

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

PERFECT

“As for God, His way is PERFECT.”

(PSALM 18:30)



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TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; SC = Martin Luther’s Small Catechism;
 [] = Minor Festivals or commemorations in the Christian Church Year

Date	Reading	Comments	Verse
Jan 1	Luke 13:1-9	Our Savior mercifully grants us another year. May we bear fruit to His glory.	Psalm 121
Jan 2	Luke 12:1-12	There’s no need to be afraid to confess Jesus before others. He will watch over you.	TLH 96
Jan 3	Romans 3:21-26	The year is new, but this truth remains: We are sinners and saints.	TLH 377:1, 6
Jan 5	Luke 2:40-52	The boy Jesus shows His appreciation for the Word of God—and grows in it.	Psalm 119:97-104
Jan 6	Isaiah 60:1-6	Jesus is the Light that drives away darkness and draws people in from everywhere.	TLH 127
Jan 7	Ephesians 3:1-12	Here is a mystery revealed: Gentiles are heirs of the promise, too!	TLH 129
Jan 8	Acts 8:26-39	Philip reveals the Savior to the Ethiopian. Epiphany is ongoing.	Psalm 72
Jan 9	Matthew 4:12-17	Daily we live in death’s shadow. Thankfully, the kingdom of heaven is just as near.	Psalm 23
Jan 10	Matthew 2:1-12	It’s true they saw the star, but the prophet’s Word was their real guiding light.	WS 717:4-5
Jan 12	Mark 1:4-11	Jesus’ baptism reveals Him as the appointed Savior from heaven.	TLH 352
Jan 13	Romans 6:1-11	Remember whose child you are!	SC Baptism IV
Jan 14	Genesis 1:1-5	The universe and everything in it were created by God.	TLH 41
Jan 15	Romans 10:8-18	All who trust in Jesus’ death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin are saved.	TLH 377:7
Jan 16	Matthew 10:32-39	Following Jesus means putting His desires ahead of our own. No harm in that!	TLH 409
Jan 17	John 6:28-40	Father and Son share the same desire: To save all people from their sins.	Psalm 29

Date	Reading	Comments	Verse
Jan 19	John 1:43-51	What stunned Nathanael? He realized Jesus had heard His prayer from under the tree.	Psalm 17
Jan 20	Genesis 17:15-22	Abraham’s initial laughter was quieted by God’s gracious promise. [Commemoration of Sarah]	WS 742:1-2
Jan 21	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Our bodies are gifts from God, bought with a price. Give glory to God!	Psalm 139
Jan 22	John 1:35-42	They heard John, and they followed Jesus.	TLH 328
Jan 23	1 Samuel 3:1-10	Jesus makes Himself known to us through His word.	WS 718:5
Jan 24	Matthew 12:46-50	Jesus shows just how much He cares for His believing children—like you and me.	WS 718:3-4
Jan 26	Titus 3:1-8	Titus was directed to urge his people to do good because of Jesus’ love for them. [Festival of St. Titus]	SC Baptism III
Jan 27	Mark 1:14-20	Jesus’ call was effective. “Follow Me,” He said; and they did.	TLH 270
Jan 28	Daniel 6:10-23	God protects us from all danger and guards and defends us from every evil.	TLH 39:3-4
Jan 29	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	In Nineveh—as in every case—repentance and faith precede fruits of repentance.	Psalm 62
Jan 30	Romans 8:24-30	In all things God works for the good of those who love Him. That means in all things!	WS 784
Jan 31	John 4:1-14	The forgiveness and peace of Jesus quench our spiritual thirst forever.	TLH 307:2

To our Readers: The compiler of these Daily Devotions is David Schaller, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, CLC, Sister Lakes, Michigan. The devotions will appear month by month in 2015 (excluding Sundays, as in the past). We heartily thank Pastor Schaller for providing this spiritual menu for our subscribers. Dear readers, as the LORD directed His prophet: “...*Eat what you find; eat this scroll...*” (Ezekiel 3:1)—and you will surely be blessed.

Celebrating the Jesus Antipoverty Program

PASTOR THEODORE BARTHELS, AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

(2 CORINTHIANS 8:9)

Fighting poverty has been at the forefront of American politics for longer than I have been alive. Every few years a new government program is established to ward off the devastating effects of poverty in our nation.

This issue is customarily brought to our attention during December. Well-intentioned efforts are made during the Christmas season to gather food for the needy, winter coats for the underprivileged, and toys so that every child can have a gift under the Christmas tree. Many claim that this is what Christmas is supposed to be about. Surely the volunteers who ring bells at the red kettles across our nation would agree with this assertion.

**But are we ready to agree that
Jesus was born to fight poverty?**

Absolutely! But not the poverty that is described as a deficiency in material goods. The poverty that caused

the Son of God to be born into this world was much deeper and far more devastating in its effects than what most Americans would define as poverty. It was the spiritual poverty, the absolute bankruptcy of righteousness common among all people, that moved God the Father to send His Son to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

The eternal Son of God was rich in all things—rich in glory, majesty, might, and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. When God looked down upon the lost condition of fallen mankind, He had compassion, and in the greatness of His love and immeasurable grace Jesus was born into this world, born of a woman, born under the law.

He became poor for our sakes that we might be delivered from poverty—the devastating spiritual poverty from which we could never deliver ourselves.

Jesus came into the world not only to be born in the humble circumstances of that stable but also to take upon Himself the debt of our sin. He redeemed us by becoming the propitiating sacrifice that paid our sin-debt. Through Him we were delivered from the poverty of our sin and enriched with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

Zion congregation, Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Ga. was pleased to receive its new pastor on Nov. 2nd. Pastor Ernest Bernet, his wife Jennifer and son Garrett moved to the parsonage on Oct. 31st and are settling in. The laying on of hands was part of the installation service. Members of the congregation Chuck Templeton and Mark Greve, and Pastors David Koenig and Glenn Oster participated.

Already now—this Christmas season and throughout the year—we rejoice in the gift that has been given us by Jesus. Indeed, we should experience such joy and excitement at the success of the ‘Jesus Antipoverty Program’ that we celebrate with the enthusiasm demonstrated by the young child unwrapping a gift selected just for him from under the Christmas tree!

That is how personal this gift is, for it was not simply the mass of humanity that moved the Lord to come and save. It was also that He had compassion upon you and me as individuals and loved us. He came to be poor, so that we might be made rich—rich here in time and hereafter in eternity.

In eternity we shall appreciate the full measure of the richness of God’s grace, and we shall glorify Jesus for having come into this world to defeat the poverty that ensnared us all.

**We are rich, for He was poor;
Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore
Here on earth and yonder.**

(TLH #97:1)



No Small Role

PASTOR WAYNE EICHSTADT, MANKATO, MINNESOTA

Joseph, Jesus' step-father, is mentioned only within the context of Matthew's and Luke's "Christmas story" accounts.

After Luke's account of the twelve-year old Jesus in the temple (Luke ch. 2), we hear no more of Joseph in the record of Scripture.

This minimal information about Joseph from Bethlehem has not prevented any number of people from saying much more than they know about him through fictionalized accounts of the gospel in television, movies, and videos.

From the Holy Spirit's somewhat scant portrayal of Joseph we should not conclude that he had an insignificant role in the earthly life of Jesus or in God's plan of salvation. Joseph had no small role, but a large one with weighty responsibility.

Although references to Joseph in Scripture are relatively few, what those verses tell us is significant. God promised that the Savior would be born from King David's family line. Thus the virgin mother of our Savior was "betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David" (Luke 1:26). While Jesus' bloodline was established through Mary, His biological mother, His legal lineage would be established through Joseph who "as was supposed" (Luke 3:23) was His father.

In God's plan of salvation, His Son was to be

"born under the law to redeem those who were under the law" (Galatians 4:4b-5). A complete and perfect obedience by the Savior was required to redeem those who were under the law—all sinners. Yet this Savior would be born a helpless infant with no ability to self-fulfill the law's early-life requirements. It would therefore be the responsibility of the household leader—the father—to circumcise his Son when He was a week old (Luke 2:21), to present the Son before the Lord, and to offer the required sacrifice (Luke 2:22-23).

This Savior born under the law would grow and mature in a very natural way—He "increased in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52)—but to do so would require a faithful home in which the spiritual leader both saw and undertook the responsibility to "teach [God's Word] diligently to [his] children..." (Deuteronomy 6:7).

God chose and called Joseph to the important role as leader in the earthly home of His Son and our Savior—no small role indeed!

God describes Joseph as a "just man" who was going

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to “put [Mary] away secretly” (Matthew 1:19) rather than bring her to public shame by exposing her to the charge of adultery. Joseph demonstrated a love that did not seek its own, nor did it seek revenge after what he felt was a grievous hurt (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4ff). In so doing Joseph reflected the love of his heavenly Father who promised to send the Messiah.

This faithful child of God—proclaimed to be “just” in God’s eyes through the faith God worked in his heart—also acted faithfully at the instruction of God’s Word. When God told Joseph to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:20), when He told him to name the child JESUS (Matthew 1:21), when He told him to flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13ff), and when He told him to return to Israel (Matthew 2:19ff)—in each instance, faithful Joseph acted on God’s Word without hesitation or delay.

Joseph’s no small role in the early years of our Savior’s life on Earth is not to be forgotten. He was chosen by God to provide the promised legal lineage, to serve as faithful father and spiritual leader of his home, to provide for the well-being of both Son and mother, and to lead his household by word and example. Joseph was a man of God’s calling to serve His Son—no less than Mary His mother!

Earthly fathers, take heed and find encouragement in the example of Joseph to fulfill the important role to which God has called you. All who support and assist earthly fathers—or who stand in the place of absent fathers—rejoice and give thanks to be involved in such an important calling. It is no small role which you fulfill. It is no small role to nurture and lead a young soul—a soul for whom the Son of God Himself was born under the law to redeem.



Born of Mary, God’s Begotten

And Then, Eternity • Poems From a Pilgrim on the Narrow Way

By Chad M. Seybt

Born of Mary, God’s Begotten,
Here on earth, incarnate Word.
Born to die for man’s salvation,
Gentle Baby, Lord of lords.

“Do not fear, behold, I bring you
Tidings of great peace and joy:
Born to you in David’s city
Is God’s promised little Boy.”

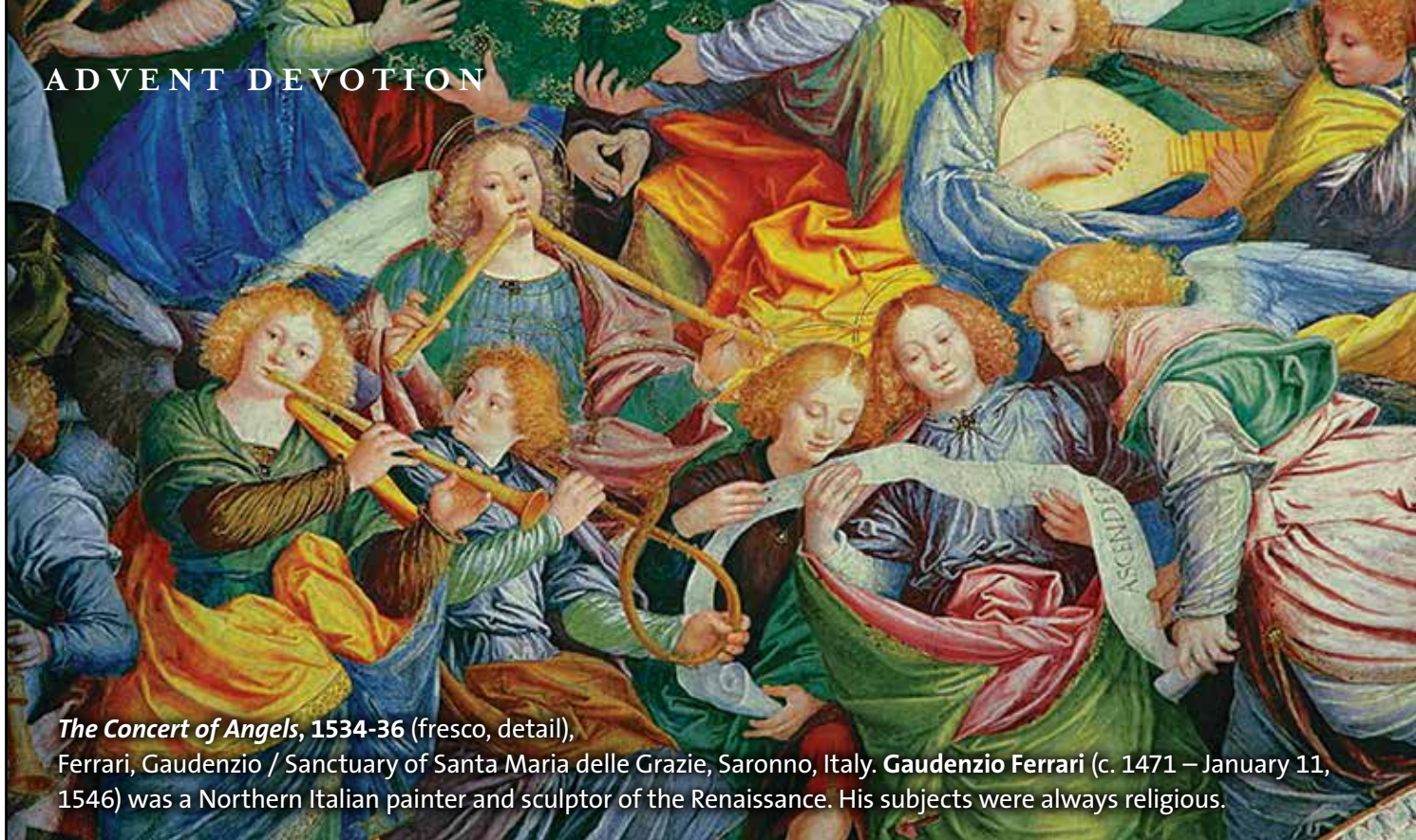
Sleeping soundly in a manger,
Savior wrapped in swaddling clothes
Is adored by shepherd strangers,
And the Babe’s angelic host.

When they saw the Christ, Messiah,
They made Him more widely known,
Shouting hope throughout the country:
“All our waiting now is done!”

Mary in her heart was pond’ring
All the things her God had planned
For all men, their sins forgiving
Through this Jesus – God and man.

Let us ponder, as did Mary,
God’s great gift of Love He’s shown.
Let us run, as did the shepherds,
Share this news with ev’ryone.





The Concert of Angels, 1534-36 (fresco, detail), Ferrari, Gaudenzio / Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Saronno, Italy. Gaudenzio Ferrari (c. 1471 – January 11, 1546) was a Northern Italian painter and sculptor of the Renaissance. His subjects were always religious.

ADVENT AGAIN

PASTOR EMERITUS DANIEL FLEISCHER, OAKDALE, MINNESOTA

Advent is a season of preparation for Christians. Consisting of the first four Sundays of the new church year, it is the season during which we prepare to celebrate the birthday of the incarnate Christ. Each year we observe this season by preparing ourselves with prayer and contemplation of the historical fact as well as the significance of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The season of Advent prior to the birth of Jesus lasted 4,000 years—through the whole Old Testament period, from the time the first promise was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after their fall into sin. John the Baptist spanned the two testaments since he was born six months before Jesus. In adulthood he fulfilled the purpose of his ministry by preparing the way for the Savior

who would shortly embark on His ministry. John's message was "...Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight" (Matthew 3:3).

This is the importance of our Advent preparation. John's message calls us to repentance and faith—to put aside all baggage that prevents us from focusing on the real purpose and meaning of Jesus' birth.

In Christ we are to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They who see in Jesus the fulfillment of God's promise and by faith cling to Him as their Savior from sin and Bearer of eternal life will have a blessed Christmas.

When we observe Christmas, we celebrate an historical, space-time event that has occurred. It is history, yet not cold and musty history, for each day of our life is lived in the power and under the grace of God through whose Spirit Christ is a living reality among us.

Through faith we recognize that Christmas has an everyday effect on our life. Each moment spent around Word and Sacrament is a moment in which

the Lord comes into our lives with His blessing! At Jesus' birth, sad to say, no room was found for Him in the homes of Bethlehem. In this intervening time between His birth and return for judgment, the majority still have no room for Him in heart or home.

Advent calls on us to observe the whole period of our life from birth to death as a time of preparation for the second coming of the Lord. Whereas Christ's birth on Earth has occurred, His coming again from heaven lies in the future.

There are some similarities between the two. One similarity lies in the fact that His coming was prophesied both then and now. Further, the time of His coming was hidden from men, known only to the Father who selected the fullness of time. The time of His coming in judgment is known to God, but not to man.

There is also dissimilarity. When Christ came in the flesh, He came in lowliness. When He comes again, He will come in glory and power, attended by the angels of heaven. When He came into the flesh, He came to die for the sins of the world. When He comes in judgment, He will come to take the saved home and cast away those who have had no time for Him.

Each day that passes brings us closer to the Advent of our Lord. We appreciate the rich significance of

His first Advent while we are awaiting personally the arrival of His second. The purpose of His birth for us will be fulfilled when He invites, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..."* (Matthew 25:34).

The determination of whether one will go to heaven or hell on the last day is not decided on judgment day. It is determined in the here and the now! Therefore, *"Prepare the way of the LORD..."* There is no time like now to hear and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 3:20-22).

**Teach us in watchfulness
and prayer
To wait for the appointed hour
And fit us by Thy grace
to share
The triumphs of
Thy conquering power.**

(TLH #64:5)



Berea Ev. Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., installed Joel Fleischer as its new pastor on Sunday, October 12, 2014. Assisting in the installation were (front) Pastor Andrew Schaller, CDS Teacher Philip Matzke; (back) Pastors James Naumann, Em. Daniel Fleischer, John Hein. Shown with the pastor and his wife, Beth, are children Alexander, Miranda, Leah and her husband Jesse Ude. — Photo by Pastor John Hein

“...A Savior, who is *Christ* the LORD”

PASTOR NATHAN PFEIFFER, SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

Reading through the four Gospels—particularly during the days leading up to the birth of Jesus—one often finds many of God’s people anxiously looking for ‘*the Christ*.’

The good news which the angels brought to the shepherds was that a Savior had been born “*who is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11).

Simeon was promised that before he would die, he would see “*the LORD’S Christ*” (Luke 2:26).

When the Wise Men came to Jerusalem looking for the newborn King of the Jews, King Herod asked the chief priests and scribes where “*the Christ*” was to be born (Matthew 2:4).

Each Sunday in the Apostles’ Creed we confess our faith in Jesus *Christ*, God’s only Son, our Lord.

But how easily we forget what this particular title or name tells us about Jesus and our salvation!

The word *Christ* is the Greek version of the Hebrew word ‘Messiah’ and means, “anointed one.” When the Jews said they were looking for *the Christ*, what they were really saying is that they were looking for “the Anointed One.”

Throughout the Old Testament several anointings took place. After being freed from slavery in Egypt, Moses anointed his brother Aaron to be the first high priest. Aaron’s sons were anointed to serve as priests of the LORD. Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel, and then the young shepherd David was anointed as Saul’s successor. The LORD directed Elijah to anoint Elisha as the next prophet in Israel.

Not only were people anointed; the LORD had the tabernacle and all the articles of worship anointed: the ark of the covenant, the altars, the lampstands, the tables, the utensils, and the basins.

What was the significance of these anointings?

Consider what the Bible says about the anointing of Aaron and his sons: “*And [Moses] poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him*” (Leviticus 8:12). The anointing of the priests, the prophets, the kings

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of Israel, and the items of worship was to show that the LORD was setting them apart and dedicating them for His work.

What a few of those anointed ones did after they were selected and dedicated was an entirely different matter. The anointed high priest Eli and his immoral sons had a horrible effect on the worship life in Israel. The first anointed king of Israel, Saul, rejected the LORD and was rejected by the LORD as king.

Remembering this about the anointed King Saul, consider the amazing respect the anointed king-in-waiting, David, had for the LORD's anointed, "*The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD*" (I Samuel 24:6). Though Saul was hunting David to kill him, David was not about to harm the one whom the LORD God Almighty had selected and dedicated to be king of Israel.

And then we find this prophecy about the coming Servant of the LORD: "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...*" (Isaiah 61:1)

While many prophets, priests, and kings were anointed in the Old Testament, showing they were separated and dedicated for the LORD's service, they all pointed to One who would be anointed by the LORD to bring the good news of salvation.

When John the Baptist called Jesus of Nazareth "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,*" we are told that two of his disciples (John and Andrew) followed Him. After spending time with Jesus and hearing His words, Andrew then went and told his brother Simon Peter that "*we have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)*" (John 1:41).

Having heard Jesus' words and seen His miracles, Peter would later confess to Jesus, "*We have come to*

believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69).

On the day that Jesus rose from the dead, two of His followers were confused about what had happened to Him on Good Friday

(His arrest, scourging, crucifixion, and death). It seems they had some misconceptions about what the Christ would actually do. Jesus replied, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*" (Luke 24:25-27).

In the book of Acts we find that the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys would likewise demonstrate to the Jews from the Old Testament Scripture that Jesus was "the Christ" who had to suffer, die, and rise again.

Jesus is the Christ! He is THE Anointed One, separated from all others and dedicated by God as His Lamb to take away the sin of the world. Jesus is the One anointed to be our great High Priest. He was sacrificed on the cross to make atonement for sin and to continually intercede for us unto God (speaking to God in our behalf). He is the One anointed as the great Prophet who has spoken to us in God's behalf. He is the One anointed to be the King of kings, ruling over all creation in behalf of His Church—that is, all His believers!

May we never lose sight of this eternally important title of our Savior! These are the good tidings of great joy which the angels brought on the night Jesus was born:

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

(Luke 2:11)



Loving Communication Wondrously Restored

PASTOR MICHAEL EICHSTADT, HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN

No cell phone bars! There we were on the road somewhere in Missouri, completely out of touch with everyone!

It doesn't happen very often, does it? We expect to be able to reach out to almost anyone at any time via voice, text message, or e-mail. We count on these means to stay in touch with children, parents, and other loved ones wherever they may be.

Yet it is far from perfect and comes at a price. The average family reportedly spends more every month on cell phone equipment and service than on any other household expense. Most of us would likely say it's still worth it. The alternative is to be cut off from others and be all alone.

Despite their limitations and cost, we appreciate our cell phones, for who wants to be alone and stranded when the tire blows out on a rural highway? Who wants to be alone when there is something to celebrate?

But there is something vastly better. The most intelligent smart phone and the most extensive 4g network in the world are nothing compared to the way God reached out to the world.

Sin had cut all mankind off from God and the blessings of life with Him. Isaiah pronounces a chilling indictment: *"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear"* (Isaiah 59:2). Why should God listen to me—a sinner whose selfishness, pride, and stubbornness merit His righteous anger?

We could no more reach out to God and repair our relationship with Him than I could fix my cell phone issues. But then God initiated a new conversation.

Christmas is all about the most amazing communication from the holy God to sinful mankind. *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among*

us" (John 1:14). God fulfilled His long-standing promise and spoke to the world in the person of His only begotten Son. Jesus came not to destroy the world with a blistering message of condemnation but to announce new hope and life. He delivered the news not by radio signals sent from heaven but by being born of a virgin, growing up as our Brother under the law, preaching repentance and forgiveness, and finally by paying the horrific debt of our sin by dying on the cross.

Because God came to us in Jesus, we have free access to the throne of God 24/7. Sin cannot interfere. It's been taken out of the way. Not only does God speak to us in His Word, He invites us to carry on a running conversation with Him. On the commute to work as you mentally run down the day's agenda, you can share the concerns, pressures, and deadlines with the Savior who leads you back to His Word and its unfailing promises of help.

When the frenzied activities of the season reach fever pitch, you can talk to the One who was born in the quiet of the Bethlehem night. He gives you the peace which passes all understanding. In caring for children or elderly parents, you are never alone. When the responsibilities and stress seem far greater than your ability to cope, don't wait. Call on Him who walked this same Earth and knows firsthand what you face. His counsel and strength are as close as your Bible.

The One who came, died, rose again, and is returning has promised you: *"...And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). What's more, this totally reliable means of heavenly communication is always absolutely free, a gift of God's boundless grace!

"Glory to God in the highest!"



The Continuing Work of the Holy Spirit

CDS TEACHER DAVID BERNTHAL,
FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN

SECOND OF FIVE PARTS OF A
SERIES ON THE THIRD ARTICLE

“This is most certainly true!”

The THIRD ARTICLE installments:

- 1) The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel
- 2) **The Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps me**
- 3) The Holy Spirit calls the whole Christian Church on Earth
- 4) The Holy Spirit daily forgives sins
- 5) The Holy Spirit gives me eternal life

THE APOSTLES' CREED

*I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.*

*And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born
of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell; the third day He
rose again from the dead; He ascended into
heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God,
the Father Almighty; from thence He shall
come to judge the quick and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy
Christian Church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the
body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

(TLH, p. 12)

While we would have continued to steadfastly and stubbornly resist the Lord and His ways, the Spirit has broken down every barrier to allow the blessed gospel to resuscitate our soul. What a blessing to be gathered together with like-minded Christians in church families for the strengthening and encouraging of each other!

But is that the end of the work of the Holy Spirit who sometimes seems to be the “silent partner” of the Holy Trinity?

While it is true that no one can call Jesus ‘Lord’ without the power of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3), it is also true we could know nothing else about Him without the Spirit’s work as well (Job 32:8). Only the Holy Spirit can reveal the true, intended meaning of Scriptures. Yes, He fans the feeble flames of our faith, but He also enlightens us with the deep meanings of the mysteries of God. Flesh and blood cannot understand these things (I Corinthians 2:6-16, John 14:26).

It is good for us to remember this when witnessing to others. It will not be our persuasiveness or clever arguments that will convince someone of the truths of the Holy Scriptures. Rather let us present the law and gospel appropriately and let the Holy Spirit do the convincing.

Having been enlightened by the Spirit’s guidance and teaching, we realize that He has a special purpose for us. We see that it is His will that we have also been sanctified or ‘set apart’ from the people and things in this world for a holy purpose. This sanctification is a direct result of our justification through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. As we have been declared ‘not guilty’ because the punishment for our sins was laid on Jesus, so now we have been sanctified or ‘set apart’ to live according to His Word and to share it with all whom we meet.

Our sanctified faith-life is very different from our saving faith. Saving faith is a Spirit-generated trust in Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Savior. Our sanctified faith, on the other hand, is either growing or shrinking as we follow our Lord and His Word (John 14:23). Since every believer will vary from moment to moment in degree of sanctified living, therefore it is good to meet others ‘where they are’ in their faith and then help and

encourage them to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

With the Spirit's help we abstain from the sinful behavior and evils of this world. Our attempts to live according to God's Word in no way contribute toward our salvation. Rather, the Spirit of God is at work, producing a faith-filled heart that has seen the love of God displayed in His sacrificed Son.

Another holy work of the Holy Spirit is to keep believers in the true faith. As every camper/hunter knows, a fire needs fuel and air in order to burn. So likewise, as we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit breathes on the spark of faith in our hearts, willing it to flame up. When we gather around the Word, participate in Bible study, contemplate our baptism, and share in the Lord's Supper, we are participating in activities or means that the Holy Spirit uses to increase and strengthen our faith.

It is good for us to remember the will of God. It is His will that we spend eternity with Him in heaven. To this end God hasn't simply wound us up like a clock-work toy and set us on a path to see if we make it there. Rather the Holy Spirit has enlightened our hearts with the truth and power of God's Word. He has set us apart from the world by giving us a new heart to follow the Lord.

And He has given us the means of grace in Word and Sacrament by which He continues to work in our hearts the blessings and fruits of the Spirit and trust in our Savior until we reach life everlasting.



THE THIRD ARTICLE

(About Sanctification)

[We print Luther's Explanation only.]

I believe that I cannot by my own reasoning or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the last day He will raise me and all the dead and give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

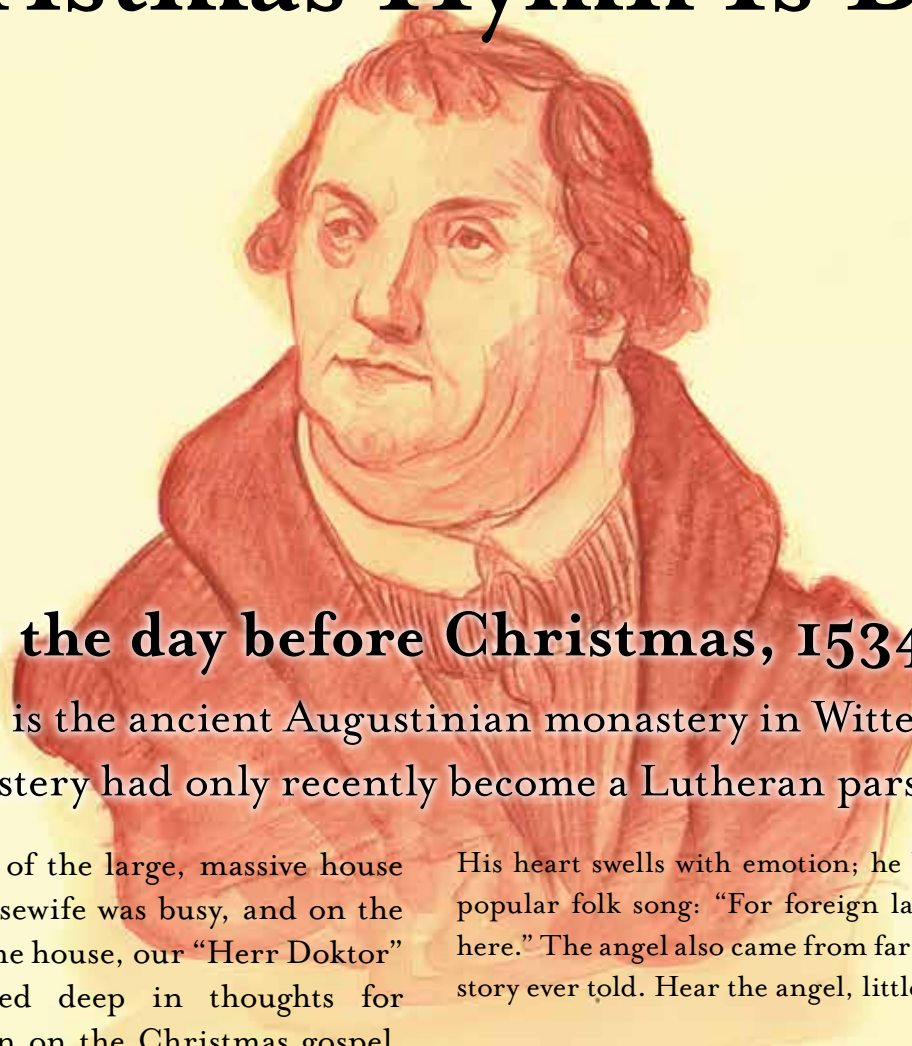
This is most certainly true.

(Martin Luther's *SMALL CATECHISM*,
Sydow edition, 2000)



New *Spokesman* helmsman (editor) Pastor Paul Naumann of Tacoma, Washington (right) and past editor Paul Fleischer, at the 31st convention of the CLC this past summer. See THANK YOU story on page 23.

A Christmas Hymn Is Born*



It is the day before Christmas, 1534.

The scene is the ancient Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. The monastery had only recently become a Lutheran parsonage.

In the kitchen of the large, massive house a faithful housewife was busy, and on the other end of the house, our “Herr Doktor” Luther was buried deep in thoughts for tomorrow’s sermon on the Christmas gospel. Adjoining his study is the large living room, with the ceiling-high stove made of shining tile. Close by stands a cradle which just then is being shaken by the wailing of a small child who is neither interested in a Christmas dinner nor in tomorrow’s sermon. He wants someone to rock the cradle and he wants this now!

“Herr Doktor, don’t you hear the little one crying? Please, I am so very busy now.” Kate Luther had a way which never found her busy husband unwilling to give a helping hand! Still deep in thoughts upon the great mystery of the incarnation of our Lord, he now sits by the cradle of the little child, gently rocking his little one to sleep.

Suddenly he becomes aware of the little child lying in a cradle, just like the Lord Jesus lying in a manger!

His heart swells with emotion; he begins to hum a popular folk song: “For foreign lands I now come here.” The angel also came from far with the sweetest story ever told. Hear the angel, little one?

**“From heav’n above to earth I come
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:”**

And so Luther sings to his little child, now fallen asleep, that “sweetest ancient cradle song”! Tiptoeing back to his study, he sits at his desk and writes line upon line, stanza upon stanza, until there are fifteen in all. He sings the words of the angel proclaiming the Savior’s birth in David’s town, of the virgin mother, of the swaddling clothes and manger dark.

**“This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford,
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.”**

With the shepherds he goes “to see the precious gift of God, who hath His own dear Son bestowed.” He marvels at the great mystery that surrounds this little child:

**Ah, Lord, who hast created all,
How weak art Thou, how poor and small,
That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed,
Where humble cattle lately fed!**

That child is the Lord, a King so rich and great—yet “all the world’s wealth, honor, might, Are naught and worthless in Thy sight.” He came not to live in palaces of kings but in the hearts of humble folks:

**Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.**

The singing of this hymn became a Christmas Eve tradition in Luther’s home and in many others since. Luther would have a student from the university dress like an angel and then sing the angel’s message given in the first seven stanzas. All would join in the remaining eight. And when they came to the last two stanzas, all would march around the Christmas tree while singing:

**My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;**



Pastor Gervasius W. Fischer became associate pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minn. in 1949. After suffering a stroke in 1955, he was encouraged by his doctor to winter in a warmer climate. In December, 1956 he began holding worship services in a rented hall in downtown Winter Haven, Fla. In 1957 the group organized as Immanuel Lutheran Church and was financially supported by Immanuel-Mankato. Pastor Fischer died of a heart attack in 1958. The Winter Haven congregation continues to exist as a member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

* Adapted from the November/December 1949 *Immanuel Lutheran*, by Pastor G. W. Fischer; submitted to the *Lutheran Spokesman* by current Immanuel pastor, Wayne Eichstadt

**I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle-song:**

**Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.**

From this beautiful hymn (TLH #85 – Ed.) we can sense the true spirit of Christmas in Luther’s home. He was a very busy man, a maligned man, a troubled man—yet nothing could rob him of the time, the joy, the peace in his home to sing glory to God, who to us His Son hath given. Truly a great man, a believer at heart!

It was probably about this hymn that he once said: “The tenor sings the simple melody, and then four or more voices accompany and literally surround this melody like joyous children singing and springing with joy, embracing as it were the simple melody as if it were Christ their Lord.”

Only in those churches and in those homes the true Christmas spirit will be found where “lips no more can silence keep,” because the “heart with very joy doth leap”! The joy is there because the Christmas gospel is believed. May this joy be in every home of our congregation! It is my prayer for you.



STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

“...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).

“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.’ And again: ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ And again: ‘Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.’ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

(Hebrews 2:10-18)

Jesus, Our Brother — Made Perfect Through Sufferings

PASTOR EMERITUS PAUL FLEISCHER
RED WING, MINNESOTA

A previous study of this epistle showed how Jesus, exalted above the angels, is worshiped by them. Now we come to the amazing truth that Jesus was “*made a little lower than the angels*” (2:9). This fact confronts us with the holy mystery of the Savior’s dual nature—God and man in one person—and with that, the eternally crucial “why?” of that duality.

We remind that the holy writer’s desire was to increase the faith of the Jewish Christians in Jesus as the “better” Savior (7:22, 8:6) over against false teachers who were trying to persuade them to return to the laws and beliefs of the Old Testament covenant. The false teaching Judaizers argued, for example, that “You’re being persecuted for your new faith, aren’t you? That’s God’s judgment for forsaking your former way of life!”

How devious Satan is! Throughout the Gospels the Savior teaches that persecution comes with the territory of the “better” salvation He won for us. In one place He says, “*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...*” (Matthew 5:11-12).

As the holy writer puts it here, Jesus, our flesh and blood Brother, came to win salvation for us at great cost to Himself: “*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings...*”



This explains God's purpose in making Christ taste death—it was fitting for Jesus to be made perfect by suffering in order to bring many sons to glory. What does that mean? Wasn't Jesus already perfect? Indeed He was, according to His divine nature. Yet according to His human nature, if Jesus was going to be the perfect (in the sense of "complete") "captain of [our] salvation," the God-ordained way was that He would have to experience suffering and death.

Ponder it, dear friends—the sinners' Savior had to be not only a Prophet and a King but also a sacrificial High Priest! "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

The role of Jesus as High Priest is a recurring theme in Hebrews. The first time the term appears is in this text. The High Priest served "in things pertaining to God," bringing God's Word to the people, sacrificing and interceding for them. And the High Priest's ultimate function was to "make propitiation for the sins of the people."

The words *make propitiation* mean "to make atonement for." These words suggest that something had happened to incur God's wrath. These words suggest that something is SIN. Sin demands an atoning. Without an atoning or purging of sin, God cannot grant forgiveness, for "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Ah, but sin is supposedly no big deal, for we're all sinners, right? Yet it remains forever true that "whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). And "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

All the animal blood-shedding sacrifices by Old Testament high priests pointed ahead to the one great High Priest. Yes, the purging which sinners so desperately need was accomplished by the Great High Priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1)—by

Jesus, the Lamb of God—of whom we read, "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Hebrews 1:3). Other Scripture passages likewise speak of Christ as the "propitiation" for sin—and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world (see 1 John 2:2; Romans 3:24-26).

Regarding the three Old Testament passages quoted within this group of verses, we're told that they all "emphasize the Son's solidarity with the men for whom He performs His priestly service" (*Concordia Bible with Notes*, 1971, p. 437).

All this is really more than human language can tell—the surpassing glory of the so-great salvation (Hebrews 2:3) which is ours in Christ Jesus!

Fellow possessors of the "better" salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, come what may—persecution, tribulation, distress of one kind or another—let us praise our gracious God. He has provided Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who took on Him the "seed of Abraham" so that He could shed His innocent blood as the ransom-payment for sin "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Jesus, our Elder Brother, the perfect, the complete, Savior! "...Such a High Priest was [indeed] fitting for us..." (Hebrews 7:26), for through Him we have been reclaimed from Satan to God for time and eternity.

**Jesus, all our ransom paid,
All Thy Father's will obeyed,
By Thy sufferings perfect made:
Hear us, holy Jesus.**

**Brighten all our heavenward way
With an ever holier ray**

Till we pass to perfect day: Hear us, holy Jesus.

(TLH #185:1,3)

HALLELUJAH AND AMEN!



The Finger of God

PASTOR EMERITUS JOHN KLATT, RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

(Luke 11:15-26)

The apostle Paul describes God as “dwelling in unapproachable light” so that no one has seen Him or can see Him (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet God graciously condescends to make Himself known to us. He wants us to know Him, and not only in His power which by itself would drive us away in terror, but also in His love to draw us to Him.

That we may know Him, God describes Himself to us in human terms. He speaks of His power as a “mighty hand” and an “outstretched arm” (Deuteronomy 5:15). He speaks of His favor toward us as a kindly and welcoming face turned toward us (Numbers 6:25).

In this particular discourse Jesus uses a human term to reveal His divine power against the devil.

Jesus’ enemies had been accusing Him of using satanic power to drive out demons. Jesus exposed the absurdity of this charge, for it did not even make sense that the devil would use his power to disrupt the work of his own allies. If he did that, his kingdom would fall by itself, as would any kingdom thus divided.

Jesus also exposed the hypocrisy of those who made the charge. Their own sons cast out demons, but no one accused them of using satanic power to do so. It was not satanic power but divine power by which Jesus cast out demons. That power Jesus here calls “the finger of God.”

But why the finger of God? Why not the arm of God or even the fist of God? Those are instruments of force used to subdue enemies. By contrast, fingers are instruments of finer things such as writing, artwork, and music.

The expression ‘finger of God’ first appears in the Bible when it was spoken by Pharaoh’s magicians after they were





God's finger touching Adam . From *Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo. Photo taken by © Savcoco | Dreamstime.com

unable to replicate the miracles that Moses did. “*This is the finger of God,*” they said to Pharaoh (Exodus 8:19). Even those pagan sorcerers saw in the miracles of Moses the handiwork of the Almighty.

The expression appears again when we are told that the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). The engraving on those stone tablets was not the work of a mere man but a communication directly from God—the expression of His holy will.

Jesus’ work of casting out demons was likewise the work of God. It bore the distinctive marks of God’s handiwork. It was the coming of the kingdom of God. It was God reestablishing His reign in His world by overthrowing the power of the enemy. Satan had gained a foothold in this world by leading mankind into sin and rebellion against God. Jesus came to destroy Satan’s power over us, and He did it by atoning for our sins and taking away our guilt with His cross.

Now instead of Satan ruling us to our destruction, we believers have God graciously ruling in our hearts

to our good. Satan has been driven out, and we have the Holy Spirit living in us.

Yet Satan is always trying to find a way back in. Be on your guard against that, Jesus warns us here. You, dear Christian, are like a house that has been swept and put in order. Keep the old evil foe out by filling your mind with the Word. That Word is still the finger of God by which Satan is cast out.

Tho’ devils all the world should fill,

All eager to devour us,

We tremble not, we fear no ill,

They shall not overpower us.

This world’s prince may still

Scowl fierce as he will,

He can harm us none,

He’s judged; the deed is done;

One little word can fell him.

(*TLH* #262:3)



GOD'S OBSCURE SAINTS (Last of Nine in a Series)

As this edifying series of chapel talks concludes, we once again heartily thank Prof. emeritus Paul R. Koch for sharing them with us from his archives while he served on the faculty at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. The Spirit of God bless these messages! – Ed.

Down along the end of Scripture's lengthy list of God's dear children who are hardly known to us, we come today to a Christian martyr by the name of Antipas. All that we know of him is found in this single verse, part of the Savior's testimony to the church in Pergamos: *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells"* (Revelation 2:13).

Who was this Antipas ("in place of the father")? Not to be confused with Antipas, short-lived procurator of Judea half-a-century before Jesus' birth, for the Antipas of Revelation was our Christian brother, a child of God who endured even death rather than desert his Savior. Jesus took God's obscure saint to heaven in a blood-bath of glory, claiming as His own this gentleman as *"My faithful martyr, who was killed among you."*

Picture, if you will, what was going on; the scenario can be found in sacred and secular records—there came a pounding at his door in the dead of night; Roman soldiers dragged Antipas from his home and family, and within sight of the altar to Zeus or the temple of Athena on City Heights they dumped him before the gilded shrine of the "divine Augustus."

Then and there the choice was laid before him—a choice given to others, and a choice others had made: take a pinch of this incense, step forward, and dribble the incense into the flame, thus making the gesture of worship to Augustus Caesar, the demi-god of the day. Nobody would see if he did so with mental reservations or private compunctions of conscience, for worship can be faked, and everyone knew it. If Antipas faked it, he could walk away and go back home; the heathen would be pacified, and "no harm done."

However, they meant the gesture to be worship,

that's how Satan meant it, and that's how it would be interpreted by Jesus, who had given grace and mercy and redemption and sanctification to Antipas, and who now granted Antipas this outstanding opportunity to be His faithful witness.

Jesus was watching and waiting. What would Antipas do? We have no details, for none of his words are recorded—but it amounted to this, that Antipas did from his heart what he knew was right, and he was willing to live and die by His Savior's code, *"Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32-33).

My friends, that was no child's game for Antipas, and neither is it for us. This life we are in and the moral decisions we make have eternal import; Satan is not on vacation; every day in every way Satan is poking and prodding and coaxing and urging his evil agenda upon us too.

In the Pergamos congregation Satan had made his impact; how else are we to understand the words of Jesus to the congregation: *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."*

Isn't it unsettling that every breath of God's approval is counter-balanced with a warning? Verses 14, 15, and 16 of chapter 2 may strike the casual reader as being unnecessarily negative. Well, tell Jesus about being negative! He could see the dangers they didn't; He could perceive what the old evil foe was doing among them. There was so much evil threatening the Pergamos congregation that Jesus had to declare that He was going to use His two-edged sword among them, for Satan had his throne there, and Satan dwelt there, too.

Those people needed Jesus on the job for them and in them and with them – and it was hard work for Jesus to preserve His faithful few, including the one-and-only Christian mentioned by name in that congregation – Antipas, one of God’s obscure saints now and forever defined as “*My faithful martyr.*”

In short, Antipas did not slouch away in defeat that day, still living in body but dead of soul; he chose to fall before the sword as Jesus’ faithful martyr! He closed his eyes before the idol of Caesar and then opened them to see his Savior with open arms at the door of heaven! Jesus gave him strength to confess in word and deed and whisked him out of his crumpled corpse to eternal glory. Antipas survives!

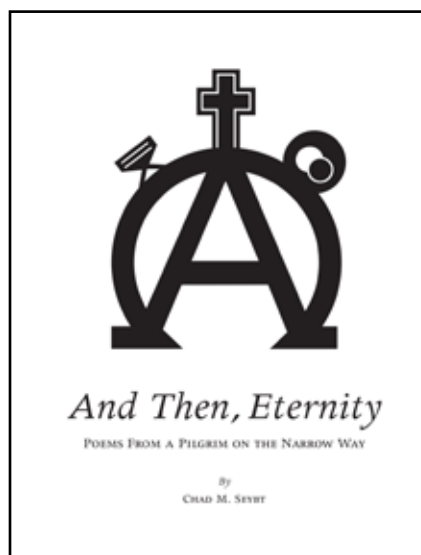
Now, what does Jesus want us to learn from this brief note about one of His obscure saints? First, let’s not be so parochial that we comfort ourselves with our safe distance from bodily persecution. Are we so far removed from God’s obscure saints in India and Africa and Burma [Myanmar] that we don’t partake of their pain? “*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*” (2 Corinthians 11:29) Besides, Satan does his dirty work with slivers as well as with axe and torch. You and I are targets of many “fiery darts of the wicked one” in our secular, humanist, idolatrous, lusty, entertainment-oriented world. Pay attention! A single wound not attended to can turn septic and kill

you! Prevent that puncture! Build up your defenses! “*Put on the whole armor of God, that you [God’s obscure saints] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11).

Lord, have mercy!

**Preserve Thy Word, O Savior,
To us this latter day
And let Thy kingdom flourish,
Enlarge Thy Church, we pray.
Oh, keep our faith from failing,
Keep hope’s bright star aglow.
Let naught from Thy Word turn us
While wand’ring here below.**

**Preserve Thy Word and preaching,
The truth that makes us whole,
The mirror of Thy glory,
The power that saves the soul.
Oh, may this living water,
This dew of heavenly grace,
Sustain us while here living
Until we see Thy face!**
(TLH #264:1,5)



New book of devotional poetry available!

And Then, Eternity

Poems From a Pilgrim on the Narrow Way

By Chad M. Seybt

The Christmas poem “Born of Mary, God’s Begotten” is on page 6 in this issue. This little book would make a great Christmas gift or possible witness tool. Cost is \$5.00 per copy (plus shipping) and can be purchased by contacting Pastor Chad M. Seybt at

cmseybster@yahoo.com.

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Designed by Matthew Schaser and Cover Art by Christine Kazemba.

...The PERFECT Present

PASTOR EM. PAUL FLEISCHER

Fellow Worshipers of God's Perfect Christmas Gift—

The cover of a recent Sunday newsmagazine said, "There's still time to find the perfect present for Christmas." And then it was said, "Check inside for last minute gifts."

The word "perfect" has lately become a favorite adjective of many people. At home I heard one of my wife's sewing customers exclaim "Perfect!" as she checked the placement of the applique on her son's jacket. I wonder how often the word "Perfect!" will be spoken this Christmas about a gift received, though before long the wheels come off or the threads fray. Whatever the problem, the supposedly perfect gift was flawed.

As you children are going to tell us again tonight, the Baby Jesus is the perfect Christmas Gift for every sinful human being, including you and me. Let us consider the design, the advertising, and the sending or shipping of this Gift.

DESIGN:

Newborn babies are often described with words like cute, sweet, precious, or even "gifts of God." But we know we can't use the word "perfect" for them since they have inherited their parents' sinful nature. How different was the eternal Son of God, who took upon Himself sin-less human flesh when He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the flawless-without-defect-complete-in-all-respects God-Man who came to bear the sins of the whole world—all your sins and all my sins.

ADVERTISING:

No false or misleading advertising here! Again, as you children are going to tell us, all the prophecies in the scrolls of the Old Testament (300+ of them) came true exactly

as "advertised." The Messiah, Jesus, came into our sin-filled, sin-perishing world to give His life as a ransom for all our sins. And every single one of those advertised prophecies pointing to Jesus was fulfilled to perfection. As the title for our Christmas Eve service puts it: *God's Promises Kept—"Perfect!"*

SENDING/SHIPPING:

Every Christmas some gifts are lost or damaged. I mean, they can get broken or lost in the mail or by the shipping company. But there was no such problem in the "sending" of God's perfect Christmas Gift, His Son our Savior! As you children are going to report, when God's own appointed time came, He "*sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Galatians 4:4). Yes, that best of all God's gifts arrived just as promised, at just the right time, and with no damage. Jesus was born perfect!

One of the last minute "perfect" gifts mentioned in the newspaper magazine was a personalized doormat. The sales pitch was that "nothing says thoughtful like a gift that has the recipient's name or initials on it." Well, a personalized doormat that we wipe our feet on wouldn't last very long, would it? How different was God's perfect Gift in the Manger. That Gift, which never wears out, has been personalized for each one of us, as the angel told the shepherds, "*Unto YOU [you and I can put our name there!] is born this day, in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord....*"

God's Christmas Gift is indeed "Perfect!" May we all believe in, confess, and share with all people the Good News of this perfect spiritual Christmas gift which has the name of each one of us on it—Jesus, the Savior of sinners! Amen.



THANK YOU!

Adapted from an editor's retirement remarks to the 31st CLC Convention,
Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wis. (June 2014)

Dear brethren:

With Jacob at the brook Jabbok I say:
“O God of my father Abraham and God of my
father Isaac...I am not worthy of the least of
all the mercies and of all the truth which You
have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this
Jordan with my staff, and now I have become
two companies” (Genesis 32:9-10).

Having graduated fifty years ago this spring from
Immanuel Seminary, I say “Thank You, Lord Jesus,
for the privilege and honor of proclaiming Your saving
Word in various pulpits within our synod fellowship
these many years.”

I also thank you, brethren, for the privilege of having
served as Editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*, our synod's
pulpit, steering the month-by-month content and
direction of the magazine for thirty-plus years (366
issues since July 1984).

All along the way I did what I could to dot the
proverbial i's and cross the proverbial t's linguistically
and theologically. The holy goal was always to clearly
and accurately proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus
Christ, as that gospel is encapsulated in the treasure
chest of the written Word which “cannot be broken”
(our *Spokesman's* byline from John 10:35). By God's
pure grace alone that Word remains among us what
it has always been—the divinely and verbally inspired
message from God the Holy Spirit for the world. As
such, it deserves to be upheld, defended, and boldly
confessed before each and every blood-bought soul
who reads the magazine.

Now as the editor's mantle is passed to another, my
prayer and confidence is that our *Spokesman* will ever
be genuinely *Lutheran*—that is, an unapologetic witness
to the sixteenth century Reformation principles of
salvation by Scripture alone, by grace alone, by faith
alone, through Christ alone, without the works of the
law—a salvation which through the indwelling Spirit
produces a hearty, joyful, and fruitful faith before the
watching world.

Allow yet some kudos. Speaking of dotting the



Paul Fleischer & Paul R. Koch

linguistic i's and crossing the
theological t's, we give special thanks
to Professor emeritus Paul R. Koch
(as he retires too from his position
as assistant editor) for the month-
by-month sharing of his literary
skills and theological insights over
the last sixteen years. Thank you,
staff writers all, for meeting the deadlines of your
respective assignment(s)—above all, seeing to the
scriptural soundness and spiritual edification of what
you write. Thank you to the CLC's Board of Education
and Publications as it facilitated this editor's transition
from cut-and-paste snail-mail days to e-mail and
digital PDF-ing. Thanks also to other long-time
partners in this holy business—Business Manager
Benno Sydow and Designer/Graphic Artist Matt
Schaser. Their on-going faithful behind-the-scenes
contributions are a gift from the Lord of the Church
to us all.

In summation, Thank You, Jesus, for all Your mercies
and all Your truth shown to Your servant.

Sail on then, *Spokesman* helmsman and crew, until
through Jesus' merits our respective ships of life are
safely docked in heaven's harbor.

**Preserve, O Lord, Your Zion, Bought dearly
with Your blood; Protect what You have chosen
Against the hellish flood.**

**Be always our defender When dangers gather
round; When all the earth is crumbling,
Safe may Your Church be found.**

**Preserve in wave and tempest Your storm-tossed
little flock; Assailed by wind and weather,
May it endure each shock.**

**Stand at the helm, our pilot, And set the course
aright; Then we will reach the harbor
In Your eternal light.**

(LSB #658:3&5)

To God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—
alone the glory! Amen!

ΛΩ

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Installations

In accord with our usage and order ILC Seminary graduate **Aaron Ude**, who was called as pastor by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Rapid City, S.Dak., was installed on Sunday, September 28, 2014.

—Pastor Em. John Klatt

In accord with our usage and order **Ernest Bernet**, who was called by Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Ga. to be its pastor, was installed on November 2, 2014. Also laying on hands were congregation members Mark Greve and Charles Templeton, and Pastor Glenn Oster.

—Pastor Em. David Koenig

In accord with our usage and order, **Thomas Schuetze**, who was called by St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lakewood (Denver), Colo., to be its pastor, was installed on Sunday, November 9, 2014. Michael Sprengeler and Pastor Chad Seybt assisted with the laying on of hands.

—Pastor Em. John Klatt

Job Opportunities at Immanuel Lutheran College/High School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Immanuel Girls Dormitory Supervisor
and

**Immanuel Food Services
Manager/Head Cook:**

The Board of Regents has announced that applications are now being sought for two positions at Immanuel:

Girls Dormitory Supervisor and
Food Services Manager/Head Cook.

For a job description and application for either position, please contact

President Steven Sippert

steve.sippert@ilc.edu

715.836.6620

Applications are due by January 11, 2015.

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

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