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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want."*

--Psalm 23:1

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"I Shall Not Want!"

Aren't those amazing, wonderful words? "I shall not want!" I shall not lack any good thing. All my needs shall be provided, or as the Apostle Paul puts it, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19) That's what we receive when we have the Lord as our Good Shepherd.

*"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."
(Psalm 23:1-2)*

What a picture of complete contentment and perfect satisfaction—to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters! That is a picture of one who has perfect peace without a care or worry in the world. There is nothing to fear and there is no need unmet. As Isaiah says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

Before we start dreaming of sitting on couches with servants waiting on us hand and foot, indulging in every pleasure, or before we think, "Yeah, but what about all those times I have suffered and had to scrape and scratch to get enough?" let us remember verse 3.

*"He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake."*

While our Good Shepherd does provide all our physical needs and takes care of us exactly as we need, that is not what enables us to lie down in contented peace. Our Shepherd never promised to give us everything our human nature might desire, and it wouldn't give us contentment if He did. Much better than that, He restores our soul and our righteousness. In other words, He restores our life and relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. That is the abundant life that Jesus promises as our Good Shepherd in John 10:10. When our soul is restored and satisfied with God's perfect righteousness, when we know God is not angry with us and will not punish us but loves us and holds us in His hands, then we can truly have peace and

contentment in every condition of life.

King David was not dreaming or imagining some unseen utopia. He was describing his own life—a life in which he was often running for his life and fighting battles against fierce enemies. But in the midst of that he could lie down and sleep in peace, knowing that his Good Shepherd was watching over him and keeping him in His care. That is why he could truly say in verses four and five:

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over."*

"I shall not want" is a confession of faith and the confidence of faith. It is knowing and seeing God's hand in our lives and trusting Him completely, knowing that "God is good" even when we don't see anything good around us. It is seeing God's faithfulness and how He has blessed you richly in the past, so that you can look forward to the future with confidence and joy just as King David did.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever."*

That's what I call a wonderful life!



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

An Ascension "Goodbye"?

I don't know anyone that likes *goodbye*. We look forward to warm welcomes standing in our doorways, we cherish the moments of togetherness around a table, but we all know that eventually, we will be standing there at the end of the drive, staring, and waving as the car disappears around the bend. The last, sad word on our lips: "Goodbye."

The disciples found themselves in a similar situation as they stared up into heaven, watching Jesus disappear behind a cloud. This would certainly qualify as the proper time for a tear-filled goodbye if it really were just another departure. The disciples knew this wasn't the case as the angels reassured them that this new arrangement was only temporary. *"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) Just as we comfort ourselves during farewells with the assumption that we'll be reunited again, so Jesus' Ascension is accompanied by the promise that He will return.

So, we know Jesus' Ascension means He will return, but does it also mean that, for the time being, Jesus is no longer present with His disciples? Not at all! As Martin Luther once said in his Ascension sermon of 1523, "Beware, lest you imagine within yourself that He has gone, and now is far away from us. The very opposite is true: While He was on earth, He was far away from us; now, He is very near." The real reason that the Ascension is not just another "goodbye" is that it's not a "goodbye" at all!

Luke writes at the end of his Gospel, *"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven."* (Luke 24:50-51) Notice Luke doesn't write, "After finishing blessing them," but

rather, *"while He blessed them,"* He ascended into heaven. The disciples' last image of their Savior was of the Son of God with hands raised in blessing. And that's the same image of Jesus that we ought to hold on to now in these post-Ascension days.



In the Apostles' Creed, we confess, "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty." He had sat there before from eternity, yet at His Ascension He returned to His throne with the victory over sin and death in hand. The result is that this throne room scene is described by John as, *"In the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as though it had been slain."* (Revelation 5:6)

As Jesus ascended to this position of glory, He was exalted as the One Who was crucified. And this is important! The One Who is exalted is the One Who was humbled to the point of death on a cross. The One Who holds all authority in His hands is the One Whose hands were pierced for your transgressions. The One Who is reigning as the King of kings is also the One Who loves you more than you could imagine. So, an Ascension "goodbye"? No! The truth is, Jesus never left. He is present and in charge, not only as the One Who loves you, but also as the One Who knows you. He knows your doubts, temptations, fears, and trials, and He rules over all for your sake. His hands are now raised over you in blessing just as He shall return—hands raised over you in blessing.



Samuel Rodebaugh is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church of Manchester, Missouri.

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

The Triune God: No Headaches, Only Hallelujahs

The words roll off our lips easily enough: *triune*, *trinity*. We've been taught from early on that God is "triune." But that easy familiarity with this description of God belies the fact that anyone who tries to reason it through is bound for a headache. There is, in this context, a logical impossibility in saying one can be three. It is understandable why practicing Jews and Muslims reject the Christian position when the subject of the "One True God" comes up.

Our understanding of God as "one God, yet three Persons" is a mystery—a truth that humans cannot arrive at by their own powers of observation and reasoning. A mystery, by definition, must be revealed to humans. But the source of this revelation is certain and sure, for Holy Scripture teaches the Trinity.

The Bible teaches that there is but one God. A famous passage from Deuteronomy asserts the singularity of God: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Yet, the Bible also reveals that within this divine being there are three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each Person exists separately from the others, yet has all the attributes of God: eternal, all-powerful, ever-present. Perhaps most importantly of all, what John says of God can be said of each of them: "God is love." (I John 4:16)

And what is true of our duty to the one true God is due each of these Persons as well: faith, worship, obedience.

It is worth remembering that the words *trinity* and *triune* are not found in the Bible; they are words coined by Bible teachers to express what is clearly taught in scripture. The Old Testament is, perhaps, less explicit about the existence of God as three separate-but-equal Persons, but the Trinity is always there, behind the story of God's dealings with mankind. Just look, for instance, at the first verses of Genesis. In verse 1, we hear "In the beginning God (i.e., the Father) created . . ."; in verse 2, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." In verse 3, God begins His creative activity through the Word: "Then God said, 'let there be light.'" John's Gospel makes it clear that the Word spoken of in

Chapter 1 is the Son: "The Word was with God . . . and without Him [the Word] *nothing was made that was made.*" Then, after much of the world has been called into existence, we come to verse 26, where God says "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." With whom could God be possibly discussing His next move, if not among the Persons of the Godhead?

The triune aspect of God is explicit in the New Testament, for instance with Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:16-17), in His instruction to the disciples on the way to Gethsemane (especially, for instance, John 15:16), and, of course, in His Great Commission that we should baptize "in the name [note the singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

The point is that since the Bible's testimony is clear on this matter, we should not give ourselves headaches trying to reason out how three can be one, or one be three. Leave the headaches to the devil, who has used man's impatience with this teaching to generate many

heresies and to lead many souls astray. He gets the headache because he can never overcome that most important attribute of God: Love x 3.

For that is the great truth of our God and Savior: all three Persons are working for and dedicated to our salvation, just as Paul assured the Corinthian Christians at the end of his second letter: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (13:14).

With such a God blessing our souls, what more is there to say than *Hallelujah* ("Praise the Lord")?

"One God, yet three Persons" is a mystery—a truth that humans cannot arrive at by their own powers



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A Prayer for Difficult Times

*“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.”
(Ezra 1:1 NASB)*

Seventy years had passed, and the time had come for the Jews taken into exile in Babylon to begin their return to Jerusalem. The work waiting for them there was daunting: rebuild the wall, the city, and the Temple. Once begun, the work was slow, difficult, and not without its detractors from nearby populations.

About ninety years later word came to Nehemiah, who was serving the king in Susa, that things were going badly back in Jerusalem. Nehemiah’s heart was deeply moved, and he longed to go to Judah and revive the rebuilding project. The king granted Nehemiah’s request and provided him many resources to assist in the effort.



In reading through the book of Nehemiah, one cannot help but notice that he was truly a man of prayer. One of the more noteworthy aspects of his prayers is how readily he confessed his own unworthiness as well as that of his forefathers and his nation. Here’s an example: *“Please, LORD God of heaven...let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open, to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have committed against You; I and my father’s house have sinned.”* (1:5-6 NASB)

This readiness to confess sins and unworthiness shows a depth of understanding and humility in the heart of every child of God who prays in like manner. In addition to freely acknowledging who they are, it is essential also to acknowledge who God is: *“You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in mercy.”* (9:17 NASB) That is the only basis on which sinners like us can approach a God like Him, namely, at His invitation and trusting in His mercy and grace.

In chapter nine Nehemiah led the people in a prayer-service,

and what a prayer it was! From verse six to the end of the chapter, he followed the pattern of confessing sins, often specific sins, but then also cited God’s righteousness, manifold mercies, unwillingness to forsake His children, willingness to instruct them, readiness to deliver them, having patience with them, and so on.

It is the Holy Spirit who moves hearts to offer humble prayers that demonstrate total trust in God and His grace. Such prayers are suitable when things are going very well and when the going is very difficult.

Even though they were physically back in Jerusalem, in many ways it didn’t feel like the exile was over.

“Behold, we are slaves today, And as for the land which You gave to our fathers to eat its fruit and its bounty, Behold, we are slaves on it. And its abundant produce is for the kings Whom You have set over us because of our sins; They also rule over our bodies And over our cattle as they please, So we are in great distress.” (9:36-37 NASB)

Starting with Ezra, the leaders had led the people in a renewed interest to know and follow God’s Word. This bore much fruit which was evident in their labor, offerings, and prayers. God is faithful to deliver and bless His humble children. Their prayers are heard and answered according to His gracious good will.

“May Your glorious name be blessed And exalted above all blessing and praise!” (9:5 NASB)



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God's Search and Rescue Team

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20, ESV)

It's always an anxious time, especially for family and friends, when someone is reported missing in the wilderness. Search and rescue teams spring into action. We wait expectantly for any word of the missing person. It's a moment of great joy if the missing person is found alive and well. It's a time of great sorrow and mourning when it's too late.

As Christians, we are all members of God's search and rescue team. That's what James tells us as he concludes his epistle. He tells us that it is our responsibility to help restore straying sinners to the truth. This is almost never a pleasant task because it involves confronting people with their sin, and people who are turning their backs on God and His Word often want to do the same to God's messengers.

It would be much easier simply to go along with the attitude of the world that says we should just mind our own business. Other people have their own lives, and we shouldn't meddle. People make their own decisions, and we shouldn't interfere. In many ways, that's true. But when we're talking about someone wandering away from the faith, we're talking about a matter of eternal life and death.

Think about it this way: you're walking across a bridge and someone near you slips and slides through a broken part and is barely holding on. You're right there to help. Do you say, "Well, that's really none of my business"? Of course not! You stoop down and help him. Every one of our fellow believers who is wandering from the truth is like that person holding on to the bridge. They need to be rescued.

As he concludes his epistle, James wants his readers to see the urgency of bringing people to repentance. That's really what James has been doing throughout—calling his readers to turn from sin. Now he says, "I have called you to repentance; now do

this for others."

As the Lord sends us to call people to repentance, He sends us with the certain message of sins forgiven for Jesus' sake. Notice our text says that "whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." He doesn't say "might save" or "probably will cover." He says God will save from death and will cover sins. God will show mercy and forgiveness.

That is the whole reason Jesus came into this world. Jesus says in Luke 5:32, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." He says in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Of course, at one time we were all like wandering sheep. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jesus' desire to save our souls from death led Him to go to the cross. There, He paid for every last one of our sins, and by His resurrection He has indeed delivered

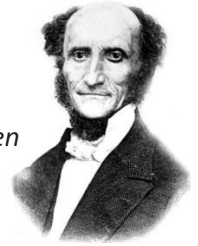
our souls from death.

God's love for us in Jesus is beyond anything we can imagine. He keeps searching for His lost and wandering sheep—again and again and again if necessary. God always cares, always loves, always forgives. Let that be your confidence as you participate in God's search and rescue team.



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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.



Saints are Still Sinners

“*T*hesis XVII--You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you describe believers in a way that is not always realistic—both with regard to the strength of their faith and to the feeling and fruitfulness of their faith.”

“You can always tell a German,” the joke begins. “You just can’t tell him much.”

“You can always tell a Christian,” people suppose. Or can you?

It is assumed that a Christian lives a wholesome lifestyle, is honest, hardworking, a model citizen, and one who keeps his temper under control. He’s a family man, a regular church attender, compassionate, and willing to serve. But there are problems with using benchmarks of piety as a measure of Christianity. The most obvious is that they can be faked. You don’t have to be a Christian to look pious. Consider the Pharisees of old or the Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses of today. And what happens if a Christian doesn’t live up to those things? Are there sins that a true Christian could never commit? Sadly, no. Is there any commandment that a Christian is incapable of breaking? No again.

In the 1980’s, Jim and Tammy Bakker’s *PTL Ministries* was worth millions. Best-guess estimates were that they took in north of \$1 million per week in offerings. Then came the scandal. In the fall of 1987, Bakker was accused of sexual misconduct and of using church funds as hush money. His resignation opened the door for another televangelist to step in. Jimmy Swaggart piously described Bakker as “a cancer on the body of Christ” that had to be cut off. A few months later, Swaggart himself was charged with immorality. The point? When Christians feel they are above temptation, or that there are sins into which they themselves could never fall, they should “*take heed.*” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Scripture is pointblank honest about the failings of the men and women of faith. Not once, but twice, Abraham lied about Sarah

being his sister. Three times, Peter denied Jesus even after his valiant promise several hours earlier. Moses killed a man. David, the man after God’s own heart, committed adultery, deception, and a rash of sins to cover his tracks. From one end of Scripture to the other, the Bible affirms, “All have sinned and fall short. . . .” (Romans 3:23) All but One. Jesus confronted every temptation and remained perfect. Then, Jesus stood under the wrath of God in our place. For our greatest sins He offers an even greater cure—His grace.

When Christians feel they are above temptation, or that there are sins into which they themselves could never fall, they should “take heed.”

Every Christian is a saint the moment God brings him to faith. Every Christian is also a sinner until the moment God delivers him from “*this body of death.*” (Romans 7:24) Saint Zacchaeus was still Sinner Zacchaeus. Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery, but added that she shouldn’t fall back into the same old sin. Underestimate the wickedness of your flesh at your own peril. Walther’s concern is that we don’t suggest that some sins are too great for a Christian to ever commit. Or worse, too great for our Savior to forgive.

Is there a way to tell a Christian? There is, actually. Watch what happens when people sin. Unbelief turns from God with indifference or impenitence. Christians run to God for mercy and forgiveness. Unbelief ultimately despairs, as in the case of Judas. Faith rejoices in God’s grace, as in the case of Peter.

Christians don’t always feel saved. Some sins leave spiritual scar tissue long after they’re forgiven. Therefore faith rests, not on ourselves, but on our Savior. We need not look within to find a reason for God to love and forgive us. Look instead to His Word, His cross, and His empty tomb.



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[To read Walther’s *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* for free online, and to access related Bible class materials, go to 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 Beauty of the Liturgical Year

When the apostle Paul said goodbye to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, he told them, “I did not avoid declaring to you the whole plan of God.” (v. 27, CSB) His goal had been to preach to them everything he could about Christ’s salvation for sinners. This would have included preaching many doctrines and historical events as they related to God’s purpose and desire to bring the Ephesians to their heavenly home.

Over the centuries, Christian churches and pastors have tried to imitate Paul’s pattern in their own preaching and teaching. Pastors seek to “leave no stone unturned” in declaring to their flocks all the aspects of God’s good news in Christ Jesus. So we hear sermons on Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, Jesus’ birth, His resurrection, Old Testament historical events, New Testament guidance from the apostles, and so on. A pastor prays that he gives his flock the most complete picture he possibly can of the incomparable grace of God.

But how can this be done in an efficient and effective way? One tool used for teaching “the whole plan of God” is the Christian church year. The church year begins in late November or early December with the first Sunday in Advent. Advent is the first “season.” The seasons that follow are Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. These seasons lead us through the life of Christ and give us the opportunity to think about everything He did to win forgiveness for our sins and give us eternal life. We see His birth, learn who He is, observe His march to the cross, reflect on the empty tomb, witness His ascension into heaven, and rejoice in the Spirit whom He sent. This covers about half the church year. During the other half, sometimes called “Trinity,” “Pentecost Season,” or “Ordinary Time,” we study the many different ways Jesus’ saving work impacts our daily walk as Christians.

The liturgical church year is filled with other features to enrich our worship and set our hearts and minds on Jesus. For instance, weekly selections of Scripture readings (Old Testament, Gospel, and Epistle) use Scripture passages to lead us through “the whole plan of God.” The decorative colors in church change with each season to remind us of main themes in the story of our salvation (for example, purple for repentance during Lent). The hymns and music of the church follow the

church seasons. Major and minor festivals occur which direct our attention to specific instances of God’s grace in history (see *The Lutheran Hymnal*, page 3 or *Lutheran Service Book*, pages x-xiii).

Non-denominational churches tend to ignore the traditional church year, with the exception of Lent (sometimes), Christmas, and Easter. Instead, they take up different topics or studies during the year that don’t necessarily follow a particular calendar. While this isn’t necessarily a wrong way to preach the Word of God, the

Christian church year is of great value

as a way to present the precious Gospel message in a variety of ways and regularly cover all the key teachings of Scripture.

The liturgical year is beautiful because it is an expression of all the beautiful things our God has done for us. He has taken us poor, lost sinners and raised us to the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. He has given us, who were bound for eternal death, eternal life instead. May we praise Him with our whole heart all year, every year!



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WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Saint Luke's Lutheran Church Lemmon, South Dakota

“**T**hey continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42) That's the goal. One hundred fifteen Christians around Lemmon, South Dakota (population 1,200) gather themselves under the name “St. Luke's Lutheran Church” (founded 1909). They hear and proclaim God's Word; both the hard news which no one likes—sin and punishment for sin—and the Good News, the startling, refreshing, “EXTRA, EXTRA! Acquittal! In Jesus!”

What's new? The wind still blows mightily at Lemmon, particularly at the church property, which is located on a rise at the edge of town. That's appropriate, isn't it? Jesus describes life, “*And the winds blew and beat on that house.*” (Matthew 7:25) Satan is always trying to beat down our church—the building, the congregation, and each Christian within. Hot blasts and icy drafts buffet us, assaulting our faith in Jesus. Satan tempts with internal dissension (“NO! what I want is . . .”), with lackluster devotion (“I am just *sooo* busy . . .”), with direct opposition to the Lord (“Church / God says *I can't*. But I say *I will*. . .”), and more. Satan strives to swoosh St. Luke's away.

Against Satan's gales, St. Luke's continues to proclaim the “breath and wind” of the Holy Spirit of God. “*Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts 2:2-4) God the Holy Spirit works through the Word at St. Luke's. Families, some from miles away, gather early for Bible class and Sunday school. More gather for worship. On Communion Sundays, those confirmed come forward for the Lord's Supper—though the more that come forward, the longer the service lasts! Little ones are brought to Baptism. These are not just “requirements for membership,” or “demanded ritual,” or “prescribed mechanical observance.” This is the breath of the Holy Spirit, in action against the winds of Satan. The Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacraments—authoring, nourishing, and uplifting faith in Jesus, leading and steering hearts to Christ the Savior from sin. Just as children who are lovingly adopted back into their family, having foolishly run off,



the Holy Spirit leads these souls to cling to Jesus and the Gospel of God's mercy in Christ. They need Him. They are given new life in Him and by Him. They love and serve Him.



The Lemmon area has also been an abundant source of fossils and petrified wood. Satan with his lies pushes “knowledgeable” people and, through them, others, to “glom onto” the idle notion that the origin of the world and its present state have little to do with Genesis 1-3. That mindset leads to a worldview without God, without sin or accountability to God, and without a need for the Savior. St. Luke's continues to proclaim the Lord's antidote for such poison. Simple yet profound truths of Scripture are taught. Our eternal, omnipotent (almighty), omniscient (all-knowing) God has CREATED the earth and universe by His Word without random chance! Man, corrupted by sin and standing in rebellion against God



through the deviousness of Satan, has been restored to God's favor by the willing death of His Son. Jesus, crucified and risen in victory! Jesus is Truth at St. Luke's. "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (John 18:37) "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Against the lies of Satan, we confess and proclaim Christ the creator and self-sacrificing Savior of all, Who grants forgiveness, the resurrection, and life forever in heaven.

St. Luke's and Lemmon are still in semi-arid territory. Annual precipitation is only eighteen inches. Satan pounds hard at the lives and hearts of ranchers, farmers, and everyone. He tempts Christians to cry out, "Unfair, God!" and to conclude that God is hostile and unloving. There can be drought, hail, grasshoppers, and fire driven by mighty winds. Each taking a turn. Several members were directly affected by a gale-driven fire a little over a year ago. By contrast, there can also be penetrating cold and white-out blizzards. Yet the Lord's promises, which St. Luke's continues to proclaim, are sure. The same love that God manifested in Jesus, our Rescuer from sin, is manifested in His day-to-day care. At St. Luke's, people learn and re-learn that the Savior-God is with them. "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22) "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I

have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Isaiah 43:1-3) "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 KJV)

What's new? People live, people get sick, people die. People realize they have offended the Lord and long for forgiveness from God and life in heaven. The Father's grace in Jesus is with us. St. Luke's proclaims that message. By it we profit and prosper spiritually, and physically as well. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11 KJV) "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42) That's the best.



Richard Kanzenbach is pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

In this series, those involved with CLC foreign missions profile one aspect of our overseas endeavors.

Continuing Education

Following 2 Timothy 2:2, our focus overseas is training indigenous pastors. You help to establish and fund seminaries through your contributions to the Mission Development Fund. Your Kinship sponsorships fund the printing or purchase of materials and make a solid Biblical training affordable for the men who want to become pastors. Your contributions to the CLC General Fund support the work of your missionaries, the native pastors who teach at the seminaries, and help to fund continuing education for pastors around the world.

Over the past several years, the Board of Missions has, with the Board of Education and Publications, been developing a series of courses and a website called *Online Theological Studies* (OTS) found at onlinetheologicalstudies.org. Almost all the lessons have been written by Professor Emeritus David Lau. Since arriving in Togo in 2019, I have been editing and

translating these lessons into French to use in the seminary here and around the world. We also use these lessons as correspondence courses with new contacts who are interested in being affiliated with the CLC.

Another important aspect of our work, especially in the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) in India, is continuing education for current pastors. The BELC holds monthly district meetings in each of the twenty-five districts. When I was there, one of the pastors came up and shared how timely my training was. I was teaching on the fact that Jesus has both a human and a divine nature and how the two natures share attributes. The pastor said one of his catechism students had just asked him how we know that Jesus is God. In the study I had given several passages that clearly demonstrate that Jesus is God, which he could immediately use. At another training a pastor came up and





excitedly told me that he had used the lessons I had given the previous month on prayer and the Lord's Prayer as a series of sermons for his congregation, and how much they had appreciated the teaching.

The twenty-five districts and almost one thousand pastors in the BELC are a lot for the seven chairmen to oversee. The BELC has been conducting two-day Leaders' Meetings three or more times per year. Two leaders from each district come to the BELC headquarters in Andhra Pradesh for additional training, encouragement, and fellowship so they can help oversee their districts. The BELC has been translating lessons from the OTS into Telugu and Tamil to use at these meetings. The goal is for these men to take this training back and teach the pastors in their districts.

I previously reported that we were going to begin seminary classes here in Togo in October 2021. That turned out to be overly optimistic. But now we have a firm roster of ten new seminary students, and classes officially began on March 21. I have just made ten books of the first several courses from the OTS and I am excited to start training these new men!

We used this delay to make further improvements to the facilities at the new center in Togo. We have added solar

We now have a firm roster of ten new seminary students, and classes officially began on March 21.

panels and battery storage so there is electricity, drilled a well, and added a small water tower so that we have running water at the land. We have also poured a concrete floor for the classroom under the roof. These are welcome additions to the classroom pavilion and the teacherage. Pastor Blewu has also started constructing two additional rooms for students who may wish to stay overnight.

Proverbs 9:9 says: "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." Thank you for your prayers and financial support that are doing just that in Togo, in India, and around the world.



Peter Evensen is a full-time foreign missionary for the CLC.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MAY 2022

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
May 2	WS 781	Acts 5:17-42	Set free from prison, the apostles continue to tell <i>“the full message of this new life.”</i> Why did the apostles keep preaching Jesus after the authorities ordered them to stop? Because we must obey God rather than men!
May 3	TLH 400	Acts 6:1-15	The Church learns that apostles (and pastors) can’t do everything. Men full of the Spirit and wisdom are chosen to help carry the load. Thank God for faithful lay people willing to use their gifts in service to Christ.
May 4	TLH 40	Acts 7:1-19	Stephen takes the Sanhedrin through a history lesson on God’s faithful love. For example, the Lord made good on all the great things He promised He would do for Abraham.
May 5	TLH 54	Acts 7:20-38	As Stephen continues his Old Testament review, he turns our attention to God’s gift of the prophet Moses to His people. God raised up Moses, through whom He would perform mighty signs in setting His people free.
May 6	TLH 225	Acts 7:39-53	Stephen’s account turns sad, as he narrates the rebellious response on the part of Israel to God’s faithful love. Then the point of the entire sermon: <i>“You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”</i>
May 7	TLH 172	Acts 7:54-59	<i>“Remind me of Thy passion when my last hour draws nigh. Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, upon Thy cross shall dwell, My heart by faith enfolds Thee. Who dieth thus dies well.”</i>
May 9	LSB 843	Acts 8:1-8	With a Christ-like spirit, Stephen asks forgiveness for his enemies. In the next chapter, with persecutor Saul, we see his prayer amazingly answered. In this chapter God uses Saul’s persecution to spread the Gospel!
May 10	TLH 324	Acts 8:9-25	Through the witness of the evangelist Philip, the Word reaches into Samaria. However, problems arise when Simon tries to buy the Holy Spirit. The solution to sinful attitudes is always repentance and forgiveness.
May 11	WS 769	Acts 8:26-40	The Word continues to march forward, as Philip tells an Ethiopian the good news of Jesus. One wonders how many souls were reached for Jesus when the Ethiopian arrived back home with God’s soul-saving truth!
May 12	WS 777	Acts 9:1-19a	Who of us would ever peg Saul, nemesis of the early Church, as God’s choice to be an apostle of Christ? But isn’t it just as astonishing that sinful wretches like us are now God’s forgiven saints and ambassadors?
May 13	TLH 464	Acts 9: 19b – 31	A murder conspiracy is thwarted when Saul’s friends sneak him out of Damascus. Barnabas stands up for Saul when no one else will. Others help Saul escape by sea from another death threat. Had Saul ever before experienced that kind of love?
May 14	WS 764	Acts 9:32-43	A paralytic named Aeneas and a seamstress named Tabitha experience the healing power of Jesus Christ. In the early church these miracles served as signs to confirm the Word of Christ being proclaimed by the apostles.
May 16	WS 772	Acts 10:1-8	If some in the church were thinking that the message of a Crucified and Risen Savior was only for Jewish ears, they were about to get a wake-up call. May the Spirit wake us up to the truth that Jesus is Savior for all.
May 17	WS 771	Acts 10:9-23a	Through a vision of “unclean” animals, God gets His message through. It’s not just a change in menu that’s called for, but a change of heart toward the Gentiles. Let’s preach the Gospel to any and all!
May 18	WS 770	Acts 10:24b-48	Peter tells Cornelius and His household the good news of how Jesus died and rose. What does it all mean? <i>“Every one who believes in Him [both Jew and Gentile] receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”</i>
May 19	TLH 227	Acts 11:1-18	At first Peter is criticized for entering the home of a Gentile. But later God is praised for granting even the Gentiles repentance unto life! Problems are overcome when the Spirit gives understanding.
May 20	WS 767	Acts 11:19-30	As the church is scattered by persecution we see what God is doing. Those scattered brought the Gospel to many faraway places. Satan’s schemes are always overturned so that they work for God’s purposes.
May 21	TLH 425	Acts 12:1-10	One apostle is put to death by the sword, while another is set free from prison by an angel. God has a distinctive plan for each of His children. His plans serve in the best interest of the individual and for His Church.
May 23	WS 775	Acts 12:11-25	This section records both painful and joyful events. But through them all the Word of God grows and multiplies! So it is today. Through pandemic and war, through good times and bad, God’s Word marches on!
May 24	TLH 507	Acts 13:1-12	Called by the Spirit, Saul and Barnabas sail for Cyprus, where Satan, through wicked Elymas, tries to block the Gospel’s advance. But Jesus can’t be stopped from conquering the heart of a man in high places.
May 25	TLH 355	Acts 13:13-31	In Psidian Antioch Paul shows from the Scriptures that Jesus is the promised Christ. No one, only Jesus, fulfills all those many, many Old Testament prophecies. There is no other Savior but Jesus!
May 26	TLH 297	Acts 13:32-51	As the work of the Gospel continues in Psidian Antioch, many believe, others reject. Down through the ages it’s ever been the same. All credit to God alone for the faith by which we have received eternal life in Christ!
May 27	TLH 501	Acts 14:1-20	Despite many hardships, Paul and Barnabas will not be deterred from proclaiming the message of Christ wherever they went. May God give us all such unwavering commitment to the greatest cause ever!
May 28	WS 780	Acts 14:21-28	The missionaries re-visit those to whom they had previously brought the Word. God’s people need constant encouragement to remain in the faith. Thank God for those who faithfully bring His faith-sustaining Word to us.
May 30	TLH 373	Acts 15:1-21	Here we read of the Church’s first great doctrinal controversy, centering around the key question of how one is saved. Scripture’s answer? <i>“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved!”</i>
May 31	TLH 521	Acts 15:22-41	Chapter 15 ends with a sad dispute between long-time friends and co-missionaries, Paul and Barnabas. But God uses the argument to put an extra missionary team on the road. All things work together for good!

Every other month we get an update on what's been happening recently at our Immanuel Lutheran High School, College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Alleluia! The 2022 Choir Tour

As restrictions regarding COVID-19 have decreased, especially in the last year, people across the United States have welcomed the return of their “normal” activities—traveling, attending sports events and concerts, or even just eating out at restaurants. Here at Immanuel, this spring marked the first time since the spring of 2019 that we were able to put on a “normal” tour choir schedule without having to worry about cutting it short or adhering to various mandates. The full return of this long-standing tradition was also the first time directing for Professor David Schaller and the first full schedule for many of the choir members.

The primary purpose of the ILC Tour Choir is sharing the Gospel message in word and song. What a privilege our tour choir has in using God’s gift of music to convey to people far and near His greatest gifts of forgiveness and salvation. This year, the choir concert took the form of a choral worship service based on the theme *Alleluia* (Praise the Lord). Not including concerts in Millston, Melrose, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin—which were outside the regular spring break tour—the choir sang for twelve different congregations over three states in just eight days. After beginning in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (Iron River and Marquette), the tour went through Michigan (Saginaw, Madison Heights, Coloma, and Sister Lakes) before heading to Batavia, Illinois. On the way back through Wisconsin, they sang in Hales Corners, Middleton, Fond du Lac, Appleton, and Markesan. If this sounds like a heavy schedule, it’s because it was, and several times it required singing in two different cities on the same day. For many of the choir members, this was a much heavier schedule than the last few years but was actually a return to one of the traditional tour choir routes.

Even with a heavy concert schedule, the choir found time to enjoy some of the local sites and activities. In Detroit, they stopped at Belle Isle Park (an island situated on the US/Canadian border) and visited historic Trinity Lutheran Church, the first Lutheran church in the city of Detroit, and one whose first pastor was Prof.

Schaller’s thrice-great grandfather. Blessed with beautiful weather, they also enjoyed dune climbing at Warren Dunes State Park on the Lake Michigan shore, and in Chicago they spent part of a day at the Museum of Science and Industry.

More importantly, the choir members were able to meet and stay with members of our CLC congregations. I have been struck by how many students come back from tour and say that their favorite part of the trip was the fellowship with the people they spent time with in the congregations.

This is definitely not the “normal” response that might be expected from young adults, and it highlights that even though this was a “normal” tour choir year, the whole tour choir endeavor itself is really quite remarkable.

Indeed, the director and these students put in a remarkable amount of time and practice for these concerts. After one concert, a public-school choir director who was in

the audience remarked how difficult the music was for high school students to learn and memorize in a short amount of time. It is also amazing that we have been so blessed with safe travels as well as the ability to send twenty-four young adults on a week-long road trip with one adult supervisor and not be plagued with behavior issues or concerns. We have been truly blessed with exceptionally gifted students and directors. Perhaps we have forgotten how special these gifts are because tour choir is seen as a “normal” part of ILC. Of course, the most amazing aspect of tour choir is the ability to share the wonderful Gospel message. Let this never become routine or “normal” to us!



Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

The Great Pastoral Resignation? A study released by the Barna group in November revealed that over twenty thousand Christian pastors left the ministry during the recent pandemic, and half of those who remain say they would leave if they could afford it. "Pastors in the ministry for 20 years or more were more likely to tell us they were considering quitting," said David Kinnaman, president and CEO of The Barna Group. The study noted that church attendance has softened quite a bit since the pandemic started. "During and after the pandemic, one-third of practicing Christians disengaged from their congregation—just sort of stopped showing up. . . . I think the long-term effect of this is going to be a stronger church, but probably a smaller church," Kinnaman said. Carter, Brody. "New Barna Survey Finds That 38% of US Pastors Have Considered Leaving Ministry." *US. Cbn.com*, 16 Nov. 2021. Web. 18 Mar. 2022.

It's a Thing – Virtual Reality Church. Corrina Laughlin, a professor of media studies at Loyola Marymount, writes in the Atlantic Magazine about how evangelical Christians are frequently at the cutting edge of technology advances, early adopters of any technology that promises to broaden the scope of their ministry. An example is Bishop D.J. Soto, a pastor who founded "VR Church" in 2016. About two hundred people attend his services virtually, each wearing a VR headset. At first Soto mostly replicated the experience of attending a physical church—there were VR pews to sit in and a pastor on stage preaching. But then, said Soto, "the light bulb came on in our brains and we're like, Hold on—we are in the matrix; we are in the metaverse, where the possibilities are endless because we control time and space." Now the congregation will often meet in VR spaces modeled on actual sites in the Holy Land. Last year's Christmas Eve service, for example, was set in the plains outside Bethlehem where, through the help of special effects, the congregation "saw" the heavens opened and angels proclaiming the Savior's birth. Laughlin, Corrina. "Why Evangelicals Are Early Adopters of New Tech." *Ideas. TheAtlantic.com*, 21 Dec. 2021. Web. 23 Dec. 2021.

Marry Young or Wait? A popular narrative about marriage states that those who wait until they are older to wed are more likely to enjoy stability and happiness in their marriage. Delaying marriage, so the thinking goes, gives one time to develop a career, build wealth and gain maturity. But in a wide-ranging recent study, Brigham Young researcher Alan Hawkins found that there are distinct advantages to marrying young. His study compared so-called "foundation stone"

marriages (those who marry at age 20-25) to "capstone" marriages (those who marry at age 25-35). His data indicated that early-marrieds enjoy slightly higher levels of marriage satisfaction and happiness than their older counterparts. "These findings run counter to the cultural narrative that early-marrieds will struggle in their relationships," Hawkins wrote. "At least today, those marrying in their early 20s appear a little more likely to enjoy wedded bliss than those marrying later." The research also indicated that religious couples are significantly more likely to marry young than are secular couples. Hawkins, Alan. "Don't Diss the Early-Marrieds." *Research. ChristianityToday.com*, 9 Feb. 2022. Web. 13 Feb. 2022.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Financial Aid Applications. Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary has a financial aid program that helps students to attend by assisting with loans, multi-student grants, individual student grants, scholarships, and work study. All students are encouraged to submit an application, especially since this year the application includes the possibility of a High School tuition grant. While the scholarships are automatically applied based upon academic performance, the other aids are provided upon application made by the responsible party. In order to be as helpful and as equitable to all, these forms need to be submitted by the deadline, which is May 1, 2022, for the 2022-23 academic year. If any potential student is showing any interest in attending Immanuel, applying now ensures that you will be considered for financial assistance. While applications have already been provided to the families of current students, you may still find them at ilc.edu/resources/ under the heading "Financial Assistance Forms & Info."

—Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents

Sponsors Needed. The Kinship Committee is in need of individual sponsors for both orphans and seminarians in our overseas sister congregations. Fields of opportunity are continually expanding, as are the needs for support from those who are moved to do. Please consider helping. Financial support ranges from \$25/month to \$50/month. For more information please see, call, email, or text Dan Roehl— danroehl@hotmail.com / 507-381-2042.

—Dan Roehl, Sponsor Liaison, CLC Project Kinship