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# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"Permit it to be so now, for  
thus it is fitting for us  
to fulfill all righteousness."*

*--Matthew 3:15*



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# Washed, Dressed and Ready for the Day

**M**ost of us have a regular routine we go through most mornings to start our day. We get up, take a shower, get dressed; and we are ready to take on the day. If you skip any of these it can spell embarrassment or disaster. Then we eat breakfast and grab that cup of coffee. God describes Baptism in similar terms.

**Wake Up!** *“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3-4) When people are sound asleep, we might say they are “dead to the world.” They are oblivious to anything going on around them until their alarm startles them awake. So also, we *“were dead in trespasses and sins.”* (Ephesians 2:1) Through Baptism, we were aroused from spiritual death by being buried with Christ into His death and then raised with Him, ready to start a new life. Every morning when you wake up, thank God that He has awakened you not only from slumber, but also from the sleep of spiritual death to live your day with Him.

**Wash Up!** *“Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.”* (Acts 22:16) We take a shower because we want to start the day clean. People are usually turned off by us if we are dirty and smelly. Your Baptism has washed you clean from the much more putrid stench of your sin. Your sins are not only a turn-off to God, they absolutely bar you from His presence and blessing. Baptism has the power to *“wash away your sins”* because it does connect you to Christ’s death and resurrection. As you stand in the shower washing off the sweat and grime of life, offer a prayer of thanks that God has washed you clean in the blood of Christ and made you fit to live in His presence.

**Get Dressed!** *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* (Galatians 3:27) If you don’t get dressed after your shower, your day isn’t going to go very well. You will be barred from any public place and could even wind up in jail. We get dressed so that we are presentable to others. More important than that, we need to be properly dressed to live in God’s presence. Recall what happened in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 22:1-14) to the man who tried to get into the king’s wedding feast without a wedding garment. It is not enough to be cleansed from all our sins, we need to be clothed with the robes of righteousness which Christ gives us in Baptism. We put on Christ! His perfect righteousness covers our nakedness. When you get dressed in the morning, praise the Lord for clothing you with Christ.

This not only enables us to come before God and to be a guest at His eternal wedding feast, it also is for the sake of the people around us, our family and friends, our coworkers, neighbors and acquaintances. Let them see Christ whenever they are around you. You are clothed in His righteousness—show it in everything you do and say.

Our Baptism makes us ready for the day, every day. Oh, and don’t forget breakfast and coffee. It is the most important meal of the day, you know. Similarly, your soul needs the nourishment and boost that can only come from the Word of God. Now you are ready for the day! Praise the Lord!



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

# Heaven Has Been Torn Open!

**A**nd when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:10-11 ESV)

Can you recall any Baptisms that were memorable? Perhaps it was a service where a father and his four sons were all baptized. Perhaps it was a Baptism where a single shaft of light came through one of the sanctuary windows, shining on the baptismal font as the child was being baptized.

The Baptism of Jesus was memorable for reasons far greater than a mere shaft of light beaming on a baptismal font. Mark writes that, after John had baptized Jesus, the heavens were “torn open.” Next, God the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove (Luke 3:22) and remained on Jesus (John 1:32). Then a voice sounded from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” God the Son was being baptized. God the Holy Spirit was visibly present. God the Father audibly spoke His approval of Jesus from heaven. John would say later of this Baptism, “I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:34) Heaven was torn open at the Baptism of the Son of God.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, Paradise was closed off; an angel with a flaming sword blocked the way. Because of sin, the Paradise of God—that is, heaven—is closed. Sinners are not allowed access to the throne room of the most Holy God. Isaiah writes, “Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2 ESV)

In order to open heaven to us, God first had to tear the heavens open and become one of us. God took on flesh, and Jesus was born as our Brother. He was born to be the

perfect Son who would win the Father’s approval. We hear of that approval at Jesus’ Baptism.

Three years after Jesus’ Baptism, on Good Friday, heaven was closed to the beloved Son of God. It wasn’t closed because the beloved Son had done something to displease the Father, but rather heaven was closed to Jesus because He had taken on Himself all that we had done to displease God. Jesus became our sin. Remembering the verse from Isaiah 59 above, how remarkable it is that God would not hear the cries of Jesus from the cross! God hid His face from His Son because Jesus was bearing our sin in His body on the cross. Heaven was closed to Jesus as He hung on the cross so that by His death He could tear heaven open for us.

At His Baptism, heaven was torn open. The Father spoke words of approval and blessing as Jesus began His journey to the cross to save us. When you were baptized, heaven was torn open once again. In your Baptism, the name of the Triune God was placed on a lost sinner and you were adopted into His family. Paul says that having been baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). In your Baptism you were covered with Jesus and His holiness, His perfection was credited to you as though it was your very own.

Heaven has been torn open. It was torn open when God became Man and when the God-Man was baptized. By taking your sins on Himself, Jesus opened heaven for you. Through Baptism and faith in Jesus, God now says to you, “You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased.” Praise be to the Triune God for His gift of Baptism, whereby He unites us with Jesus! Hallelujah! Amen!



**Nathan Pfeiffer** is a pastor of Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

*This series offers an overview of the chief teachings of the Christian church.*

# The Clarity of Scripture

**W**e were returning home and the road ahead included mountain passes that were wet and slushy. As daylight gave way to night, I began having more and more difficulty seeing the road in front of me. There was no rain or blowing snow, and yet I couldn't see well enough to travel at the speed limit. Perplexed, I accepted the fact that this was going to be a long drive home.

A little while later, when I stopped to get fuel, I noticed something. I cleaned the car's headlights, and when we resumed our travels we were homeward bound with excellent visibility.

During the miles of struggle, the lights had been shining brightly, but so much road spray and slush had landed on their lenses that their light was no longer clear, and the illumination was compromised.

God calls His Word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). God's Word is the illumination for our walk heavenward, but unlike my headlights in Northwest mountain passes, God's Word is always completely clear, shining, and illuminating.

God desires all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He Himself has given us the specific words He wants us to have in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). He has given us His Word so that we believe that Jesus is the Christ and have life in His name (John 20:31). It would be completely counter-productive if His Word were anything but crystal clear.

God's Word is the clear light that breaks the darkness of sin, creates faith, and guides us. This is because the Word reveals Jesus, the Light of the World (John 8:12). Peter wrote, "*We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place.*" (2 Peter 1:19)

It is important not to confuse clarity with *understanding*. If you place a logarithmic equation before a kindergartner, the child won't know what to do with it. The equation is very clear, but the young student is not yet equipped to

understand it. The beauty of God's Word is that it is clear *and* understandable so that even the youngest of children can learn Who Jesus is and what He has done.

Scripture is clear and simple enough for a young child to understand and embrace. Yet there are passages that are difficult to understand, as even the apostle Peter admits, "*As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written you . . . speaking in them [his epistles] of these things, in which are some things hard to understand.*" (2 Peter 3:15-16)

We may study a passage of Scripture our entire lives and never fully grasp all of the truth that the Holy Spirit has tucked into those words. This fact does not expose a lack of clarity on Scripture's part. Rather, it speaks to a limited understanding and knowledge on our part.

The clarity of God's Word is such that we are able to use the simpler passages to shine light upon the more difficult passages. In this way we grow in understanding.

There are arguments against the clarity of Scripture which open the door to multiple interpretations and Bible "study" that consists only of individuals' own ideas and feelings concerning the text. Many believe that only parts of the Bible are God's Word. If that were the case, Scripture would be a murky mix of truth and falsehood without any clarity. The fact stands: God's Word is inspired and clear and is the objective truth by which all else is measured.

Whenever we are "in the dark," the solution is to shine the clear bright light of God's Word upon the situation and into our hearts. This may require that we first wipe off the road spray of our human reason and the slushy residue of our sin-tainted thoughts and selfish goals. The light of God's Word is always shining clear and bright—remove the mud of self and let the Word shine!



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# Out of the Depths

(Read Psalm 130)

**T**he writer of Psalm 130 was “in the depths.” Not simply a mild depression or temporary problem, but deep trouble, deep pain, deep heartache. In fact, the Hebrew word for depths in Psalm 130 is used in Isaiah 51 to describe the depths of the ocean.

At times, we may find ourselves in the depths. Our terminology might be different, but the meaning is the same. “I’m in such a rut.” “I feel so down.” “I’ve never been so low.” When in the depths, do we know the way up and out? Psalm 130 provides the answers.

## Give Your Burdens to the Lord

When in the depths, the psalmist gave his burdens to the Lord. “*Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.*” (verse 1) The Hebrew word for “cried” in this verse has the sense of crying loudly or wordlessly. Yet, according to Scripture, even our sobs and sighs are prayers heard and acted on by the Almighty.

No matter how deep the pit or heavy the weight, when we give our burdens to the Lord, He lifts us up and out of the deep and gives us the peace of God which can only come from God. This is not theoretical thinking or a locker-room pep-talk. This is divine truth. Paul wrote, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 4:6-7)

## Trust in God’s Mercy and Forgiveness

Sometimes, we find ourselves in the depths because of a spiritual crisis. We feel the weight of our sins and wonder how even our merciful God could ever forgive us. The psalmist wrote, “*If you, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*” (verse 3) Just imagine what would happen if God did keep a record of our wrongs—for one day, or even a single hour.

How important, then, that we remember the words of Psalm 130: “*But there is forgiveness with You,*” verse 4; and “*with Him is abundant redemption,*” verse 7. In fact, it is because of God’s forgiveness and plenteous redemption in Jesus Christ that we can be certain that He will lift us up and out of the “horrible pit” of our problems. When feeling helpless and hopeless, ask yourself, “If God willingly sacrificed His only Son to save me from my sins, will He refuse to give me any other godly blessing?” Of course not.

***If God willingly sacrificed His only Son to save me from my sins, will He refuse to give me any other godly blessing? Of course not.***

## Wait Patiently for God to Act

Finally, when in the depths of trouble or despair, wait patiently for the Lord to act. The psalmist wrote, “*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope.*” (verse 5) Like many Bible words for waiting, the Hebrew word used in this verse has the sense of strength, patience, and hope.

Where does this hope originate? The psalmist tells us this too: “*And in His word I do hope.*” (verse 5) To have this confidence that God will act is to have the patience of that little boy who kept staring at the escalator in the mall. “Son,” asked a security guard, “is something wrong?

Are you lost?” “No sir,” the boy replied. “I’m just waiting for my chewing gum to come around again.”

Scripture doesn’t talk about chewing gum, but it does say much about the source of strength and patience. “*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.*” (Psalm 40:1-2)



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# The Lord's Purpose: Compassion and Mercy

**“D**o not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:9-11 ESV)

Life is hard. I realize that statement isn't a newsflash to anyone, but knowing this fact doesn't make it any easier to accept it, does it? And our world doesn't help. The world tells us in so many ways that life should always be good, fun, happy, and enjoyable. But that's not reality. Life is a struggle on many levels. We will face challenges, stress, and hardship. We're living in a delusional fantasy land if we think life is going to be a piece of cake.



But again, knowing that doesn't make it easy for us to accept it. And when life is hard, one of the first things we do is grumble against one another. “It's someone else's fault that I'm having a hard time,” we reason. And so husbands and wives snap at each other. Parents become overly demanding of their children. Children resent their parents. Teachers become impatient with their students.

What good does this grumbling really do? Perhaps it makes us feel better for a moment, but ultimately, it does us no good at all. In fact, it just makes things worse as we damage our relationships with others and sin against God. And, as our text tells us, “*the Judge is standing at the door.*” (verse 9) May the Lord lead us to repentance for such sins.

But it's also comforting to hear that Jesus is at the door, because it means that there will be an end to all our trouble and pain. James encourages us to consider the example of the prophets. Events in the lives of the believers of old are

recorded carefully in Scripture that we might learn from them. They had much that they could have been stressed out about; they had much that they could have grumbled about. They were rejected and worse. They remained patient and steadfast. Moses, for example, after he was driven out of Egypt, spent forty years tending sheep in Sinai before being called to his life's work. Job, the example given in our text, trusted God even when everything in his life fell apart. His riches, his livelihood, and his children were all lost to him. In spite of his many woes and griefs,

Job persevered in faith until God responded to his questions and showered him with abundant blessings.

Beyond being something for us to mimic, God has a higher purpose for these examples of the Old Testament believers. God wants us to see “*how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*” (verse 11) We have been given the

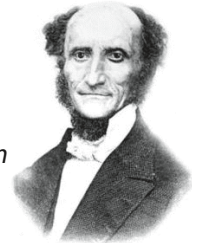
careful record of the lives of these people of faith so that we can see the Lord. All along, He is there with His people. In His mercy He never allows them to suffer more than they can bear. In His compassion He provides them complete salvation.

The Lord's purpose in all this is to get you to know His compassion and mercy. His purpose is that you would look to Him constantly, that you would tear your gaze away from all those annoyances, all those grievances you have, all that taxes your patience, and look to His cross, where His mercy forgives you and His compassion saves you for eternity in heaven.



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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.



# “You’ve Got to Believe”?

**“Thesis XIII-- In the ninth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when one makes an appeal to believe or at least help towards that end, instead of preaching faith into a person's heart by laying the Gospel promises before him.”**

The day before leaving for seminary, a father offered his son the best pastoral advice he ever heard: “I’m just a farmer. I don’t know much about theology. But I do know if you dig up a seed every day to check if it’s grown, it never will.”

When you don’t see the results you want, the urge is to micromanage or nag. No one likes to hear that his best efforts to help are getting in the way. But being of the Law, all our digging and checking can do is push away those we intend to help.

Yes, sin in the heart must be tilled and exposed. But the Law can neither create faith nor make it sprout up above the soil.

The Savior’s gracious invitation itself calls forth from the heart the response He desires: “Come, for all things are now ready.” (Luke 14:17) The Gospel alone nourishes all spiritual growth: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16)

One who proclaims the Gospel must fight the temptation to dig in and check what faith looks like. Sadly, the Gospel can be presented in a Law-ish manner, as if by repeating the importance of believing often enough, such preaching might finally poke faith into the hearer’s heart: “You need to have faith!” “If you only truly believed . . .” In the furious attempt to water the seed, the preacher’s own doubt tears up the soil before him with a power washer, causing the hearers to fear that “something is required of them and . . . to worry whether they will be able to do it.” (p. 261)

True Gospel proclamation does not merely preach faith, but preaches THE faith: “the work of Christ, salvation by grace, and the riches of God’s mercy in Jesus Christ.” Thus, Walther advises a counterintuitive approach: “A preacher must be able to preach a sermon on faith without ever using the term faith.” (p. 260)

Jesus never once commanded the thief on the cross to “believe.” Rather, the glorious sight of His all-atoning suffering and death was sufficient to work faith in the heart of the thief, who longed to be welcomed into His kingdom (Luke 23:42). Likewise, the centurion marvels: “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matt. 27:54) And when three women go check on Jesus’ body planted in the earth, they discover

Him already gone, sprouted up from the dirt of death, and you with Him into eternal life.

Like a thirsty plant, living faith reaches out for living water: “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” (John 12:21) He commissions you to give the souls in your life what they need: “Preach the Gospel!” (Mark 16:15)

Confidence in the Gospel’s power to save offers patience for every trying situation. It provides the clarity of mind to recognize the growth He promises as, by the power of God, the seeds take root and begin to sprout all around you.

That farmer knew far more Lutheran theology than he admitted. Sowed into my ear by his son, I pass it along to you as the best pastoral advice I ever received myself. Don’t go digging around for faith, or it’ll never grow!

**Jesus never once commanded the thief on the cross to “believe.”**



**Timothy Daub** is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla, South Dakota.

[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](http://www.ilc.edu/Walther)]



## OUR LITURGICAL LEGACY

*Ever wonder why we Lutherans use the form of worship we do?  
In this series we examine the depth and meaning of the various elements of  
our worship service, beginning with the history of Christian worship itself.*

# The Roman Mass

The word *liturgy* means “service.” In our worship services, liturgy refers to the order in which we do things such as singing hymns, reading Scripture, hearing a sermon, or praying. Liturgies may change depending on the purpose of the service. For instance, an evening service during Advent or Lent will usually have a different liturgy than a Sunday morning service, and a festival service such as Christmas Day or Easter Day will include special seasonal features.

God does not direct us to use a certain liturgy in our churches. Each congregation has the freedom to choose what it wishes as long as things are done “*decently and in order*.” (1 Corinthians 14:40) Part of doing things “decently and in order” means that any liturgy should be Scripturally sound (no false teaching).

In the days of the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, Christians such as Martin Luther were concerned that there were parts of the customary liturgy (also called the *Mass*) which were not in agreement with Scriptural teaching. Although the Roman liturgy could trace its roots back to the earliest Christian services, various additions and adaptations over the centuries had caused current practice to stray from the truth.

In particular, Luther was concerned about the liturgy used in the Lord’s Supper. The Roman church had transformed the Supper from Christ’s body and blood given to us for the forgiveness of sin into a sacrifice made by the priest in order to atone for sin. The body and blood of Jesus in the Sacrament was explained as being offered (or sacrificed) to God, as if Jesus’ death on the cross was not enough to pay for sin and the people needed to offer up their Savior again and again in order to earn God’s favor. This went straight to the heart of the chief doctrine of Scripture and of the Reformation: salvation by faith in Christ’s sacrifice once for all.



Luther was not really interested in changing the liturgies commonly used in congregational worship. He was extremely reluctant to suggest how a congregation should worship. He resisted many requests from others that he write a liturgy for churches to use. Finally, however, he conceded and authored the *Formula missae et communionis* (1523) and the *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung Gottes Diensts* (1526). In these liturgies he corrected the principal abuse of the Roman Mass by removing the lengthy “eucharistic prayers” which referred to the Lord’s Supper as a re-sacrificing of the body and blood of Christ. The rest of the liturgy he left mainly untouched, offering suggestions but preferring that pastors and congregations work it out themselves.

It’s easy for us to spot the same false teachings that Luther saw in the eucharistic prayers. They are alive and well in Catholic liturgies today. Here is a brief example from modern times: “Remember, Lord, your servants . . . and all gathered here, whose faith and devotion are known to you. For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise or they offer it for themselves and all who are dear to them, for the redemption of their souls, in hope of health and well-being, and paying their homage to you, the eternal God, living and true.” ([www.liturgies.net](http://www.liturgies.net))

*Jesus* gives His body and blood *to us* in the Holy Supper as proof that our sins are forgiven. This is not a meal in which we offer anything to God. May Christ and *His* grace ever remain at the center of all our worship services!



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## WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

*Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession*

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church Melrose, Wisconsin

**R**ight along Highway 54, which runs through the middle of downtown Melrose, Wisconsin, stands St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The congregation dates back to 1902 when Pastor William Parisius of Christ's Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS) in Burr Oak, Wisconsin, began holding services for a number of German Lutheran families living in Melrose.

In 1923, Pastor Martin A. Zimmerman was called to be pastor of this dual parish of Burr Oak and Melrose. Around this time, a controversy (which came to be known as the Protestant Controversy) broke out in the WELS. In 1924, Pastor Zimmerman resigned from the WELS due to the controversy, but his resignation was not accepted and he was ousted instead. The churches at Burr Oak and Melrose were subsequently suspended from WELS for retaining Zimmerman as pastor. The dual parish became affiliated with the Protestant Conference in 1928.

St. Paul's operated for fifty years without a church building, renting various places to hold worship services, usually the Methodist Church in town. In 1949, the congregation voted to begin construction of a church building. In January of 1952, the congregation held its first services in the unfinished structure, which would finally be fully completed in the summer of 1953. It is a beautiful building inside and out, complete with a bell tower that displays the Luther seal.

In 1961, Pastor Zimmerman retired from the ministry, and the parochial school teacher for the dual parish at that time, Marcus Albrecht, was called to be the new pastor. Although serving as teacher, Albrecht was also trained to be pastor at the WELS seminary. He served the congregation faithfully from 1961-1991. In 1991,



St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Pastor Floyd Brand was called to be pastor. In 1994, the church at Burr Oak terminated Pastor Brand's call and rejoined the WELS, while St. Paul's retained Pastor Brand as their pastor. After Pastor Brand's retirement in May 2017, St. Paul's continued by having lay services using audio sermons of Pastor Brand, which they played over their PA speakers during the service.

In April 2020, at the onset of the COVID pandemic, a member of St. Paul's came across the Palm Sunday service of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming, that was posted on Facebook. CLC Pastor Chad Seybt mentioned in that sermon a collection of devotions he had written on COVID-19, and the contact from Melrose reached out to Pastor Seybt requesting a copy of those devotions. She and her husband subsequently shared them with the members of St. Paul's, who in turn shared them with their friends and family members.

Shortly afterwards, Pastor Seybt was asked if he would be willing to share audio versions of his sermons for St.



Above: Members of Messiah, Eau Claire, help St. Paul's members move pews to clear the way for ceiling repairs.

Paul's to use in their worship services. After learning that the congregation was without a pastor, Pastor Seybt agreed to do so. In the meantime, the Melrose contact and her husband also began taking instruction classes with Pastor Seybt to learn more about the CLC.

In August, 2020, Pastor Seybt was called to serve the tri-parish of CLC churches located in Fairchild, Millston, and Onalaska, Wisconsin. By this point, there were more members of St. Paul's who were investigating the CLC on their own. Shortly after Pastor Seybt accepted the call to serve the tri-parish in Wisconsin, the members of St. Paul's sent a letter to President Eichstadt formally requesting information on the teachings of the CLC. After a series of meetings with Pastor Emeritus John Schierenbeck and Pastor Chad Seybt, St. Paul's Lutheran Church found themselves in agreement with the CLC, and on Palm Sunday 2021, exactly one year from their first contact with Pastor Seybt, St. Paul's voted to seek membership in the CLC.

In May 2021, St. Paul's called Pastor Chad Seybt to

serve as part-time pastor for the congregation. Pastor Seybt accepted the call almost four years to the day that St. Paul's former pastor retired. At the June 2021 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, St. Paul's Lutheran Church was formally received into membership status in the CLC.

St. Paul's is an older congregation and has several members in their 90's and 100's. Many last names of the congregation are the same as those mentioned in the membership roster of those first meetings in 1902. They are very grateful to have a pastor now, after going without one for four years, and are most eager learners of God's Word. They enjoy being able to gather around the preaching of God's Law and Gospel. They do not all file out after the service as is the custom of some churches, but rather many members will often stay and sit in the pews to chat about the service and sermon. The members of St. Paul's are happy to be received into membership in the CLC and are thankful for the support they have already received.

The faithfulness of St. Paul's Lutheran Church having lay services for four years waiting and hoping for the Lord to provide a pastor is a testament to God's promise in Psalm 27:14, *"Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!"* They waited; the Lord provided. The way St. Paul's found fellowship with the CLC among the challenges of the COVID pandemic is a testament to God's promise in Romans 8:28, *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."* Only the Lord Himself could plan such things as what happened with St. Paul's congregation over the course of the past two years. Christ continues to build and provide for His church, even in the midst of a pandemic. Jesus, our Savior, never leaves us and saves to the uttermost. *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"* (2 Corinthians 9:15)

If you are ever in the Melrose, Wisconsin area, you are invited to come meet your new brothers and sisters in the CLC. We worship at 1:30 P.M. on Sundays.



**Chad Seybt** is pastor of Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Wisconsin, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska.

# The Word is Growing in the Himalayas!

[Ed.: the following is a report about current activities in the Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession in Nepal (HCLCN). It is written, in his own words, by the indigenous pastor who is our main contact in Nepal. Names of people and places are being withheld because of the risk of persecution. The report is lightly edited for clarity.]

**T**he Word of the Lord grows!

It is our pleasure to share that the Lord has blessed us with new congregations and new preaching stations. We are blessed with the new congregation in Siraha district, east Nepal. The new congregation is blessed with twelve families, and it is growing. The local pastor says that they are having more people in the church, and they are glad and excited that the Lord has blessed the church with new souls.

During lockdown the churches experienced a low point in the physical attendance of their members. Now the lockdown and restriction orders are lifted, and churches are seeing significant numbers of new members too.

In the western part of the country, the HCLCN has started the construction of a new church building. We are praying for the resources to continue the work and finish it before Christmas. The people there are praying that the building may be finished and that more people can join in services at the church. They are training with the Word of God sixteen young men who will witness to the Lord in their region.

The HCLCN is planning to repair other churches and preaching stations, and we hope to begin the work soon. We plan to repair the churches which were damaged or affected by the monsoon season, which was longer than usual. The monsoon affected many people and places—mountains got landslides and southern plains got flooded. That is why we would like to work in order to get the churches ready for Christmas and welcome new people at the local churches.

Congregations in the mountain regions report that there are new people coming to their churches too. One pastor says that they are having more new people from the community in the church. They are blessed with a majority of Christians in their village. We praise God for His grace and mercy toward tribal people that are coming to Christ

and being saved. God is good and He is always working, as it says in Isaiah 55:11 “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (ESV)

The HCLCN is planning for mission trips in the mountains in coming days. We are excited to proclaim the

name of our Savior and help more people know Him. The mountains are difficult to get to, with bad roads and unfavorable weather sometimes. We know that the Scripture says in Isaiah 52:7 “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation.” (ESV) Therefore we at the HCLCN are praying and

working to train more workers who can go out on the mountains to preach and proclaim the true Savior.

The Himalayan Bible Institute plans to begin training in early 2022 with ten students from different parts of the country. The preparation is going well. We pray that things go well according to our schedule. The Lord is blessing us with more people and more congregations, and the congregations need faithful servants who are willing to share the Gospel. We trust God that He will lead us and guide us in this.

The monsoon is over now. The weather is getting better and winter is going to begin soon. The Himalayas are getting much snow. We are praying that we can visit as many places as possible in late 2021 and preach the Gospel among many groups of people. The local churches are calling us to preach the Gospel in their areas. We are looking forward to working in the mountains with our beloved brothers and sisters that are spiritually hungry and parched. We are planning and working to saturate the country with the Gospel, in spite of the anti-conversion law which is in effect. We pray that the Lord blesses our efforts and work for His Kingdom.



# Student Counselors

Our heavenly Father did not create us to live in isolation—He designed us to interact with one another. From the very beginning He said, “*It is not good that man should be alone.*” (Genesis 2:18) His will is for us to support each other for our mental and spiritual health. As Paul says in Galatians 6:2, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”

For many years, the faculty and staff at Immanuel have fulfilled this directive at our school by providing counsel to students from the Word of God. Many former students have fond memories of sitting down with one or another of the adults on campus, getting advice for their life, scriptural encouragement, or just some time to chat. This is one of the many benefits that comes as a result of Immanuel’s small size and its focus on teaching the Word of God.

While giving thanks for this blessing and the work of the faculty and staff and encouraging them to continue their personal contact with the students, the Regents have recognized that there is a growing need for more counseling help for the students at Immanuel. Many students develop a good connection with a particular staff member, but there are always students who could use additional help or may not have anyone they feel comfortable opening up to. A particular concern has been to provide more counseling help for the female students.

With this in mind, the Regents have added the positions of part-time counselor and mentor to the staff. Their intention is for the counselor to be a seminary-trained individual, while the mentor would be a female, and they would work together to address the needs of the students.

The Lord saw fit to fill one counseling position during the last school year (2020-2021), when I accepted this call. As an Immanuel Seminary graduate and former pastor, I met their qualifications. And as a current part-time teacher and coach at Immanuel, I am already on campus several times a week and able to fit counseling hours into my schedule.

The faculty and staff have supported this new counseling program and have helped identify students that may be struggling, or ones that are just falling through the cracks and may need someone to talk to.

Several individuals have expressed their thanks to the Lord for filling this position during a time of additional stress due to COVID restrictions, quarantines, missed school, and disrupted routines. I have appreciated the opportunities to meet with students one-on-one, getting to know them and being involved in their lives here at Immanuel. The Lord has truly blessed us with many gifted and conscientious young Christians!

With the start of the current school year, the Lord also provided a female to serve as the “mentor” counterpart when April Sydow accepted that call. April is an ILHS graduate and active member at Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire. She has a degree in Rehab Psychology from the UW-Madison, along with experience raising four boys. She currently works as a real estate agent and is also pursuing her master’s degree in social work.

This year April has been focusing on the female students, while I’ve been spending the majority of my time with the males. We’re sharing an office in the library, holding regular office hours on opposite days, and meeting with students at other times as we are able. April has also started “girl talk” sessions in the dorm to help them open up about issues they’re facing.

Thank you for your continued prayers for our students at Immanuel, and for all of the faculty and staff as we care for the children entrusted to us.



April Sydow



**Stephen Sydow** is a part-time instructor and counselor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JANUARY 2022

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Jan 1	TLH 115	Luke 2:21-40	Already, on the eighth day of His earthly life, Jesus sheds His holy and precious blood for us. With eyes of faith we see the salvation God has prepared for all people!
Jan 3	TLH 63	Luke 3:1-20	Luke chronicles the precise time in history in which John the Baptist, by preaching of the Word, begins to prepare hearts to receive the Savior. Now is our time in history to preach so that all mankind may see the salvation of our God.
Jan 4	TLH 134	Luke 3:21-37	By the waters of the Jordan River, God announces to the world that Jesus is His Son. Luke traces Jesus' human ancestry all the way back to Adam. Jesus is the God-man come to save us.
Jan 5	TLH 59	Luke 4:12-27	The Spirit of God rests on Jesus, the Chosen Christ, anointed to preach freedom for those held captive by sin. But beware! Friends and neighbors may react with hostility when we share the good news with them.
Jan 6	TLH 130	Luke 4:31-44	<i>"... the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them."</i> Epiphany! This Jesus must be the Christ, the Son of God!
Jan 7	TLH 507	Luke 5:1-11	With Jesus as our Savior, we need not be afraid. He even gives our lives amazing purpose by equipping us to be fishers of men.
Jan 8	TLH 396	Luke 5:17-26	Even if it means tearing apart a roof to get to the Savior, nothing can stop faith from taking its bodily and spiritual concerns to Jesus.
Jan 10	TLH 276	Luke 6:1-11	Sinners have a natural bent toward legalistic religion, which is loveless to the extreme. True religion finds spiritual rest in Jesus, the Sabbath Lord. Then it shows its faith in deeds of love for one's neighbor.
Jan 11	TLH 392	Luke 6:17-26	Happiness is not what people think it is. A person truly blessed is poor and hungry. In other words, we are happy when we know we are poor sinners, and have a hunger for the righteousness our Savior alone can give.
Jan 12	TLH 403	Luke 6:27-36	Love for enemies does not come naturally to sinners. Jesus loved His enemies—the whole sinful world. His love sent Him to the cross to pay for all sins. Only His sacrificial love can work in us a real love for our enemies.
Jan 13	TLH 412	Luke 6:37-49	With 20/20 vision we see the speck in our brother's eye, but are often blind to the two-by-four in our own. Lord, help us see our own sin so that we may look upon our brother with humble and helpful love.
Jan 14	TLH 341	Luke 7:1-16	If we haven't seen it so far in Luke's Gospel, it's crystal clear in today's reading: Jesus is God in human flesh. Who else can heal the sick and raise the dead with just a few words?!
Jan 15	TLH 132	Luke 7:18-35	Jesus is the prophesied Christ! He shows it by healing the blind, the deaf, the lame, and leprous. He even raises the dead! Don't look for anyone else. He's the One—the answer to all our guilt and pain.
Jan 17	WS 781	Luke 8:1-15	God calls us to scatter the seed of His Word with reckless abandon. The power to create and grow faith is in the Word, not in us. The results will vary. But we take heart, trusting the Gospel to bring in a harvest of souls.
Jan 18	TLH 649	Luke 8:16-25	Jesus was asleep in the boat as the disciples struggled against a vicious storm. Does it sometimes feel like God is asleep, oblivious to our fears? If so, we need to wake up! Jesus is ready to calm any storm we may encounter.
Jan 19	TLH 90	Luke 8:26-39	Yesterday we read of Jesus' power over the forces of nature. Today we see His power over the forces of hell. Satan and his demons are powerful enemies, but they are no match for the Son of the Most High.
Jan 20	TLH 200	Luke 8:40-56	The world tells us it's hopeless. There's nothing, they say, that can be done about death. Don't listen to them! Just believe! Trust that even death must bow before Jesus. He is the Resurrection and the Life.
Jan 21	TLH 659	Luke 9:1-17	We are rightly impressed with Jesus' ability to feed so many with so little. But let's not miss the more important spiritual feeding in our reading. Jesus fed the crowd His Word, speaking to them of the kingdom of God.
Jan 22	TLH 355	Luke 9:18-27	Peter had the right answer when Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?" But Peter's [or anybody else's] personal conviction about Jesus' true identity won't save you. Who do you say Jesus is?
Jan 24	TLH 409	Luke 9:46-62	In the world people scramble to get to the top of the social or corporate ladder. In God's kingdom Jesus calls us to the bottom of the ladder into a life of humble service. After all, He came in humility as servant of all.
Jan 25	TLH 656	Luke 10:1-24	The seventy-two disciples returned with joy from their missionary journey. They were happy because even the demons submitted to them in Jesus' Name. But our real joy as disciples is that our names are written in heaven!
Jan 26	TLH 400	Luke 10:25-42	Who is my neighbor? Jesus teaches that our neighbor is whoever we cross paths with in life, and whoever needs a good Samaritan to lend a helping hand. Jesus is the Good Samaritan Who gave His life a ransom for all.
Jan 27	TLH 455	Luke 11:1-13	Even imperfect earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children. Our perfect Heavenly Father even more so! Our Heavenly Father only gives good gifts to His praying children, such as the Holy Spirit.
Jan 28	TLH 452	Luke 11:14-28	Sometimes Jesus' enemies are absurdly stupid. Why would the prince of demons fight against his own demonic army, thus dividing his own kingdom? It's obvious! Jesus drives out demons by the finger of God.
Jan 29	TLH 324	Luke 11:29-36	Jesus points back to Old Testament people and events to awaken the current generation to their need for repentance. That generation wanted a sign. Only the sign of Jonah—Jesus' resurrection—would be given it.

## IN THE PIPELINE

*Want to meet the person who may be your next pastor or Christian day school teacher? This series profiles the men and women who are in their final year of preparation for the public teaching or preaching ministry at Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.*

# Zachary Sippert

**Age:** 24

**Program:** Seminary

**Year in School:** Senior

**Where were you born?**

Valentine, Nebraska.

**Where did you grow up?**

Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

**Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.**

I'm unmarried. My mom, dad, and two older sisters are my family. They have been one of the greatest blessings for me my entire life. Being the son of an Immanuel professor, I've spent most of my life in Eau Claire on the campus of Immanuel.

**What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?**

I like soccer, football, golf, listening to music, singing, meditative walks, and reading.

**Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know.**

I play the bass guitar. It's been a while since I've played, so that fact about me may have fallen into obscurity.

**Which academic subjects especially interest you?**

Liturgics (especially hymnody), Church History, Dogmatics, Greek, and Hebrew.

**How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career?**

It first came into my mind when I was about twelve and it hasn't left my mind since. Though I thought many a fear and nervous quirk would be my undoing, during my long



wait from twelve to twenty-four, I learned it is not I, but the Lord Who will guide me. As the Lord worked through the prophet Moses to lead Israel, and the apostle Paul to preach Christ to the Gentiles (both were leaders who were filled with fears and nervous quirks, Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Corinthians 2:1-5), so the Lord does today through His ministers. I pray for and rejoice in His grace as I strive to preach the Word.

**What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?**

One of the most-appreciated blessings about my time at ILC has been the faculty and staff that the Lord has led to serve at the campus of Immanuel. During my time in seminary, college, high

school, and even my early childhood, the teachers here have served me not just by bringing to me a knowledge of His Word and His creation, but also by being Christian role models. Each one of them has made a positive impact on my life. I want to thank them for all that they do, and I also want to thank the Lord for providing them as gifts.

**What qualities do you think will most be needed by the future leaders of the church?**

Many qualities can be given in answer to this question. Compassion, empathy, diligence, integrity, and wisdom would be some, but one of the most important is faithfulness. Faithfulness can be applied to all the responsibilities of a leader of the church. I pray that the Lord grant the church's leaders faithfulness, that they may remain faithful to their callings, faithful to their responsibility toward others, and faithful in their presentation of God's Word in all its truth and purity. We find such faithfulness in Christ and His Word, which strengthens and sustains our faith in His justification.

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**Prominent Evangelical Leader Succumbs to COVID.** Marcus Lamb, a prominent Christian broadcaster known for his outspoken opposition to COVID-19 vaccines, died on December 1 after contracting the virus. He was 64. Lamb was co-founder and CEO of the Daystar Television Network, a network popular with evangelical and charismatic Christians. His wife Joni announced the passing in a morning broadcast the same day. Smietana, Bob. "Marcus Lamb, anti-Covid vaccine Christian broadcaster, dies at 64." *Home>US*. ChristianToday.com, 1 Dec. 2021. Web. 1 Dec. 2021.

**Marriage Matters.** In the *American Ideals* series by the Washington Examiner, author Conn Carroll examines why the declining rate of marriage does not bode well for American society. "Decades of research has found that, after controlling for race and income, children born to married parents end up better educated, more likely to be employed, wealthier, and healthier than children born to unmarried parents. Marriage is also beneficial to the married spouses themselves. Even after controlling for income, married people are healthier, wealthier, and happier than their single counterparts. . . The most common modern alternative to marriage is cohabitation. As the number of married couples has fallen, the number of cohabiting adults has risen. Among adults ages 18 to 44, the share who have ever cohabited (59%) is now larger than the share who have ever been married (50%)." But marriage, Carroll points out, has benefits that cohabitation does not. "Cohabitation, despite its superficial similarities to marriage, offers far less relationship stability than marriage does. More than half of all cohabiting relationships end in breakups within just 12 months, and only 10% last longer than five years. The average marriage, in contrast, lasts almost 20 years, and nearly half of them last until death do them part." Carroll, Conn. "Marriage matters." *American Ideals*. WashingtonExaminer.com, 11 Oct. 2021. Web. 1 Dec. 2021.

**Harvard Appoints an Atheist "Chaplain."** In August, venerable Harvard University, which has over thirty chaplains, named Greg Epstein as the new president of chaplains. Epstein, a self-described "humanist rabbi," is an atheist, and author of the book, "Good Without God. "We don't look to a god for answers," Epstein told the New York Times in an interview. "We are each other's answers." At the time of its founding almost four hundred years ago, Harvard was a Christian seminary. Paumgarten, Nick. "Harvard's Atheist-Chaplain Controversy." *Higher Power Dept*. Newyorker.com, 11 Sep. 2021. Web. 1 Dec. 2021.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Call for Nominations:** Nominations to fill synodical offices can be made by CLC pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of CLC congregations any time between January 1 through March 31, 2022. Nomination forms will be available on our [cclutheran.org](http://cclutheran.org) website.

--Pastor Paul D. Nolting, CLC Moderator

