

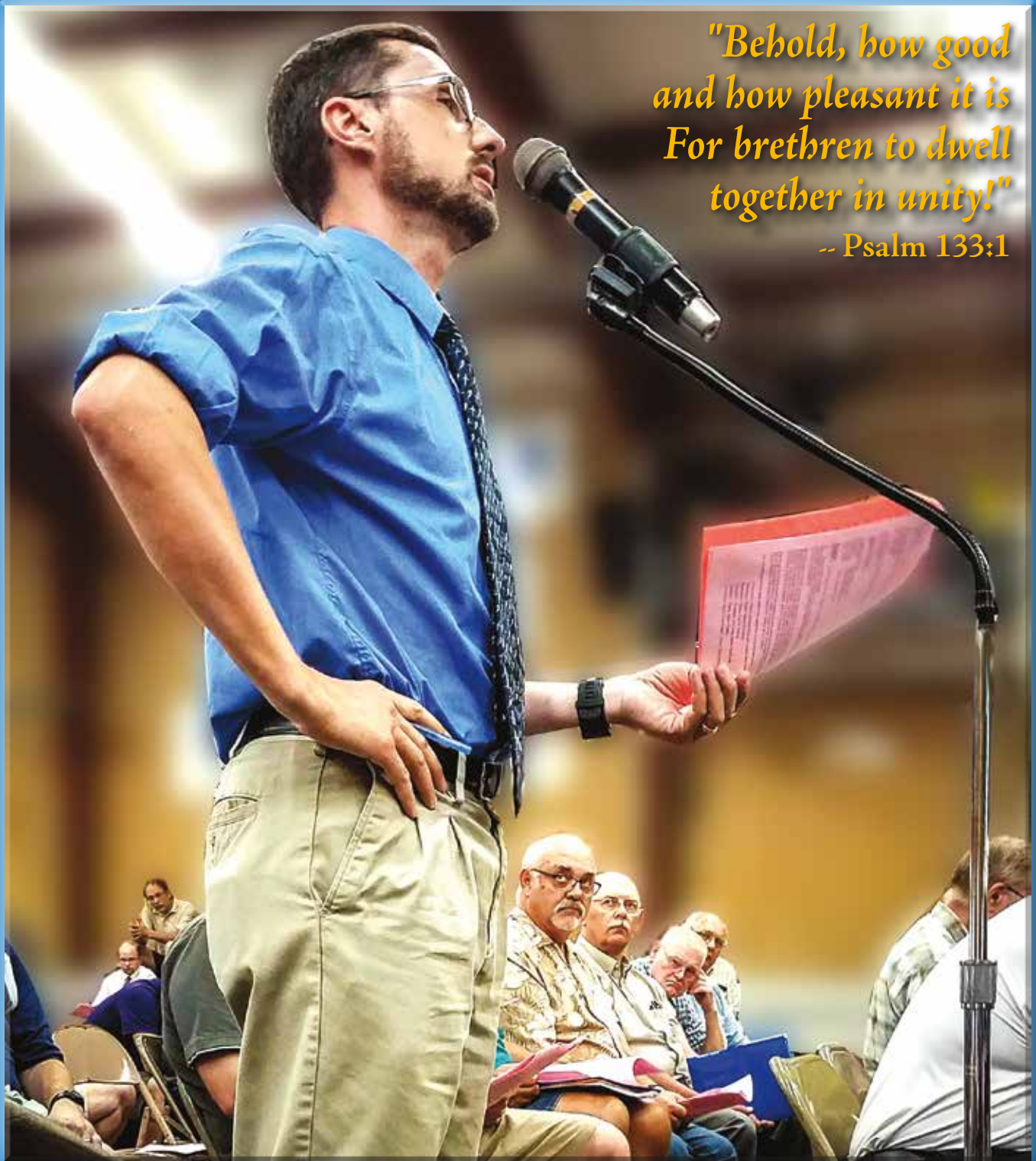
June 2021 VOL 63 NO. 12

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." (John 10:35)

*"Behold, how good
and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell
together in unity!"*

-- Psalm 133:1



– CLC CONVENTION, JUNE 24-27, 2021, EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN –



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An Amazing Act of Love

*“Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’
And to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’”*

(Hosea 2:1)

The above passage is the conclusion to one of the most amazing human love stories ever told. God told His prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, so he married a woman named Gomer. She was repeatedly unfaithful to him. She bore him three children but he was not their true father. Yet Hosea forgave her, loved her, and cared for her and her children. After all that, she left him and somehow ended up totally destitute. Hosea, in an amazing act of love, bought her back to be his own wife again and cared for her.

Gomer was a vivid picture of the rebellious people of Israel. They were committing spiritual adultery by worshipping idols instead of the Lord. God had named Gomer’s daughter “*Lo-Ruhamah*”—No Mercy. He named her second son “*Lo-Ammi*”—Not My People. After loving and forgiving Israel for several hundred years, God indicated that they were no longer His people and He would not have mercy on them. Without God’s protection, the Assyrians conquered them, scattered them among the nations, and they became destitute. Then, in an amazing act of love, God promised to buy them back to be His people once again.

The story of Gomer and Israel is also our story. The Apostle Peter picks up on this and says to all believers in Christ, “*At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy.*” (1 Peter 2:10 EHV) We had no rightful claim to God’s love or to be considered His people. However, by an amazing act of love, God bought us back with the lifeblood of His own Son.

Now God addresses us as His true children and calls on us to, “*Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’ and to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’*” This is a simple but beautiful description of our fellowship. God describes us as family. We are brothers and sisters with one another in the faith. Now we are to encourage each other with God’s amazing love.

This is the blessing of our fellowship. When you see a brother or a sister who is troubled by their sin or doubting their position as God’s child, you can call them “*Ruhamah*”—Mercy is shown. Christ paid for your sins on the cross so that God can show mercy and forgive you. Say to them “*Ammi*”—Christ bought you back with His own life so that He calls you “My People.”

If you see a brother or a sister straying back into a life of sin, remind that person how much God paid to rescue us from that life. He has made us His own and given us eternal life. Don’t throw it all away by returning to a life of sin again. Show that you are His people with your life.

We do that regularly when we worship together. We confess our sins together and are reassured of God’s mercy and forgiveness. We are warned and encouraged, convicted and forgiven with messages from God’s Law and Gospel. But the blessing of our fellowship extends beyond the moments of our worship. We can encourage one another in our daily life.

We can enjoy one another’s company because we are on the same page; we can trust each other. We can freely share our faith with one another without fear and encourage each other along the pathway to eternal life. We can also reassure each other that because we are the “People of God,” God will zealously look after us and care for us. In times of trouble we can remind one another, God is our refuge and strength, turn to Him. Trust in Him! He is our God!

This is the beauty of our fellowship. God’s incredible act of love has brought us together as brothers and sisters so we can live together in love and travel side by side along the road to heaven.



David Reim is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Vernon, British Columbia.

About Our Father's Work

God's plans are not always our plans. The Church of the Lutheran Confession's planned 2020 Convention was not held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the called workers and delegates will meet this year on June 24-27 at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

In Acts 15 the Holy Spirit records a controversy that struck the early Christian church. *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question."* (Acts 15:1-2)

The question was raised: was it necessary for Gentile converts to be circumcised? For the Jewish believer in the time after Jesus' ascension, a radical change in the status quo was taking place. The "certain men" in the passage above may have believed that they were completing Paul's mission work; in reality, they were forcing onto their fellow believers the demands of the Old Testament Law. This disagreement led to a call for the apostles and other church leaders to convene in Jerusalem. There were strong feelings on both sides of the meeting in Jerusalem, but the Gospel, free grace by faith alone, prevailed.

The 2021 CLC Convention will have important decisions to make. The Convention will reconsider the Joint Statement with the WELS and the ELS. This will be an opportunity to search God's Word and ensure that the practices and doctrine of our synod are in line with the Bible's teachings.

While the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 was dealing with the question of circumcision, they used the opportunity to hear accounts from the mission field. *"Then all the multitude*

kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles." (Acts 15:12) What joy these early Christians must have had to hear that the Word of the Lord was growing mightily throughout the known world!

At the CLC Convention, we will also hear news and accounts from the mission field. Both foreign and domestic mission reports will declare the wonders God works through the proclamation of the Gospel.

At the end of Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas had a difference of opinion. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark on their mission trip, but Paul didn't want to take someone who had left them on a prior journey. *"Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another."* (Acts 15:39)

Lord willing, no contention at the CLC Convention will require physical separation from one another. But no meeting of sinful humans will be free of disagreement.

The Convention will be tasked with making financial decisions, among them a future ILC building project. It's an opportunity to consider how best to use the financial blessings God gives us.

The Jerusalem Council's decision was shared in a letter. *"When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement."* (Acts 15:31)

CLC Convention is not only an opportunity to help make decisions for the synod but also to rejoice in the fellowship of believers. Pray for the Convention to make God-pleasing, wise decisions. Rejoice for the mission opportunities at home and abroad. Give thanks for the fellowship of believers and the work of faithful preachers of the Word. Look forward to the perfect fellowship and unity of the Holy Christian Church when we join our Savior in heaven.



Ross Kok is a teacher at Holy Cross Lutheran School in Phoenix, Arizona.

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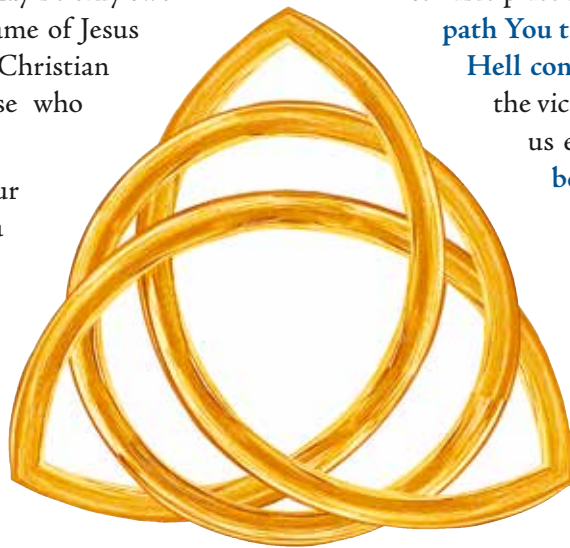
“God We Praise You”

Years ago, pastors would sometimes introduce the Creed in the Sunday service with words such as these: “Let us unite with the whole Christian Church on earth in confession of the Christian faith.” That formula, repeated week after week, was a worthwhile reminder of something easily forgotten. When we participate in a worship service, we may be only two or three gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ, but we are part of the Holy Christian Church, the total number of those who believe in Him.

Our hymn reminds us that in our Christian worship we are part of a multitude even larger than the whole Christian Church on earth. When we sing, **“God, we praise You! / God, we bless You! / God, we name You sov’reign Lord!”** (v.1), we are joining with the Church both on earth and in heaven. It is not only believers the world over who praise the one true and living God: **“Heav’n and earth draw near Your throne, / Singing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, / Lord of hosts and God alone!’”** (v.1) It is not only believers in this life who sing God’s praises with us: **“True apostles, faithful prophets, / Saints who set their world ablaze, / Martyrs, once unknown, unheeded, / Join one growing song of praise. / While Your Church on earth confesses / One majestic Trinity / Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, / God, our hope eternally.”** (v.2)

This is a setting of the ancient Christian hymn, *Te Deum Laudamus*, “God, We Praise You.” Dating back to the 4th century, its origins and authorship are uncertain. Still very much in use today, it appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal* in the Order of Matins (page 35) and in the hymn, “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name.” (#250) *The Lutheran Service Book* has two additional settings, including one to a fittingly majestic melody by Gustav Holst. (#941)

Verse 3 lauds Jesus and what He accomplished for us. After proclaiming the glory of God the Father and the Holy Trinity, the hymn praises Jesus Christ as true God: **“Jesus Christ, the King of glory, / Everlasting Son of God.”** He came down from heaven and took on our human nature: **“Humble was Your virgin mother.”** He paid the terrible price for our redemption: **“Hard the lonely path You trod / By Your cross is sin defeated, / Hell confronted face to face.”** He won for us the victory over sin and death and gained for us eternal salvation: **“Heaven opened to believers, / Sinners justified by grace.”**



The last stanza of the hymn is a prayer addressed to the victorious Christ enthroned on high and who will come again in glory: **“Christ, at God’s right hand victorious, / You will judge the world You made.”** It is a plea from us believers still living in this sinful world for His help to bring us safely to eternal life:

“Lord, in mercy help Your servants / For whose freedom You have paid: / Raise us up from dust to glory; / Guard us from all sin today. / King enthroned above all praises, / Save Your people, God, we pray.”

When we gather for worship, it is often in congregations that are small. And even when our numbers are greater, we know that we are still Jesus’ “*little flock*” outnumbered in the midst of an unbelieving world (Luke 12:32). But God’s Word also teaches that we are part of that “*great multitude which no one could number*” that the apostle John saw (Revelation 7:9). We are a mighty band because we are disciples of the living and reigning Christ and redeemed children of the one true and living God.



John Klatt is a retired pastor. He lives in Watertown, South Dakota.

In the Midst of Change, a God Who Doesn't

(Read Psalm 27)

Change is a part of life. In a real sense, change defines life. Every living thing is a changing thing. But as Christians, we never face change alone.

The first six verses of Psalm 27 are brimming with confidence. *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?"* In verse 7, however, the tone changes from triumph to uncertainty. The psalmist writes: *"Hear, O LORD, when I cry"* verse 7. *"Do not hide Your face from me"* and *"Do not leave me nor forsake me,"* verse 9. *"I would have lost heart,"* verse 13.

This abrupt change has led some commentators to conclude that David wrote Psalm 27 in two stages, each stage separated by years. Did he? Possibly. But perhaps there is a simpler explanation; namely, real life can change that abruptly. Haven't we all experienced at least one incident, one phone call, one knock on the door, one consultation with a doctor, that instantly changed our lives?

Change is a part of life, and it impacts all of us. Yet, one of the key messages of Psalm 27 is that we never face change alone. God is always with us. Thirteen times in Psalm 27 David uses the Hebrew name YAVEH for God, the source of our English word Jehovah. This name, YAVEH, derives from the verb "I AM."

Though we often imagine God has forsaken us, His very name, "I AM," declares the opposite. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus promises, *"And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* In Hebrews 13:5 God says, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Let's put the principle into practice. When we lose a job,

then and there the Lord is saying, "Don't lose hope. I AM with you." When we struggle to repair a troubled marriage, then and there the Lord is saying, "Don't give up. I AM with you." When we receive a bad report from the doctor, then and there the Lord is saying, "Don't be afraid. I AM with you."



This great name for God, "I AM," is not only the guarantee of God's eternal presence, but also the guarantee of His changelessness. *"For I am the LORD, I do not change,"* says God in Malachi 3:6; just as the writer of Hebrews states, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."* (Hebrews 13:8) Can you think of anything more comforting, uplifting, or inspiring than the promise of an UNCHANGING GOD in a constantly changing world?

When confronted by change, don't think God Himself is changing. God cannot change. He loves you in the good times, and He still loves you in the bad times. He is never for you one day and against you the next. He never grows sleepy, bored, or irritable; rather, according to Scripture, He loves you with an everlasting love and enfolds you in an everlasting embrace.

Psalm 136:1 invites and reminds: *"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures FOREVER."* And this is what empowers us to accept change with confidence, praise, and thanksgiving.



Mark Weis is professor and Dean of Students at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Live at Peace and Not at War

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

(James 4:1-3)

In the last verse of the preceding chapter, James writes, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (3:18) From what we read in the opening verses of chapter 4, there were Jewish Christians in the diaspora who were not bearing the good fruit of righteousness that makes for peace, but rather bad fruit that makes for conflict. Their relationships with one another had degenerated into hateful rivalries, lustful jealousies, and personal animosities. They certainly weren’t acting like disciples of Christ who love one another (see John 13:35).

From whence came this bad fruit of making war and not peace? The root problem was that they were not content with their lot in life. Selfishly desiring what this world has to offer, the rich greedily desired more, and looked down upon the poor in their midst as if they were of no account. The poor, on their part, lusted after what their rich brothers had.

As a result they were tearing each other apart, rather than building each other up by promoting a peaceful coexistence. Lusting, hating, and coveting does not enable anyone to obtain that which is truly meaningful, satisfying, and lasting.

These people, who regarded themselves as followers of Christ, were very much in need of stern admonition, and a call to repentance in the strongest possible terms. That was the reason for the probing questions of James, which were intended to cause these misguided Christians to do some serious soul searching and to learn from God’s Word where true peace and joy is to be found.

If the sinful passions that these Jewish Christians exhibited continued, their fighting with one another would go on and on. Not only would they not have peace with

one another, but more importantly they would not have peace with God—peace that can come only where there is repentance and faith in Christ’s redemption.

Why didn’t these Christians receive that which gives true and godly pleasure? They didn’t receive, because they failed to beseech the Lord in prayer. God gladly provides the high and blessed things that give His children the best form of pleasure. James’ worldly-minded readers needed to learn that God’s way of pleasure far transcends and outshines the world’s way of pleasure. His form of pleasure is the peace of knowing and receiving God’s forgiveness, having His favor resting upon us, being a part of the everlasting family of God, and having the blissful life of heaven awaiting us—all of which is ours through Jesus’ shed blood and righteousness.

For those who did ask of God, they did not receive because they asked amiss. They pleaded with God to give them what was not good for them. They selfishly wanted things of this world, which cannot truly satisfy and which they would end up wasting.

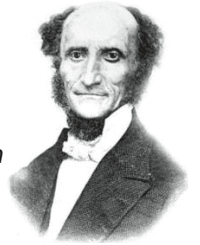
Their prayers and our prayers need to focus on what God wants for us, and that His will be done in our lives. In and through Christ Jesus, God can bless us with true and lasting peace and happiness.

May God help us to live at peace with one another, rather than warring with each other.



Mark Gullerud is retired from the pastoral ministry. He lives in Sunnyvale, California.

One of the hallmarks of the Lutheran Church is its proper understanding and application of the Bible's two main teachings—Law and Gospel. Dr. C.F.W. Walther's seminal work, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, is the basis for this two-year series. Note: page numbers given are accurate for the 1929 and 1986 editions of the book.



A Fundamental Difference

“Thesis VI--The Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.”

When you were young, did you ever have a parent or teacher tell you to “just do your best” and everything would be fine? You were probably told that because they wanted you not to worry about the result, but rather to put in your best effort. No doubt that is appropriate advice at times. In this lecture of Walther's, however, he warns against such advice when it has spiritual application. The problem is that “our best” is incapable of meeting God's perfect standards. Everything will NOT be fine when we come up short. It is the purpose of the Law to show us that.

If in our preaching we water down the message of the Law by mingling in the Gospel, it loses its effectiveness. If we are left with the impression that we contribute to our salvation, or that faith itself is a good work on our part, or that God really isn't going to punish us if we try hard enough, then the Law has not done its job and the heart is not being prepared to hear the Gospel. Walther states: “A preacher must proclaim the Law in such a manner that there remains in it nothing pleasant to lost and condemned sinners.”

The Law cannot save us, only condemn us. *“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith.’”* (Galatians 3:11) The Law makes no concessions; it only makes demands. As Luther

rightly pointed out from Scripture in his explanations to the Ten Commandments (“What Does This Mean?”), God condemns not only sinful acts, but the condition of the heart. People who give up outward vices, feeling they are now Christians because of that, have not received the true impact of the Law, which should focus on the attitude of the heart. The Law makes no one godly. Too often, people wrongly criticize preachers for making them feel uncomfortable by exposing their sin. They prefer preachers who tell them how good they are, to their own spiritual detriment.

God Himself did not sugarcoat the giving of the Law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai; nor should we. Parents and other teachers of the young do children a deadly disservice if they minimize the effect of sin. Promoting self-righteousness in youth will create little Pharisees who will see no need for a Savior. Likewise, the Catholic Church is wrong when it teaches

that only outwardly sinful acts are condemned by the Law. God is clear about the deadly nature of sins of the heart, *“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”* (1 John 3:15)

In conclusion, the sweetness of the Gospel message will only be welcomed by a heart utterly convicted of sin by the Law. This is what Walther is saying. This is what the Bible teaches. See Titus 3:3-7.

If we are left with the impression that we contribute to our salvation, or that faith itself is a good work on our part, or that God really isn't going to punish us if we try hard enough, then the Law has not done its job.



Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

[To read Walther's The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel for free on-line, and to access related Bible class materials, go to www.ilc.edu/Walther]

ERROR'S ECHO

In this series we take a look back at some of the most notorious errors and heresies that have threatened the church over the centuries, as well as the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which those false teachings continue to haunt 21st century thought and theology.

Monarchianism

From the very beginning, the Christian Church has always believed and confessed with Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," (Matthew 16:16) and with Thomas, who addressed Jesus as "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28) But the difficulty of defining how Jesus is both true God and true man, having a distinct personality and yet full equality with the Father, led to many errors. Usually one of these truths was overemphasized at the expense of the other.

Near the end of the second century, certain people were attempting to defend the absolute unity and sole rule of God. For this reason, they were called Monarchians. They had the worthy goal of avoiding every appearance of believing that Jesus was another God alongside the Father. This soon resulted in error from two directions. Some saw Jesus as less than fully God; these are often called dynamic monarchians, or adoptionists. Others saw Jesus as a mere manifestation of God the Father as He appears to us. These are named modal monarchians and will be dealt with in a later article.

Several names float down to us through the mists of time from Eusebius, the first Christian historian: Theodotus, the fuller; Theodotus, the banker; Artemon; even Asclepiodotus! These came from Asia Minor to Rome and taught that the man Jesus was given unique strength by the Father. The only deity He could claim was the power poured out on Him at His baptism. In this way, He was adopted by God. They were never a very large group and were condemned and cast out of the church.

But later a more prominent leader arose, who gained a larger following and caused greater difficulty. This was Paul of Samosata, the patriarch of Antioch. He is described as "unspiritual, worldly, imperious, vain, pompous, insidious, sophistic, covetous, and even immoral." He taught that Jesus was a man miraculously born but having no existence before being formed in the womb of Mary. He was granted a unique measure of divine wisdom and, aided by that wisdom, "gradually climbed to divine dignity and became worthy of the divine name." (This sounds much like

Mormonism with its humans-become-gods theology.) He was not a distinct person of the Trinity but dwelled with God much like reason dwells in us.

Paul of Samosata was finally condemned by a convention in Antioch, but only on the third try in 272. He was able to mask his teaching so cleverly that he sounded orthodox while meaning something quite different from what Scripture teaches.

He was also condemned by name in our Augsburg Confession. The first article rejects "Samosatenes, old and new, who . . . craftily and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Spirit are not distinct persons since 'Word' signifies a spoken word and 'Spirit' signifies a movement which is produced in things."

Eusebius stresses their rationalism. Of course, we strive to be rational. But when reason becomes supreme over Scripture, it always leads to error. Eusebius: "They care not what the holy books say, but they laboriously seek out a form of reasoning which would support their impiety." They admire Aristotle, and Galen they "almost worship." They were not afraid to alter the Scriptures, claiming "to correct them." Others "disdained to make these falsifications, but have simply rejected the law and the prophets."

How like the Modernists who have thoroughly taken over nearly all branches of the church! Thinking they know more than the Bible, they blithely cut and paste. Unwilling to believe that Jesus could do miracles, they explain them away. Unable to accept the deity of Jesus, they simply deny it or redefine what it means. Blinded to the need for a spiritual salvation, they strive for an earthly one. Rejecting Scripture's heaven, they seek to construct a heaven on earth and gain neither.

"Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word."



Norman Greve is pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iron River, Michigan.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the church of the Lutheran Confession

Peace with God Lutheran Church Onalaska, Wisconsin

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
(Romans 5:1)

The past few years have brought several changes to Peace with God Lutheran Church. We have had a change of worship schedule, moving from Sunday morning service to Saturday afternoon, and finally to our current worship time of 9:30 A.M. on Saturday mornings. It's certainly not ideal, but this flexibility has allowed us to share a full-time pastor in a tri-parish setting with two other CLC congregations (Morning Star of Fairchild, Wisconsin, and Trinity of Millston, Wisconsin). And although it is a different worship schedule, our small group makes it work, with many members traveling from a distance to do so (one family lives three and a half hours away!)

The congregation has seen some changes in membership as well. Over the past three years, there has been an increase in membership through a few transfers from other CLC congregations, along with an adult instruction confirmand. Also, a longtime member of the congregation was transferred to his heavenly home in March of 2020.

In September 2020, Peace with God's pastor, Richard Kanzenbach, accepted a call to St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Lemmon, South Dakota. Retired CLC Pastor John Schierenbeck of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was then called to serve the group as vacancy pastor. On

December 5th, 2020, Pastor Chad Seybt was installed as the new pastor of the tri-parish.

Most of the outreach efforts from the congregation come in the form of person-to-person conversations with friends and family members. Pastor Seybt brought with him numerous copies of his COVID devotion booklets to help his members share God's Word, and the hope it brings, with those affected by the pandemic. For those unable to make it to Saturday worship, Pastor Seybt makes his sermons available via email in audio and print forms, along with the weekly bulletin. These

have been shared by congregational members with friends and family, and they have been well received.

Although Peace with God is a small congregation of only about fifteen members, they are a faithful group, with pre-COVID worship attendance often near 100%. And although post-COVID attendance is not yet back to where it was, the pandemic has only increased their determination to find ways to stay connected with God's Word and with one another. As one Peace with God member said, "I guess we were prepared to weather this pandemic. COVID, distance, alternative church space could not impede the delivery of His message. Nice try though! For such a small group, blessings abound!"





“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1). This passage is where our small congregation on the mighty Mississippi River gets its name. However, “peace with God” is not just a clever name or wishful thinking. As the passage from Romans says, it’s what we are immeasurably privileged to have through our Lord Jesus Christ! In such uncertain and chaotic times, what a joy and blessing it is to know that Jesus’ blood and righteousness overcome the chaos of our sin and bring us into a state of peace with the holy God of heaven! How refreshing! How peaceful! It

is this sweet peace with God that we gather to hear and learn more about every week at worship. If you are ever in the Onalaska area, we’d love to have you join us!



Chad Seybt is pastor of Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Wisconsin, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, Wisconsin, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska, Wisconsin.

Giving Beyond Their Ability

[Editor's note: Certain names of people and places in this article have been withheld because of the risk of persecution.]

“Now brothers, we want you to know about the grace of God that was given in the churches of Macedonia: In a severe test of trouble, their overflowing joy and their deep poverty overflowed into an abundance of their generosity. I testify that of their own free will they gave according to their ability, and even beyond their ability, pleading with us with an urgent request for the gracious privilege of joining in this service to the saints.”
(2 Corinthians 8:1-4 EHV)

When I had the privilege of representing the CLC in Bangladesh and India in January 2020, the above passage struck me very vividly. We give our support to our foreign missions, and what a privilege it is to be able to do so. However, I quickly realized that they give way more than most of us. Perhaps not in actual dollar amounts but, as Jesus said of the widow's two mites, she gave more than all the rest, *“For they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”* (Mark 12:43-44) Our brothers and sisters in the foreign fields are like that woman and like the Macedonians. They are giving beyond their ability freely to the Lord. Allow me to introduce you to a few of these extraordinary givers.

Rev. Monotosh Banarjee. He is the founder and head of the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission-BLCM. He quite literally gave up everything and took up his cross to follow Christ. He was born into a Hindu family in the class of Brahmin, the most privileged class of people. As such, he had a very promising future in worldly terms. But as a teenager he was introduced to Jesus Christ by a friend and given a Bible. A few years later he announced to his family that he was a Christian and was promptly cast out of his family and found himself on the streets, penniless. Through hard work and

the Lord's blessing, he was able to get back on his feet. He had a burning desire to tell his fellow countrymen the good news of our salvation in Christ. With the Lord's guidance and blessing, he began the BLCM working mostly among the Dalits, the poorest of the poor whom, as a Brahmin, he had once considered “untouchable.” For the past four years, while



Rev. Monotosh Banarjee is the founder and head of the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission-BLCM. He is pictured here with his wife and son.

studying the Scriptures with our missionaries and pursuing fellowship with the CLC, he has supported the work of the BLCM entirely with his own meager resources. He sold some property that he had acquired and sold his wife's jewelry to support the ministry of the BLCM. The BLCM has grown to fourteen congregations and six schools in eight districts. Due to the limited support we are able to provide, he continues to support the ministry in Bangladesh in any way he can. Like the widow in the Temple, Rev. Banarjee has given his whole livelihood for the work of the Lord.

Dr. R. is a young man whom I met at the Joint Asia Pastoral Conference. Dr. R. learned to give from little on. He is the son of the president of the BELC in India, who has given his all to the work of the Lord in India for over 20 years. Dr. R is following in his father's footsteps. He worked hard to become a Doctor of Physical Therapy, not so he could break free from the grip of poverty, but so that he could support the preaching of the Gospel. He also studied to become a pastor and serves a congregation in Southern India. He uses his secular job to support his and his father's ministry.

Unnamed Believers. There are countless others one could mention who give of themselves and all they have to the work of the Lord: Pastor J. and his brother N. who work tirelessly



Above: Pastor Reim with children of the vacation Bible school. Right: attendees at the 2020 Joint Asia Pastoral Conference.



in the Seminary and Orphanage in Nidubrolu; a pastor who lives in what is little more than a tent with canvas walls, waited on me hand and foot as we travelled around the CLCI. But I would also like to mention many unnamed believers in a remote fishing village. They live in extreme poverty. They worship outside on the street. Yet when two young women in their village, both with little children, were left destitute because their husbands abandoned them when they became Christians, the members of the congregation banded together to support these women and their children as best they could.

Such is the heart of love that the Lord has worked in these brothers and sister of ours. Jesus gave His all for us, so naturally they give their all to Him and to one another without

question. May we be inspired by them and likewise moved by our Savior's love.



David Reim is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Vernon, British Columbia.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JUNE 2021

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; LSB = Lutheran Service Book, 2006

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Jun 2	WS 734	John 20:11-18	Mary was so distracted by her own grief that she didn't recognize the Lord right away. What was it that got her attention again? The Word of Jesus. That Word calls to us by name too.
Jun 3	TLH 188; LSB 472	John 20:19-31	Jesus teaches us that it's not necessary to see Him in order to believe in Him. Again, it's the Word of Christ that works in our hearts, not what we have seen or not seen.
Jun 4	TLH 338 (LSB 687)	Malachi 1:1-5	The Lord reaffirmed His concern and care for the descendants of Jacob, the children of the promise. Today you are the children of the promise, dear Christians!
Jun 5	TLH 337	Malachi 1:6-14	The priests were going through the motions, but neither they nor the people were honoring God from their hearts and their offerings showed it.
Jun 7	WS 735 (LSB 485)	John 21:1-14	Not only did Jesus show His disciples He was alive again, but He also revealed His power and authority as the Son of God.
Jun 8	TLH 648 (LSB 740)	John 21:15-19	The Son of God loved His disciples by forgiving their sins. Even Peter who had disowned Jesus was forgiven and sent out to shepherd Christ's people. The risen Lord forgives!
Jun 9	TLH 484	John 21:20-25	The disciples still had much spiritual maturing to do, but the Spirit would be with them, and they would grow in their faith.
Jun 10	TLH 488	Malachi 2:1-9	God intended that the priests should be His messengers, bringing His Word to the people. However, they failed to do this and had led the people into sin and spiritual danger.
Jun 11	TLH 399 (LSB 694)	Malachi 2:10-17	The people of Judah disregarded God's Law and then complained when He did not bless them! Their morality was backwards, taking what the Lord called evil and calling it good.
Jun 12	TLH 19 (LSB 819)	Ephesians 1:1-14	When you feel discouraged and defeated by your own sins, remember that you have been chosen to receive every spiritual blessing in Christ—even redemption through His blood!
Jun 14	TLH 233 (LSB 499)	Ephesians 1:15-23	The faith, understanding, and spiritual enlightenment that God gives you comes courtesy of His surpassing power and greatness. Thanks be to God and to His Son Jesus Christ!
Jun 15	TLH 231 (LSB 768)	Ephesians 2:1-22	At one time we were apart from Christ, but now we have been brought to faith in Him and are members of God's household along with the Holy Christian Church.
Jun 16	WS 701 (LSB 343)	Malachi 3:1-5	The Lord would send a messenger (John the Baptist) to prepare the way for the "messenger of the covenant" (Jesus Christ). What would the Christ do? He would purify His people from their sins.
Jun 17	TLH 404	Malachi 3:6-18	Bringing proper offerings to the Lord once again would be evidence that the people had returned to Him in their hearts.
Jun 18	TLH 95 (LSB 332)	Malachi 4:1-6	Trouble was coming for those who would not repent, but help was coming too in the Messiah. They would know He was just around the corner when they saw the new "Elijah" (John the Baptist).
Jun 19	TLH 499; LSB 813	Ephesians 3:1-13	Paul had been made a prisoner for taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, but through that ministry the Lord had shared the "incomprehensible riches" of Christ with many, so Paul didn't feel bad.
Jun 21	TLH 495	Ephesians 3:14-21	What does every minister pray? He prays that his people know the love of Christ.
Jun 22	TLH 543; LSB 411	Ephesians 4:1-32	How can we show our appreciation for Christ's love toward us? By acting in loving ways toward others.
Jun 23	TLH 544	Psalm 73	It's easy to follow the ways of the wicked because they often seem to have it better than the believing children of God. Yet they will perish and those who draw near to God find refuge.
Jun 24	TLH 239 (LSB 905)	Psalm 74	It is hard to stand by and watch the Lord and His followers persecuted throughout the world, so we pray that He would arise and defend those who praise His name.
Jun 25	TLH 353	Psalm 75	The wicked and impenitent cannot escape the Lord's justice, but that same justice also frees those who repent and trust in Christ.
Jun 26	TLH 365	Ephesians 5:1-21	As Christ sacrificed Himself for us and lived for us in love, let us "sacrifice" ourselves to Him, living a godly life before Him and others.
Jun 28	WS 790	Ephesians 5:22-33	Not sure what a godly life looks like? The apostle first explains what a godly life between husbands and wives looks like.
Jun 29	TLH 630; LSB 863	Ephesians 6:1-9	Next we see what a godly life between children, parents, servants, and masters looks like.
Jun 30	WS 768 (LSB 665)	Ephesians 6:10-24	Finally, the Lord gives us the tools to fight against evil. Our strength is in the Lord and in His mighty power.

Challenges and Blessings in Myanmar

The CLC is in fellowship with two church bodies in Myanmar—the National Lutheran Church of Myanmar (NLCM) and the Church of the Lutheran Confession of Myanmar (CLCM). While the past year and a half has been challenging for just about everyone, it has been especially trying for our fellow believers in Myanmar.

From March through the end of 2020, the country was on strict lockdown. All worship services, church meetings, and classes had to be canceled with the exception of a brief reopening in July. This was especially unfortunate for the CLCM as Pastors Kham and Thang, the only two pastors with a formal theological training, had to postpone pastoral training classes they had begun with six men prior to the lock-down. Tragedy struck the NLCM in December when Pastor Charles Edwards, the only ordained pastor, unexpectedly passed away from a massive stroke.

The difficulties continued into 2021 as a military takeover in February has brought months of protests and violence between the military and citizens. Several hundred civilians have been killed or injured. Our fellow Christians are facing particular danger, since much of the violence has taken place near Yangon and Kalaymyo, where the NLCM and CLCM have their respective headquarters. Pastor Kham,



Above: Pastor Kham, his family and the orphans they care for. Below: Pastor Charles Edwards (left, since deceased) and family members. Bottom: scenes of unrest in Myanmar.



his family and the orphans they care for have been taking shelter when gunfire erupts just blocks from where they live. They have found bullets lodged in the walls of their home. In order to prevent the military from seizing the funds of the citizens, all of the banks shut down their computers and ATMs. As a result, we have not been able to send our regular financial support, and it is hard to tell when we will be able to send funds again.

In spite of all of these challenges, the Lord's work continues in Myanmar. In the NLCM Pastor Edwards' brother Ivan and son Sam have been called as co-leaders of the church, and they are eager to resume worship

services and outreach work once it is safe to do so. They are also eager to continue their online theological studies with Missionary Todd Ohlmann once regular internet access can be restored and the violence and COVID restrictions have been reduced. In the CLCM, amid the violence this year, Pastor Kham was able to travel to more rural areas during Easter weekend to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection and to baptize several new believers. Praise the Lord for allowing His Word to be spread during these uncertain times and for leading hearts to repentance and saving faith in our Savior!

Please pray that the Lord will provide for and protect His people in Myanmar, and that they would know His peace which surpasses all understanding.



Robert Sauers is pastor of Luther Memorial Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions.



SEEN IN PASSING

Items of interest from various sources of religious news and opinion, in print and on the web.

For the First Time, Church Members a Minority in U.S. In a recent study, the Gallup polling organization found that only 47% of Americans were current members of a church, synagogue or mosque. That number is down over 20% since the turn of the century, when 70% of Americans were church members. This drop is particularly precipitous in view of the fact that church membership remained relatively steady, at between 68-76%, all the way from WWII through the year 2000. Gallup says that their polling attributes the trend mainly to the rise of the “nones.” The percentage of those claiming no religious affiliation has risen sharply, from 8% in 2000, to 13% in 2010, to 21% today. Further contributing to the drop in church membership is the increasing number of people who do claim a religious affiliation, but *do not* belong to a church – 73% in 2000, but only 60% today. Jones, Jeffrey M. “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time.” *Politics*. News.Gallup.Com, 29 Mar. 2021. Web. 2 May 2021.

New Dead Sea Fragments Found. In March, Israeli antiquities experts announced the discovery of new biblical material in a previously excavated Dead Sea site. The site is called “The Cave of Horror” for the forty human skeletons found there in the previous excavation in the 1960s. A fresh expedition uncovered several dozen parchment fragments from the books of Zechariah and Nahum. The fragments are written in Greek uncial (capital) letters and appear to have been hidden during the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt, which took place in A.D. 132-136, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. Of interest is the fact that the text fragments do not seem to exactly match any known Biblical manuscript, either Hebrew or Greek, but rather represent an independent textual witness. Experts are currently at work analyzing the new manuscript fragments. Ben Zion, Ilan. “Israeli experts announce discovery of more Dead Sea scrolls.” *Top Stories*. APnews.com, 16 Mar. 2021. Web. 2 May 2021.

Tests Say Bones of “James, the Brother of the Lord” Are Actually Someone Else.

For 1500 years the Santi Apostoli Church in Rome has held, among other relics, what were purported to be the remains of James, the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:18-19). Recently, however, Danish experts performed carbon dating on a cross-section of the femur and determined that, while quite old, the bones were not old enough to be contemporary with Christ. The carbon dating process placed the individual as living between 214-340 A.D. Rasmussen, Kaare. “Supposed Remains of Jesus’ Brother Shown to Be Someone Else.” *Quick and Clear Science*. RealClearScience.com, 6 Mar. 2021. Web. 2 May 2021.

Putin Critic A Late Convert to Christianity.

Russian anti-corruption crusader Alexei Navalny praised protestors who turned out to support him after his arrest by quoting Jesus’ statement, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6). Navalny was poisoned in 2020, possibly by Russia’s Federal Security Service, and has been called the man that Vladimir Putin fears most. Navalny said he became a Christian after his son was born, but “I don’t think I could make political capital out of my religious faith—it would just look silly.” Kremlin officials claimed he is “comparing himself to Jesus” and has delusions of grandeur. Silliman, Daniel. “Putin critic quotes Jesus.” *Gleanings*. ChristianityToday.com, 20 Apr. 2021. Web. 2 May 2021.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2021 Great Lakes Delegate Conference

Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

June 7-8

Agenda:

- Holding Up the Prophet’s Hands—Ideas For Supporting the Called Servants in Our Congregations—Pastor Robert Sauers
- How to Respond Evangelically to Accusations of Bigotry, Hatred, and Intolerance on Both a Congregational and Personal Level—Pastor Caleb Schaller
- Might Our Style of Worship Be Detrimental to Gaining and/or Retaining Members? —Pastor Thomas Naumann
- Other Business - Overview of Prospectus
- Service Speaker—Pastor David Ude
- Chaplain —Teacher Emeritus David Bernthal
—Pastor Michael Wilke, Conference Visitor

