, but who also can take your five-cake, two-fish efforts and make them go farther than your fondest dreams.

So, teach your children, your students, your parishioners, your friends to look to Jesus no matter what situation they find themselves in—elation or disappointment, victory or defeat, rejoicing in life or grieving over time misspent. Look to Jesus!

And if they do that and find the peace of God which passes understanding, it will not be your little contribution, but His great blessing and distributing of your efforts. It is God who works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

So... *“Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass”* (Psalm 37:5). Amen.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Joel Fleischer, who was called by Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sioux Falls, S.Dak. to be its pastor, was installed on September 28, 2014. Pastor John Hein delivered the message. Also participating in the installation were Pastors Andrew Schaller and James Naumann, and teacher Philip Matzke.

— Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer

In accord with our usage and order, Timothy Wheaton, who was called by Living Word Lutheran Church of Blue Springs, Mo. (the greater Kansas City area) to be their pastor, was installed on Sunday, October 12, 2014. Teacher Michael Wheaton and Pastor Ernest Bernet assisted with the laying on of hands.

— Pastor Todd Ohlmann



NEXT MONTH'S FAREWELL ISSUE:

The December 2014 Christmas issue will be the final one in which the tandem of Editor Paul Fleischer and Assistant Editor Paul Koch will be steering the content and direction of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. Beginning January 2015, the new Editor will be Pastor Paul Naumann, with teacher Craig Owings as Assistant Editor.

More on the Fleischer/Koch farewell next month.

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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN 55113 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 2750 Oxford Street North, Roseville MN 55113

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org. Editor: Paul Fleischer, 1862 W. 6th St., Red Wing, MN 55066, E-Mail to paulgf@qwestoffice.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Art Director/Designer: Matthew Schaser; Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Daniel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Jay Hartmann, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Paul Naumann, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Andrew Schaller, Thomas Schuetze. Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Fleischer six weeks before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Fleischer. Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to BennoSydow@yahoo.com. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$22.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$42.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$62.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00. • Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org Printed in U.S.A.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

The Lutheran Spokesman, with a paid circulation of 1,647 and a total distribution of 1,723, is owned and managed by the Church of the Lutheran Confession of 12145 W. Edgerton Ave., Hales Corners, WI 53130-1026.

--Benno Sydow, Business Manager

Cover Photo by
Rachel Arndt

