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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

*The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put
aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

--Romans 13:12 (NIV)



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Behold Your King of Glory!

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.” (Psalm 24:7-10)

I’m writing this on September 19, after watching the funeral for Queen Elizabeth II. It’s fascinating to watch all the pomp and ceremony for the longest-reigning monarch in England. One can only imagine the far greater pomp and celebration that will accompany the coronation of King Charles III.

With that imagery in mind, the reality of Psalm 24 is all the more striking and wonderful. This Psalm calls upon the gates of Jerusalem to lift up their heads to let The King of Glory enter and begin His reign. The people ask with anticipation and excitement, “Who is this King of Glory?” (verse 8) The answer indicates power and great pomp: “The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” (verse 8) Again the question and the answer rings through the streets: “The LORD of hosts [armies], He is the King of Glory.” (verse 10)

What grand procession would you expect as the Lord, Jehovah Himself, enters the royal city?

You look for yourself, and what do you see? A tiny baby in the most lowly place, wrapped in swaddling cloths. Behold, look closely, this is your King of Glory! This is the Mighty One who fights for you to defeat the fierce enemies of mankind: Satan and all his demons, sin and corruption, death, and hell itself.

Who would expect the King of Glory to look like this? Who would expect the King of Glory to live a life of lowliness and humility with nowhere even to lay His head, and to die an ignominious death on the cross? Yet that is where we see His true glory—not in lavish robes, scepters, and crowns. No, His glory is seen in His service to His creation.

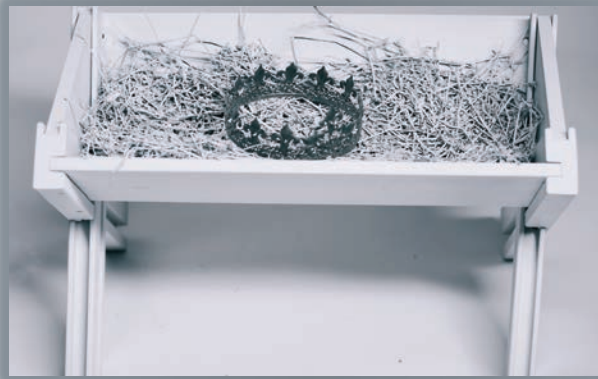
The opening verses of this Psalm describe Him: “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.” (Psalm 24:1-2) He possesses and rules the entire universe He made, far above all other monarchs. Truly He is the King of all other kings!

Then comes the tragic reality: “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” (Psalm 24:3-4) We have just been left out. We cannot ascend God’s holy hill to view His glory or worship before Him. None of us have clean hands; they are filthy with sin. We certainly do not have a pure heart without evil thoughts and intentions. We are sinners through and through. Yet we see the King of Glory in the manger. He has come to take our place. Throughout His lowly life of trial and hardship, even in His bitter suffering and death, Jesus

kept His hands clean and His heart one hundred percent pure of even the slightest thought of sin. Jesus ascends the hill of the Lord into the presence of God, and the beautiful thing is, He takes us along. He cleanses our hands and purifies our hearts with His own perfection so we can enter into His presence to worship. As you look into the manger once again this Christmas, behold your King of Glory. Rejoice and worship Him with all your heart!

“Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!
Behold, the King of Glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near,
the Savior of the world is here.
Life and salvation He doth bring,
wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
We praise Thee, Father, now,
Creator, wise art Thou!

Fling wide the portals of your heart;
make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for Heaven’s employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sovereign enter in and
new and nobler life begin.
To Thee, O God, be praise
For word and deed and grace! (TLH 73:1, 4)



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

“As You See the Day Approaching”

“**L**et us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)

As I write this, the sun is setting earlier each day, the leaves are changing color, and the temperatures are getting cooler. I don't need a desk calendar to tell me that fall has arrived; what I see right outside my office window reminds me what season it is.

As you read this, the colorful lights adorning the houses around you, perhaps the snow on the ground, and Sunday School children memorizing their “parts” remind you that it is December and Christmas is just around the corner.

Just as we know the time of year we are in by looking around us, Jesus wants us to be aware of the times in which we are living. For instance, read what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 about “the last times.” Do you see any (or all!) of those things today?

We know what time it is. “The Day” is approaching. “The Day” is the one we speak of every time we confess the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds: “[Jesus] will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.” It is the Last Day, Judgment Day, the Day of Jesus’ second coming.

How can we prepare for “the Day?” First, the writer to the Hebrews says, “hold fast the confession of our hope.” Hold on to the precious promises God has made to you in His Word. Hold fast, hold on tight to God’s promises of forgiveness through His Son. Hold fast to the confession that because Jesus rose from the dead, your sins are truly forgiven. Hold fast to the confession of your hope that because of all that Jesus did, heaven is your eternal home. As the world around you becomes more and more “hopeless,” rejoice knowing that “He who promised is faithful.”

Secondly, as you see “the Day” approaching, “consider one another.” As society becomes more and more ungodly, it is easy to grumble and be discouraged. While it may feel easier to just “hunker down” and isolate from the chaos swirling around you, the writer calls on us to think about our fellow believers. If you’re feeling discouraged, they probably are too.

As we see the Day approaching, we will need ever more encouragement in Christ’s love as the world around us becomes only more discouraging.

In considering one another, the writer calls on us to assemble ourselves together. This is primarily done as we gather for worship. Assembling together for worship, we confess our sins together, and together we rejoice to hear Christ’s forgiveness. Together we sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to His Word. Together, shoulder to shoulder, we are fed by the Good Shepherd as we receive the Lord’s Supper.

We also assemble ourselves together so that we can stir up love and good works, as well as “exhorting one another.” To exhort means to “call to one’s side.” It’s like putting your arm around someone and encouraging them. As we see the Day approaching, we will need ever more encouragement in Christ’s love as the world around us becomes only more discouraging.

We know what time it is. Seeing “December” on the calendar reminds us that Christmas is drawing near. Seeing the times in which we are living today, we know that “the Day” of Christ’s return is approaching. Hold on to the hope God has promised you in His Word and encourage your fellow believers “so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”



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

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 Lutheran worship service.*

The Gloria in Excelsis

The *Gloria in Excelsis* (Latin for “Glory in the highest”) is a magnificent hymn of praise and prayer that dates back to at least the fourth century.

Luther said of this part of the liturgy that it “did not grow, nor was it made on earth, but it came down from heaven.” This is not saying too much, for the thoughts and words of the *Gloria in Excelsis* have come down to us from God in heaven in the Holy Scriptures.

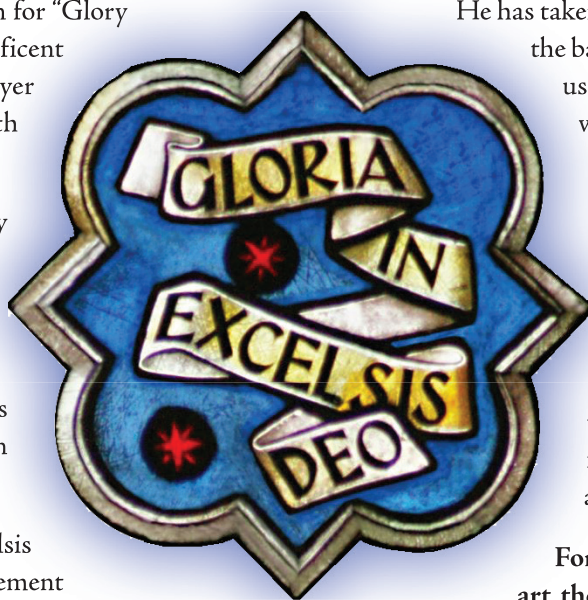
A brief review of the *Gloria in Excelsis* bears out the truth of Luther’s statement about it.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

We recognize the opening sentence of the *Gloria in Excelsis* as the familiar words of the multitude of the heavenly host to the shepherds on the night of Christ’s birth (Luke 2:14). They bring to our minds God’s great act of grace in sending His own Son to take on our human nature and as both God and Man to rescue us from our sin and death. We praise and thank Him for His great glory revealed in His grace and love.

O Lord, the Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

We praise the Son of God as the Lamb of God Who offered Himself as sacrifice for human sin. Twice we sing that He has taken away “the sin of the world,” assuring one another that



He has taken away the sins of every one of us. On the basis of this love that Christ has shown us, we plead for His mercy, which we very much need in this fallen world where we are subjected to trials and temptations. We express confidence that He is able to hear and answer our prayers, for He has risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father; He is able to intercede for us with the Father so that daily our sins are forgiven and our prayers heard and answered.

For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

We cry to Jesus for His merciful intercession because He is the Holy One; He is the only perfect Man acceptable to God the Father, the beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased. By faith His righteousness is ours, and we too are accepted by the Father. We call to Jesus for help also because He Who is our Brother is also Lord, one with the Holy Spirit and the Father.

The *Gloria in Excelsis* as quoted above is from *The Lutheran Hymnal* (pages 7, 17). Other forms of it include versions in more modern English and paraphrases in the form of hymns. Whatever version of it we use, this hymn of praise passed down to us from the early church lifts us from our earthly fears, cares, and troubles as it brings into our view the glory of our Savior God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



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

Incorruptible Seed Which Lives and Abides Forever

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:22-25)

Our text gives us a great contrast to behold: the corruptible and the incorruptible. Peter explains that the incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever is the Word of God. The same Word of God used to bring new life to your dead soul. The same Word of God that keeps your faith alive and strong. The same Word of God “*which by the gospel was preached to you.*” (verse 25) This Word of God is an incorruptible seed because it cannot wither or fall away; rather, it brings forth a life that does not end.

And then there is corruptible seed, described in our text as “*flesh*” and “*the glory of man.*” (verse 24) These are not merely those things that corrupt our soul or destroy our faith, although those things are certainly included; rather, “corruptible seed” refers to those things in life that are able to be corrupted; that is, they do wither and fall away, they don’t last forever.

We are told in no uncertain terms that all the glory of man falls away, and yet what is it that so often claims the lion’s share of our attention? The glory of man: smartphones, movies, social media, sports—and on and on. The list is as endless as is our unquenchable thirst for the corruptible seed, but all such things will cease to exist. They fall away and become as nothing.

The contrast and divide between the corruptible and the incorruptible is found throughout Scripture (see Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54). It also runs throughout Peter’s first letter as well, especially in this first chapter. Earlier in verses 4-9, Peter contrasts our incorruptible inheritance in heaven with the struggles, trials, and sufferings we face here on this sin-cursed earth. Prior to our text, in verses 18-19, Peter writes, “*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct*

received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

All the glory of man falls away, and yet what is it that so often claims the lion’s share of our attention? The glory of man.

In other words, you were not bought of corruptible things; rather, you were bought by the perfect, incorruptible blood of Jesus. This same precious blood of Jesus covers over your sin of seeking first the corruptible things of this world. You also were not born of corruptible seed; rather, you were born of the perfect, incorruptible Word of God. This same perfect seed that lives and abides forever continues to give new life to your soul.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, “*Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*” (Galatians 6:7) What are you sowing? As you go about your daily life, are you planting corruptible seed that brings

forth things which are temporary, fleeting, and will die in the end; or are you planting incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever?

“*The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.*” (Isaiah 40:8) Sow that incorruptible seed in your own life and in the lives of others, and then stand back and be amazed at your Savior God and how His life-giving Word grows. For this incorruptible seed of the Word of God by which the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to you and by which you were born again to new life will spring forth and grow up into life everlasting.



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

The Great Preparer

“To Prepare: To make ready beforehand for some purpose, use or activity; to plan in advance, to implement a strategy.” (Merriam-Webster)

We might think of an attorney who prepares a will or legal document, a chef who prepares a gourmet meal, or even a general who prepares for battle. All of us have prepared something for some purpose.

But there is one Preparer Who towers above all. Just how striking are His providential ways God revealed in the short account of the prophet Jonah. Four times God **prepared** ordinary things to serve Him in unexpected ways to reveal His will and to instruct and humble. We might even call them preparatory miracles.

As you might recall, God had called Jonah to travel to and preach a message of repentance to the wicked people of Nineveh. Jonah refused and set sail in the opposite direction. Having been found guilty of causing a mighty tempest, Jonah was tossed overboard by his fellow mariners. It was then that God **prepared** a great fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17), both to save him from destruction, and also to convince him of the necessity of fulfilling his call.

The people having repented, God spared Nineveh. But Jonah became so angry over this merciful outcome that he wished for death. The Lord then **prepared** a gourd to quickly grow up and provide shade and comfort for His prophet (4:6). And while Jonah was exceedingly thankful and glad for the gourd, he was not thankful and joyful over Nineveh’s repentance.

So God next **prepared** a worm, which chewed into the gourd so that it withered (4:7). Poor Jonah! But God was not through, for when the sun arose, He **prepared** a scorching wind (4:8). With this and the sun beating on his head, Jonah fainted and again wished to die. The book closes with God preaching Jonah a short sermon on the great scope of His mercy and compassion for all lost sinners. We can only assume Jonah learned this lesson with gladness and awe.

Cannot God still speak to us through common things to teach us a lesson, and also to rebuke and humble us? A sudden storm or hungry worm might cause a loss; a simple plant might bring delight, if not deliverance. Always the intent of the Great

Preparer is to lead us into His will and conform our lives to His great love.

A chef prepares a gourmet dessert (as does our Good Shepherd Who prepares a meal of protection, mercy and goodness—Psalm 23). The flour, salt, shortening, and baking powder might taste awful by themselves, but mixed together and baked in the heat of an oven they become a delicious cake. In just this way the Great Preparer works in the lives

of His children. It cannot be otherwise, for *“we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

Our God is the Great Preparer—from beginning to end. In eternity He prepared our election in Christ, then prepared and sent His Son to redeem us as the sin-atoning sacrifice. Through the Holy Spirit He prepared our sanctification. Thus, by grace received through faith, *“we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10) Finally, on the Last Day we will hear the gracious invitation: *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* (Matthew 25:34)

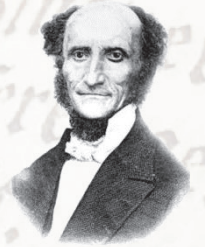
Our Savior-God is never caught unawares, never reacts in panic or ignorance. How could He? In love and in the wisdom of His omniscience He has planned and continually prepares all things for the good of His people. Indeed, He has done all things perfectly. He is the Great Preparer.



David Fuerstenau is a retired pastor. He lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

WALTHER'S LAW AND GOSPEL

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.



The Unforgivable Sin

“Thesis XXIV--In the twentieth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost is described in a manner as if it could not be forgiven because of its magnitude.”

I do not remember the first time I heard about the “sin against the Holy Ghost.” I am guessing I was in grade school at the time. I do remember it being scary. Why? Because the sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable. That means you cannot go to heaven if you have committed it. Had I committed it? Might I have lost heaven because of it? Perhaps these are questions that you have asked yourself as well. These questions no doubt occupied Walther's thoughts as he addressed his seminary students on October 23, 1885, in the second-to-last of his evening lectures in this series.

Walther rightly points out that the sin against the Holy Ghost is real. It is mentioned in Scripture in several places, including Matthew 12:31-32. *“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”* (See also Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10.) Walther concludes that this sin cannot be related merely to speaking against the person of the Holy Spirit, for then the sin would also be committed against the co-equal other persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. Rather, it is a sin against the office, or operation, of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who works faith and forgiveness through the means of grace. A person who, against his better knowledge, continues to reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit risks hardening his own heart, a heart that God will eventually make incapable of repentance and faith.

Should This Sin Alarm Us?

All Christians should take heed to the warning of willfully resisting the Holy Spirit. Continuing to nurture any sin in spite of our better judgment is putting one's spiritual life in danger. We do not know at what point God will allow our heart to be hardened beyond repair. This is God's Law. It should alarm us.

Take Comfort in Christ

If you are concerned that you may have committed this sin, that is evidence that you have not. Those who have do not worry about such things. “They would not feel distressed if they really had committed that sin and were in that awful condition of heart, but they would find their constant delight in blaspheming the Gospel.” (page 399) It is only those who insist on maintaining and defending their known error who

are in danger of having committed this sin. “Whoever is sorry for his sins and craves forgiveness should be told that he is a dear child of God.” (page 397)

Finally, it is wrong to think that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable because of its magnitude. Think of the sins of Bible believers, including Abraham, David, Noah, and the thief on the cross. God assures us that where sin abounds, grace abounds more. *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38-39) *“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”* (Luke 10:20)

If you are concerned that you may have committed this sin, that is evidence that you have not.



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

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

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

Justification: By Grace Alone Through Faith Alone

As we begin a new church year with Advent, it's good to hear a Reformation echo in those comforting words that God has justified us; that is, He has declared us righteous by *grace alone* through *faith alone*. Our status as His dear children to whom He gives eternal life depends on the fact that we are perfectly justified in His sight. With so much at stake, we stick to the Reformation's assertion that justification is the central teaching of the Bible, to be proclaimed to all as a gift for all in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Properly understood from Scripture, justification is the incredible result of the triune God at work, with sinners like us as mere recipients of what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have done for us. In His gracious love for all people, God sent His Son to fulfill the Law's demands by keeping every commandment in our place and being the perfect sacrifice for every sin. The Father would remain in His role as the Judge who places all our guilt on Christ and punishes Him instead of us. It was divine, holy justice carried out on Good Friday when all the sins of all people of all time were atoned for and removed from God's sight. Then, to show that His Son was innocent and to certify that all people have been forgiven and are indeed justified, the Father raised His Son from the dead. We embrace the Easter declaration of Romans 4:25 that Jesus *"was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."*

Our own role in justification is only passive, and to begin with, quite negative. We made the horrible mess that needs to be made right. We are in the picture of Romans 3 that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* (verses 23-24) 2 Corinthians 5 states the same truth that *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not*

imputing their trespass to them." (verse 19) In confessional Lutheran terminology this Bible truth is called *objective justification*. Think of it as forgiveness of all sin offered up front and delivered in the Gospel as God's free gift. He has already declared His verdict that we are thoroughly righteous, sinless in His eyes because of what Christ did in our place. The certainty of that verdict for us is the fact that God has in the death and resurrection of His Son applied it to all people.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespass to them."

The truth of objective justification is where the certainty of salvation is found, but at the same time the role of faith is given its due. Full and free forgiveness comes first, then faith, which is a person's trust that what Christ has done to save all has been done to save him. Faith is simply the way each believer receives what God offers. As Paul concludes in

Romans 3:28, *"a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."* In Lutheran terminology this truth is called subjective justification, which is always the sought-after goal whenever the Gospel is proclaimed to people.

Thankfully, the faith needed to receive God's gift does not depend on the person who believes. The Holy Spirit is the One to bring the good news to us, convince us of its truth, and work in our hearts the very faith that we need to believe and receive God's justification of us. Only in that way does the objective justification of all people effectively become the subjective justification of each believer *by grace alone through faith alone*.



Steven Sippert is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

Relying on Jesus or Superstitions?

[Ed.: The following is an article by Pastor Jyothi Benjamin, in his own words, about the prevalence of superstition in India. Pastor Benjamin is president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI). The report is lightly edited for clarity.]

Two thousand twenty-two years after the birth of Christ, Christianity still remains as an unknown entity to the main core of the population of India because of the pagan beliefs and evil superstitions. There are 1.4 billion precious souls here in India for whom Christ died, but more than half the Indian population literally thrives on baseless weird superstitions, most of which simply defy logic.

Here are a few examples of superstitious beliefs in India:

- Banyan trees are considered to be the dwelling of ghosts and evil spirits.
- The lemon and chili charm is a regular sight in India and wards off the "goddess" who brings poverty and bad luck.
- Putting a small black dot of kajal on the forehead will protect a child from the evil eye.
- A black cat crossing the road symbolizes bad luck.
- A crow cawing indicates that guests are arriving.
- A single sneeze before beginning of any work brings bad luck.
- One shouldn't sweep floors in the evening because it drives away wealth from the home.
- Bad luck will befall anyone who hears an owl hoot three times. People believe that owls are the only creatures that live with ghosts.

Recently we visited a remote village in the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh State, and I preached on the topic of "Jesus casting out the demons." I explained to the villagers that Jesus comes into this world to defeat Satan and every demonic force of our world. Because of our loud PA system all the villagers heard the Gospel and many people received the Word of God and believed that Jesus has power to save. On the last night, one man came to the dais for individual prayer. I prayed for him, but strangely he requested me to visit his house to pray for his family also. I visited his home along with him. While entering into his house I saw a string of lemon and chilies hanging in the



Pastor Benjamin in front of the enormous banyan tree that was considered "haunted" by the family living next to it.

doorway. I followed him silently through that doorway. I asked him what his prayer request was. He said that his family is fearful because of the banyan tree which is beside his house. He said that he wants Lord's protection for his family from that very big banyan tree. Also, I observed a black dot on the forehead of his six-month-old child. I understood that that family is suffering from evil superstitions. I felt so sad to see their belief in superstitions. Sadly, many Indian Christians continue to cling to superstitions because of their strong Hindu background. Superstition gives them a false sense of control over

their lives. Many of the superstitions are driving people away from Gospel truth, causing people to rely on superstitions instead of relying fully on our all-sufficient Jesus.

That night I used many Bible passages to convince that family that they do not need to worry about superstitions, and they should not give them importance. Finally they came to believe that Jesus is fully in charge of their lives.

CLCI pastors and evangelists often face challenges in their evangelism because of these powerful village superstitions. The CLCI is working hard to eradicate the influence of these pagan superstitions in our church members' lives. From the bottom of our hearts we convey our heartfelt thanks to the CLC missionaries who have been helping us through their teachings to overcome these evil superstitions. We request you all to pray for us to spread the gospel here in India; to bring hope, grace, and salvation to these millions of people. Thank you!



Pastor Jyothi Benjamin is the Chairman of the CLCI. His home is in Nidubrolu, Andhra Pradesh State, India.

Every other month our CLC Board of Missions updates us with recent news from various mission fields.

Third Foreign Missionary Call to Tanzania

The Board of Missions reported to this past summer's convention that "the need for additional workers in foreign fields continues to grow." After a pause due to COVID-related travel restrictions in countries across the globe, the Board has resumed calling for a third foreign missionary.

With the many contacts we've received and the opportunities we have to assist with training men for the work of ministry overseas, the question is, "Where should we send another missionary?" After prayerful consideration of the needs in our various fields, we have determined to call a man primarily to work with the CLC-Tanzania.

Our relationship with Lutheran churches in Tanzania goes back to April 2000. Missionary David Koenig met with Pastor Angowi of the Lutheran Church in East Africa (LCEA). After instruction and doctrinal discussions, the CLC declared fellowship with the LCEA in June 2002. A seminary opened in May 2003. In 2004, a second Tanzanian church body formed out of the LCEA, the Church of the Lutheran Confession in East Africa (CLCEA). While these church bodies were distinct from each other, an understanding was reached that both bodies would work together with one another and with the CLC. In 2008, the seminary graduated its first class of eight men for the pastoral ministry.

However, in February 2010, fellowship was broken with Pastor Angowi and the LCEA over their working with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. While many pastors and congregations of the LCEA joined the CLCEA, the seminary was closed and ownership of the seminary property was disputed. In 2010, the CLCEA reorganized



Top: Leadership of the CLCI-Tanzania
Above: First graduating class of the Wartburg Lutheran Theological Seminary

into the CLC-Tanzania.

It took some time for the CLC-Tanzania to start a new Bible Institute for training pastors. The Wartburg Lutheran Theological Seminary began classes in 2019, and the first class of five students graduated in November 2021. The school currently has ten students. Classes are currently taught by a faculty of three elderly pastors, two living near the seminary, and one traveling from a distance to teach a few days a week. While this schedule of teaching is working, this is not a good long-term solution.

The main work of the Third Foreign Missionary would be to serve in the seminary as an instructor to the students and to train up men of the next generation as seminary instructors. The work would also involve assisting pastors and congregations as they reach out with the Gospel in new areas. The call may also involve annual trips to other East African countries where the CLC is currently working (Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia).

We pray that the Lord of the Church would lead a man to accept this call so that our brothers and sisters in the CLC-Tanzania would be encouraged in their efforts to spread the Gospel, being firmly grounded in the Word of Truth.



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

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Peace Lutheran Church Orofino, Idaho

“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given; And
the government will be upon
His shoulder. And His name will be
called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and
peace There will be no end, Upon the
throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment
and justice From that time forward, even
forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts
will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)



Among the many names attributed to the Christchild in these beautiful verses from Isaiah is the name “Prince of Peace.” Sin separated us from our holy God. Our hearts were captives of its unending chaos of guilt and shame. At just the right time our loving heavenly Father sent His one and only Son to be the Prince of Peace for each of us. Having become the satisfactory payment for our sins on the cross, Jesus now attributes His righteousness to us, and the Father declares us not guilty. It is that complete forgiveness that grants each of us, by faith, the never-ending peace that all is right between us and our heavenly Father.

The members of Peace Lutheran Church in Orofino, Idaho, have been blessed both to receive and to continue teaching Jesus, the Prince of Peace, since becoming a congregation in 1950.

Much has happened since our last article was published in the October 2015 issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman* in the “Slice of Life” series. Most important, and by God’s good grace, is the faithful preaching, teaching, and hearing of the Gospel administered through

the Word and sacraments. In the trying times of the pandemic, the Lord preserved Peace Lutheran of Orofino, Idaho, through those means of grace. When we couldn’t meet for several months, the Lord did not stop providing faith in the forgiveness of sins, courage and strength for our fearful hearts, and a plan to bring the Word first online, then outside in a local park, then thankfully back into our church sanctuary. The visible witness of our fellowship together was God’s gift to strengthen us as individuals.



In the last seven years we have had many visitors and contacts. One of our ongoing mission outreach efforts is to utilize the local newspaper, which offers the free printing of religious devotions from local pastors on a



regular basis. Over twenty-five such articles have been submitted, and many good comments, some contacts, and a few visitors have been the result. Recently a young family of six has started attending services and has begun instruction classes. Another local man has also been attending morning Bible class and worship services. Knowing God gives the increase, all our members continue to take the opportunity the Spirit gives to plant the seed of the Word.

We are thankful to the Prince of Peace for calling home six of our long-time members to the Church Triumphant and their eternal peace. Although grieved by the separation of temporal death, we are joyful that *“the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.”* (Isaiah 57:1-2) Hallelujah!

Perhaps every congregation has its own amazing example of God’s steadfast love and kindness, but one that stands out for us at Peace Lutheran Church is a man with a heart problem. Not spiritual, but physical. After a heart attack that left him with only eighteen percent of his heart functioning, he lived with an LVAD (left ventricular assist device), a device that weighed nine pounds, twenty-four hours per day for three years while waiting for a heart transplant. He got his heart transplant a year and half ago, and has spent more days in the hospital than not. Because of complications, he’s been life-flighted by helicopter ten times (so far) to a larger hospital in Spokane, Washington. Through it all, his loving Savior has reminded him that His strength is made perfect in

our weakness. And the spiritual heart transplant he (and every child of God) has received from his Lord has kept him in perfect peace.

Currently we have twenty-five members with eighteen communicants. With an average attendance of ten, worship services are held Sunday mornings at eight o’clock. A half-hour Bible study is offered prior to Sunday service September through May. Last year a long-time couple from the congregation purchased the property next door to the church. We are thankful, because she also is our main church organist, so that’s handy!

By Spirit-worked faith, the members of Peace are thankful to the Lord of the Church for His steadfast love and kindness in guarding our hearts and minds with the peace of His Son Jesus Christ. We look forward to our Triune God’s blessings and His gracious plans for our hope-filled future. *“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”* (Isaiah 26:3)



David Naumann is pastor of Saint John’s Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Washington, and Peace Lutheran Church in Orofino, Idaho

“ BREAD OF LIFE ” READINGS DECEMBER 2022

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
December 1	TLH 73	Psalm 24	The King is coming. But not just any King. He is the King of glory. Dear Holy Spirit, during this Advent time, open the gates of our hearts by Your Word, that Christ our King may enter in with His gifts of cleansing and peace.
December 2	TLH 95	Isaiah 2:1-11	Isaiah looks ahead to New Testament times when people from all nations will flock to the Mountain of the Lord, which is the Holy Christian Church. To this very day, countless millions find lasting peace on “God’s Mountain” through the good news of a Savior for all.
December 3	TLH 72	Isaiah 62:1-12	In picture language the Spirit gives beautiful names to the Redeemed of the Lord. He names us Hephzibah, meaning the Lord delights in us. He names us Beulah, meaning He rejoices over us as His bride. By His grace we are His Holy people.
December 5	WS 703	Jeremiah 31:23-34	As we count the days to Christmas, we ponder anew the Father’s wondrous gift of His Son, our Savior. On account of Christ, God has made a new covenant with us, in which He forgives our iniquity and remembers our sins no more. This covenant is completely one-sided, and all by grace.
December 6	TLH 645	Jeremiah 33:1-16	As sinners we have no righteousness of our own that could ever make us acceptable to God. But our gracious God comes to our rescue. He gives and credits us the righteousness of Jesus, naming Him <i>“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”</i>
December 7	TLH 62	Isaiah 7:1-17	Movies like <i>It’s a Wonderful Life</i> depict so-called Christmas miracles. But these make-believe miracles are nothing compared to God’s true Christmas miracles, such as the miracle of a virgin giving birth to a Son, Who is none other than God with us!
December 8	TLH 61	Isaiah 40:1-11	God speaks tenderly to His people with the assurance of sins paid for and forgiven. This Word of Gospel grace stands firm and secure forever. We can always be sure that our Savior/Shepherd will carry us close to His heart.
December 9	TLH 72	Isaiah 35:1-10	Centuries before the birth of Christ, Isaiah proclaimed, <i>“Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come. . . . He will come and save you.”</i> At Christmas we celebrate the fact that, indeed, our God has come to save us. Do not fear, your God will come again, and then all sorrow and sighing will flee away forever.
December 10	TLH 276	Matthew 11:25-30	At this time of year, because we are under pressure to get so much done, our sinfulness can come out in some very ugly ways. Now, and at all times, we poor sinners need Jesus’ grace-filled invitation. <i>“Come to Me, . . . you will find rest for your souls.”</i>
December 12	TLH 56	Matthew 24:30-44	Old Testament believers awaited Christ’s first coming. We wait for the day of Christ’s return, but we don’t know when that will be. So keep a repentant watch, dear Christian, faithfully serving Him Who died so that you now have an everlasting inheritance.
December 13	TLH 275	Luke 1:39-56	Oh to have a “Mary” Christmas! A “Mary” Christmas is one in which we humbly confess our sinfulness, while rejoicing in God our Savior. When your focus is on the Mighty One Who has done great things for you, then you will truly have a “Mary” Christmas!
December 14	CW 275	Luke 1:69-79	Zacharias’s son was God’s choice to prepare the way for the world’s Savior. The world sat in hopeless darkness, but John would point to Jesus as the Light to guide sinners into the way of peace. Jesus is still the one and only Light in Whom we have true and lasting peace.
December 15	WS 701	Luke 3:1-16	Repent! When we confess our sins and then find full relief in the Savior’s forgiveness, fruits of repentance will naturally follow. Our faith in Jesus is a living thing which seeks to correct what is amiss in our lives. All praise to the Holy Spirit for the fruit He produces in our lives!
December 16	TLH 63	John 1:19-28	John sought no honor or glory for Himself. He gave all glory to Christ, Whose way he had come to prepare. His whole ministry was about pointing lost sinners to Christ. How blessed we are when God’s people are served by preachers like that.
December 17	TLH 156	John 1:29-34	God’s Christmas gift to the world is a sacrificial Lamb. “Christ, the heavenly Lamb, Takes all our sins away; A sacrifice of nobler name And richer blood than they . . . Believing, we rejoice To see the curse remove; We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice And sing His bleeding love.”
December 19	TLH 297	Romans 1:1-17	The angels sing the Gospel of a Savior born to bring peace between God and sinful man. This is good news. But the Gospel is much more than news. It is the very <i>“power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”</i>
December 20	TLH 60	Romans 13:8-14	Christmas is only five days away. Are you ready? Are you ready for Christ’s return? But when will that be? We don’t know. But one thing is sure: <i>“Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”</i> So wake up! <i>“Cast off the works of darkness . . . and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”</i>
December 21	TLH 70	1 Corinthians 1:1-31	A humble manger leads to a despised cross. For <i>“God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.”</i> Though sin-tainted reason sees nothing worthwhile in a manger and a cross, faith sees in them God’s great answer to everything.
December 22	TLH 609	Ephesians 5:1-21	Christmas lights are all around us. These lights remind us that Christ is the Light of the world. But they also remind us that God has called us to reflect the light of Christ. <i>“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”</i>
December 23	TLH 106	Psalm 23	Christ was born to be both our Savior and our Shepherd. He is the caring Shepherd Who feeds us on His Word. He is the Shepherd Who leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. His shepherding will finally lead us to dwell in His house forever.
December 24	TLH 76	Matthew 1:1-25	What’s in a name? Sometimes a great deal. Jesus’ name fits him to a T. His very name means “Savior!” <i>“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”</i>
December 26	TLH 102	Luke 2:1-20	“On Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring, on Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring, news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful King’s birth.”
December 27	WS 710	John 1:1-18	<i>“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”</i>
December 28	WS 712	Galatians 3:15-4:7	God’s timing is always perfect. In the fullness of time God sent His Son. His Son was born under the law to redeem us, and to adopt us as His dear children. But when will Christ come again? Exactly at the right time!
December 29	TLH 99	Titus 2:1-15	God’s saving grace has appeared to all people. His grace works powerfully in our lives, causing us to deny ungodliness, making us eager to do what is good. By His grace we also are <i>“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”</i>
December 30	WS 709	1 John 4:1-21	We draw to the end of another year with the needed assurance that God is love. His love sent His Son to be the propitiation [the satisfactory payment] for our sins. His love means life now and forever. May His perfect love cast away all fear in the coming year.
December 31	TLH 123	Psalm 90	This life passes by so swiftly, We <i>“are like grass which grows up: In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers.”</i> Clinging in faith to Christ our Savior we pray: “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Life Will Never Be the Same!

Couples expecting their first child can count on hearing one comment in particular from experienced parents: “Life will never be the same again! You might imagine things won’t change that much, but they will!” The observation is not meant to frighten or discourage—just the opposite. This is a good thing. Even before birth, a baby changes lives. Time and attention are laser focused on planning for the arrival. Anticipation grows with each passing month. There is a sense of excitement and purpose which was not there before. Mom and Dad are not just living for themselves, but preparing for life as a family. A room is cleared for a nursery. A cradle or crib is assembled.

Even greater changes lie in store after the new baby comes home from the hospital. Life revolves around sleeping and feeding schedules. A new tooth and first tentative steps are milestones to celebrate and to document on video. Parents look for clues as to what gifts God has given their child. After high school and college, when the parents adjust to life as empty nesters, their child is still at the heart of their thoughts and prayers. Life is never the same, and that’s a good thing!

Isn’t that even more true for our lives in light of the Child who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary? If Jesus had not been born, we would still be dead in sin without God and without hope. But in the fullness of time, according to God’s promise, He sent His Son so that our lives would never be the same again. Abraham, David, and all the other Old Testament believers looked ahead with great anticipation to the birth. Despite trials and heartaches, they were filled with hope in the One who would be born to free them from sin and death. “*His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6 ESV)

While the world tries to find a glimmer of hope in the temporary good will of people during the holidays, our lives are different. We prepare our hearts to welcome the Savior of all humankind. Hope in Him is never disappointed. Even in His infancy, there was no question as to His identity or mission. Who could ever tire of hearing, “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the LORD.*” (Luke 2:11 ESV)

We prepare our hearts to welcome the Savior of all humankind. Hope in Him is never disappointed.

Jesus’ birth turns things completely upside down. “*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*” (Romans 5:12 ESV) Then a Baby was born Who did not inherit the sin of Adam, a Baby Who would live in perfect holiness as the stand-in for every sinner, a Baby Who would be “*pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities,*” (Isaiah 53:5 ESV) a Baby Who would

rise from the dead and give us the victory.

Life will never be the same! Because of Jesus’ birth, we don’t have to live with the burden of sin weighing on the conscience. We don’t have to live with the pressure of desperately trying to make ourselves good enough for God. We don’t have to wonder where we stand with Him or be fearful of tomorrow or eternity.

We are not alone. We are family. We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Life will never be the same, and that is a good thing, a very good thing! Praise God.



Michael Eichstadt is pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, and president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Wisconsin Ban on Clergy Visits to Prisoners Ruled Unconstitutional.

A Wisconsin circuit court judge in Madison found against a Wisconsin Department of Corrections policy that forbade clergy to visit prisons because of risks associated with COVID. For over fifteen months, clergy were forbidden from fulfilling their religious duty to meet in-person with inmates at Wisconsin's correctional institutions, administer sacraments or provide counseling. At the same time, WIDOC granted in-person access to a host of other individuals ranging from lawyers to law enforcement to teachers to dog trainers. A lawsuit alleged the WIDOC policy violated both state statute and the state constitutional guarantee to the free exercise of religion. Wisconsin state law, Wis. Stat. § 301.33 provides in part: "Subject to reasonable exercise of the privilege, members of the clergy of all religious faiths shall have an opportunity, at least once each week, to conduct religious services within the state correctional institutions. Attendance at the services is voluntary." The judge agreed, and issued an injunction barring the department from reinstating the policy. Bauer, Scott. "Judge rules against Wisconsin prisons over visitation policy." *Trending*. APNews.com, 15 Jul. 2022. Web. 17 Sep. 2022.

More People Deciding Not to Have Children. A recent study by Michigan State University indicates that a growing number of adults are choosing not to have children, and many are making that choice at a younger age. The survey, which sampled over 1500 adults in Michigan, showed that fully one-fifth of people of child-bearing years reported that they did not want children, and intended to remain child-free. One-fifth of the population of Michigan would represent over 1.7 million people – more than the population of its nine largest cities combined. "People – especially women – who say they don't

want children are often told they'll change their mind, but the study found otherwise," said Jennifer Watling Neal, associate professor in the psychology department at MSU and co-author of the study. "People are making the decision to be childfree early in life, most often in their teens and twenties. And it's not just young people claiming they don't want children. Women who decided in their teens to be childfree are now, on average, nearly 40 and still do not have children." Ward, Kim. "Study: One in five adults don't want children — and they're deciding early in life." *News*. MSUToday.msu.edu, 25 Jul. 2022. Web. 17 Sep. 2022.

Are Robot Pastors Next? Worshipers at a Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan, can now listen to sermons and Buddhist scriptures read by a robot. Inside Kodaiji Temple is a six-foot-tall robot named "Mindar" programmed to deliver a twenty-five-minute sermon on Heart Sutra. Made of silicone skin and aluminum body parts, the robot features a camera embedded in its left eye to allow eye contact with worshippers during sermons and teachings. Mindar's hands and torso were also designed to replicate human movement and interactions. The robot was developed by a team led by Professor Ishiguro Hiroshi of Osaka University in 2019. The goal of the project was to renew people's interest in Buddhism, which has been declining due to generational change and modernism in Japan, and to encourage worshippers in using their imagination. Ishiguro explained that Mindar was designed to have an ambiguous gender and age so that worshippers can imagine their own image of Buddha. Moon, Rebecca. "Japanese robot preacher that cost \$1 million delivers sermons at Buddhist temple in Kyoto." *NextShark*. News.Yahoo.com, 15 Jun. 2022. Web. 27 Jul. 2022.



2022 CLC Teachers Conference, held October 19-21 at Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.