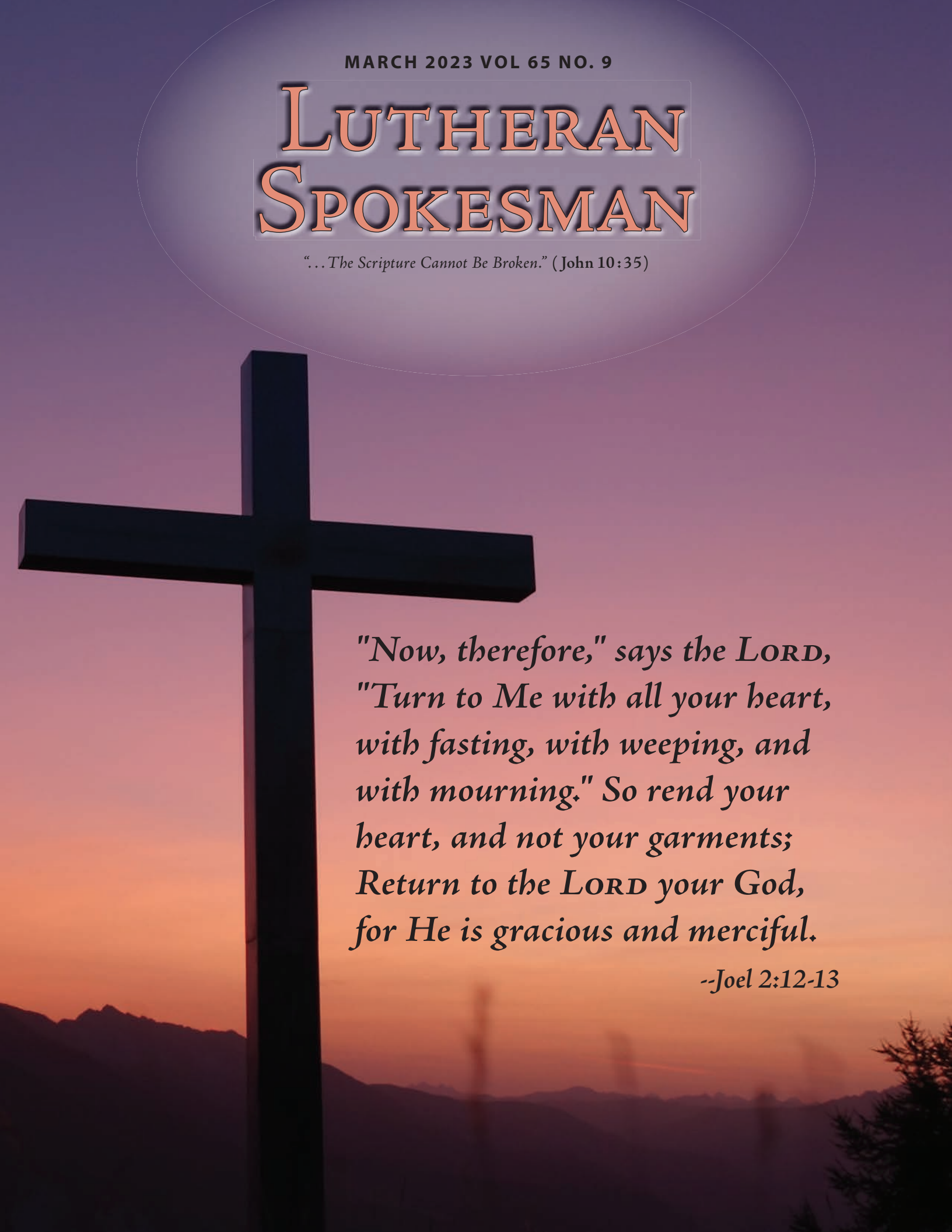


MARCH 2023 VOL 65 NO. 9

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"Now, therefore," says the LORD,
"Turn to Me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and
with mourning." So rend your
heart, and not your garments;
Return to the LORD your God,
for He is gracious and merciful.*

-Joel 2:12-13



Pages 10-11

IN THIS ISSUE MARCH 2023

COVER STORY - ASH WEDNESDAY

Ashes to Ashes? – No! – Ashes to Beauty!..... 3

DEVOTION - LENT

Lent: Repentance and Relief..... 4

OUR LITURGICAL LEGACY

The Epistle..... 5

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chosen to Belong in Christ..... 6

GEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Both Stronghold and Garden..... 7

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

The Sower..... 8

PILLARS OF FAITH

The Means of Grace: God's Gospel-Based Delivery System..... 9

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

New Brethren in Uganda..... 10-11

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church–Spokane, Washington.....12-13

IN THE PIPELINE

Stephen Krause..... 14

BREAD OF LIFE READINGS, MARCH 2023 15

SEEN IN PASSING / ANNOUNCEMENTS..... 16

The Lutheran Spokesman (USPS 825580) (ISSN 00247537) is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org

Periodicals postage paid at Eau Claire, WI and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701-7134

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, art direction & graphic design by Pipestone Publishing Co.; Proofreaders: David Lau and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauer, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, Steven Sippert, Mark Weis.

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann three months before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann.


Business Manager: Rev. James Sandeen, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to jim.sandeen@ilc.edu. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$36.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$50.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$72.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00.

Send address or payment question requests to: lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org

Printed in U.S.A.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Ashes to Ashes? —No!— Ashes to Beauty!

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:1-3)

There are two ways to bring the human body to its original state. 1) By the natural process of decomposition in the grave, resulting in dust. 2) By cremation, resulting in ashes. Over the centuries, the concept of *dust and ashes* has always pointed to our mortality. “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)

When people are suffering, they are reminded of their mortality; sitting in *dust and ashes* has been a way of displaying this. After losing his wealth, his children, and his good health, Job expressed his suffering by sitting in ashes (2:8). — When people are grieving over their sins, they are reminded that sin is the cause of mortality: *dust and ashes* are an acknowledgment of this truth. When the Lord confronted him with his sins, Job said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (42:6)

Ash Wednesday, a day of *dust and ashes*. It is the first step in the Lenten journey. This is a journey of suffering and sorrow, as we walk in spirit with Christ on His *via dolorosa*, His “road of sorrow” leading to Calvary. Midweek services focus on the shame and agony that our Savior endured on our behalf.

For centuries, on Ash Wednesday, people have used ash smudges on their foreheads to symbolize their sorrow over the sins that brought our punishment upon our Redeemer. Sadly, too many times, the symbolism has become only an external

act. However, the true Christian—whether or not he puts a smudge on his forehead or sits in ashes—is sincere in his repentance. On Ash Wednesday, we do not merely “go through the motions.” Jesus suffered for OUR sins. Therefore, our grief is real.

Real it is, but also short-lived, not because we forget about it the next day, but because our Savior gives the grieving

sinner “*beauty for [instead of] ashes.*”

The word that Isaiah uses for “*beauty*” refers to a beautiful headdress. On Ash Wednesday, we look in the mirror of the Law and uglify our heads with sorrow’s “ashes.” But then, praise be to God, He washes the ashes from our heads and adorns them with a beautiful headdress. The washing is that of forgiveness; the adorning is with the headdress of Jesus’ righteousness.

While the journey of Lent will be filled with the sights and sounds of Christ’s anguish leading to His death, it will not end there. If it did, there would be only ashes. The journey takes us beyond the cross to the tomb, where we await the third day. It is by virtue of Christ’s victorious resurrection that our ashes are replaced by His beauty. Therefore,

we “*give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; [and] worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*” (Psalm 29:2)

“*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*” (Isaiah 61:10 - ESV)



John Pfeiffer is retired from the pastoral and teaching ministry. He is a former president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

Lent: Repentance and Relief

Lent, as well as Advent, is a season of repentance. Advent: “Consider your actions! The Savior is about to arrive! Wash away your sins in God’s mercy. Live for Him!” It’s repentance in anticipation of and relief in the rescuing Savior’s arrival. Lent: “The Savior is about to die in agony in His mission to give you, even you, an escape from the doom you deserve—in His blood you are spared! Consider your actions. Cling to Jesus for forgiveness. Live for Him!” It’s repentance, with the somber realization that your rescue called for your Rescuer’s death. It took His death—or, shall we say, took His life—to save you.

What exactly is repentance? To repent literally means to “re-think” a matter. Christian repentance—re-thinking— involves three elements:

- 1) Lord, I have done wrong. I have acted contrary to Your will. I admit it.
- 2) Lord, I am “sorry,” I am “sorrowful” that I have disobeyed. It’s not just regret for the negative consequences I face, but sorrow for having broken the directives You lovingly entrusted to me.
- 3) Lord, I am unable to right the wrong I have done. Although I do it over a thousand times and do it right each time, I cannot erase the failure. I have no “credit balance” before You upon which I can draw. I meekly ask for mercy and pardon. Forgive me. I dare ask this only through my crucified and risen Jesus.

Dear sinner, for Jesus’ sake the Father mercifully forgives and removes from your record all your trespasses—that is, your crossing the line. He removes all your sins—that is, your missing the target. He removes all your iniquities—that is, your being unequal to His expectations. In Jesus there is relief!

Consider a man unexpectedly released from prison because another, who is not guilty, willingly “does the time.” How wretched if the freed man were to say, “Thanks, fool!” and walk away. Rather it would be a time for humble and solemn

reflection on what had just taken place—an unmerited kindness to help the helpless. Lent is a season during which we humbly and solemnly ponder the unmerited “forgiven status” and “not-guilty status” rendered to us in exchange for the “guilty verdict” rendered to Jesus and willingly suffered by Him. That is why we read and hear the *passion* history (in its original sense, the “suffering” history) of our Lord at services during Lent. We review the record and the meaning of the Lord’s surrender to death for us.

During Lent, re-think your daily life, your actions, your words, your thoughts. Realize your relief in Jesus! You are forgiven! Live as the Lord wills, in devotion to the Redeemer Who paid the price for you,

The Old Testament book of Judges displays a sad pattern. The people of Israel repeatedly turned to other gods. The Lord sent oppressive nations against them to bring them to their knees. They cried out to Him for forgiveness and help. The Lord forgave. He sent deliverers, rescuers, judges (Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and others.) However, when the deliverer died, Israel again turned away from the Lord. The pattern continued for centuries, until the majority of Israel repented no more. They no longer re-thought their sin and situation, but plunged forward to their own great harm. Recognize the pattern? “Repenting, being forgiven through Jesus, following for a time, then off the road again.” Do not foolishly turn away from Jesus, Who lovingly saved you from your oppressors: sin, sin’s wages (death), Satan, and hell. During Lent re-think your life and situation, cling to Jesus by faith, and lovingly obey Him. Continue to do so all your life. Do not say, “Thanks, fool” and walk away.



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

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 Epistle

The Gospel of Luke records that on the day of Jesus' resurrection, He joined two of His disciples as they walked and discussed the events of the previous Friday. They did not yet understand why Jesus had been crucified, so He took them through the Scriptures and explained what Moses and the prophets had foretold about Him. After Jesus had finished His Bible class with them and vanished from their sight, they talked about how their hearts had burned within them as He opened the Scriptures to them.

As we read about the experience of those two disciples and of Jesus' personal instruction to the apostles during His three-year ministry, we might wish that we could have listened in. But we need not envy them, as if they received some instruction that has been kept from us. The apostles did not keep to themselves what they learned from Jesus. According to His promise, they wrote down what He had taught them as the Holy Spirit brought it back to their minds and gave them understanding of it. We have the instruction that the Son of God gave to His apostles in their writings in the New Testament. In addition to the four Gospels that record the Savior's life, death, and resurrection, we have the blessing of the *epistles*. These writings of the apostles reveal to us the person of the Lord Jesus and the meaning of His life, death, and resurrection.

It is good for us to keep this in mind as we hear the epistle lesson read in our church services. We are hearing what Jesus taught His apostles. We are listening in on instruction from the greatest of all teachers about the most important of all subjects.

Recognizing this, the church through the ages has included the reading of portions of the New Testament epistles as a regular part of the Sunday service.

Readings from the Law and the Prophets were a part of the services in the synagogues at the time of Christ (Luke 4:16-21). The early Christians continued this custom in their services and soon added lessons from the epistles, later adding

lessons from the gospels.

The three great festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost were the first to have definite readings. Eventually systems of readings were developed for each Sunday of the church year. These came to be called "pericopes," a word from the Greek meaning a portion of Scripture that was "cut out." The oldest of these, called the "historic series," has been in use since the early days of the church.

The epistle readings in the various systems have been carefully chosen so that they cover the main teachings of the Bible in the course of a year. They ensure that those who come to church hear "*the whole counsel of God.*" (Acts 20:27)

Our custom of the epistle reading during the Sunday service emphasizes the importance of God's Word in the service. Up to that point the congregation has spoken to God in prayer and praise. But

when the epistle lesson is read, the congregation sits in silence and listens. This silent listening is a powerful statement that what God says to us is more important than anything we can say or do. It is through His Word that God gives us His grace. By the Word the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, works faith in us, and then sustains and strengthens that faith so that we have all the blessings that Christ won for us by His life and death.

There is also a blessing in listening to the epistle lessons together with our fellow believers. This experience reminds us that we are part of the family of believers, God's own children through faith in Jesus Christ. In His Word He addresses all of us together in love, leading us to repentance with His Law and comforting us with His Gospel of forgiveness and salvation.

When the epistle lesson is read the congregation sits in silence and listens. This silent listening is a powerful statement that what God says to us is more important than anything we can say or do.



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

Chosen to Belong in Christ

“Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient ‘the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the Word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:7-10)

One of life’s more difficult experiences is that of rejection—not being invited or chosen or accepted by those whose association we seek. From childhood spats to teenage peer struggles to social media FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) to adult relationship issues—from not being “chosen” for that sports team, that musical role, that academic award, that job promotion—life is filled with the sorrow and stigma of rejection on every human level. Emotional and even spiritual survival often hinge on learning coping skills, both putting our this-world rejections into Christian perspective as well as appreciating how we have been chosen and invited to truly belong to God’s family in Christ. Much of this life angst can be dissolved by focusing on the One Whose loving relationship matters most to us.

Yet how is it that the holy, perfect God chose unholy and unworthy sinners like you and me to be His very own? As Peter and the other holy writers emphasize, it’s not because of something in us. By nature, we chose sin and darkness and “were not a people of God.” Yet “we received mercy” as God’s compassionate heart reached out to us in eternity, choosing His beloved Son to be our Savior and our Reconciler. He is the “chief cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22) upon which our faith, our lives and His Church are built. Formerly outcasts and outliers, in Christ we now truly “belong.” To us who believe, there is no one and nothing more precious.

Sadly, however, there are also many then and now who spiritually “stumble and fall” over this Rock, rejecting Him and His salvation and choosing for themselves the divine judgment and destiny of the “disobedient.” While we also were once among them, we “are now God’s people,” having “received mercy.” Has there ever been a greater “before and after” contrast than that?

Now in Christ you are one of God’s very own, redeemed and

Much of this life angst can be dissolved by focusing on the One Whose loving relationship matters most to us.

rescued from a life and eternity of sin, selfishness, rejection, and separation. And while you in your life have received many terms of endearment from those near and dear to you, nothing can possibly compare to how your God now sees and describes you in Christ:

“A chosen generation”—God’s heart and hand-picked child from eternity in Christ Jesus,

“A royal priesthood”—spiritual royalty now invited to enter God’s presence to offer prayer and praise,

“A holy nation”—belonging to the Holy Christian Church, redeemed and cleansed to glorify Him,

“His own special people”—truly God’s own and the “apple of His eye” (Psalm 17:8) whom He loves, cherishes, rejoices in, and cares for.

Given our wonderful new relationship, status, and calling in Christ, we now delight in the privilege of “proclaiming the praises of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” This is our now and forever “thank you” to the God whose grace and mercy alone has made us who we truly are. So, whenever life moments arise when we feel we don’t belong, be it in the world out there or sometimes in our own world, take heart. In Christ, we do truly belong to God. And because we belong to God, we also belong with the Lord now and evermore.



David Schierenbeck is a retired pastor and a member of the CLC Board of Doctrine. He lives in St. Paul Park, Minnesota.

Both Stronghold and Garden

It is an elemental fact that the basic needs for physical life are water, food, and shelter. The various survival programs on TV clearly bear this out.

David once found himself in a survival dilemma. After serving King Saul faithfully, he was hunted by his jealous king. At one point David took refuge in the “strongholds of Engedi” (1 Samuel 23:29), hiding from the murderous Saul in caves among the limestone cliffs. It was in such a cave that David had the chance to dispatch Saul, but did not do so, for he knew Saul was anointed by the Lord. So, shelter and protection David had.

But what about water? Engedi was an oasis in the desert. It was located midway up the western shore of the Dead Sea. From its six-hundred-foot cliffs flows a spring of potable water—one of only two fresh-water springs flowing into the Dead Sea. Because of the ibex which lived among those cliffs, it was called “the spring of the kid.” Thus David and his men had plenty of good drinking water.

And where there is water there is generally food. Watered by the flowing spring, there grew date palms, grapes, and fruit-bearing shrubs. No wonder Engedi was called a garden spot. And no wonder David sought refuge in this garden-stronghold.

Today we are the spiritual survivalists traveling through enemy territory. Our spiritual needs are the same: water, food, and protection. Where or to whom shall we flee? There is only One who can provide—our great Savior-God.

David himself described Him with three meaningful words in the same passage: “rock,” “fortress,” and “deliverer” (Psalm 18:2). Then and now all three speak of safety and protection, refuge and salvation. So Luther wrote of our “Mighty Fortress,” so also the poet, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me.” Our Savior-God is our refuge from all our enemies.

Today, few drink water out of cisterns—water that might well be tainted with pathogens and parasites. When as a lad I cleaned out my grandparents’ cistern, I found snakes and

salamanders, worms, bugs, and plenty of mud. Just as people want pure, physical water, so they *should* thirst after pure, spiritual water. Alas, the Old Testament Jews were rebuked for drinking water out of broken cisterns, instead of flowing springs (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus is not a polluted cistern, but provides living water—Himself—water so pure and precious that when drunk by faith it springs up into everlasting life (John 4:10,14).

As for bread, Malachi accused the priests of Israel of offering the people polluted spiritual bread (1:7). Sinners today are invited to come to Jesus, the Bread of Life. Thus He promises that whosoever eats and trusts in His atoning death shall live forever (John 6:51).

Contaminated water and polluted bread! Who would so drink and eat? Sadly, most of the world. Gangrenous false doctrine here, killing pride and self-righteousness there, failure to trust and treasure the Living Water and Bread from heaven everywhere. No wonder so many are spiritually sick and starving unto death!



Modern-day Engedi

Rejoice! We have it all: protection, pure Living Water, and the nourishing Bread of Life. How blessed we are! But God has saved the best for last—in heaven. There we will dwell in His holy city, with walls great and high (Revelation 21), with no sin or evil-doers of any sort allowed. In the holy city we will drink from the water of life, and be nourished by the tree of life, with her various fruits. There all the saints will dwell, never hungering or thirsting again (Revelation 22).

Truly, what a safe and blessed place! Jesus Himself called it Paradise, for it is both an eternal stronghold, and a peace garden of everlasting beauty and happiness.



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

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

The Sower

(Matthew 13:3-23, Mark 4: 2-20, Luke 8:4-15)

The “Sower” is found in three of the four Gospels. It is the longest of Jesus’ parables recorded in the Bible, in part because its meaning is explained by Jesus Himself.

Jesus’ parables used everyday life pictures to convey deeper and more important spiritual truths. That Jesus chose a sower is not surprising. Prior to the agricultural and industrial revolutions, most people were farmers, and most people sowed their seeds by hand, scattering them over a roughly plowed field. Once sown, God causes growth over time that transforms the seed into a harvest. However, even the best soil will not produce anything without the seed.

The parable notes four places the seed would fall when scattered: a tamped down path; thin, rocky soil; weedy, thorn-infested soil; and good soil. The seed on the pathway did not penetrate the ground and was eaten by the birds. The seed on the rocky soil sprang up quickly, but without roots to sustain growth, the hot sun scorched the plant and it withered away. The seed that germinated in the thorny soil grew for a time, but eventually the weeds choked off the nutrients necessary for sustaining life before fruit could be produced. The seed that fell on good soil did produce a crop with varying degrees of bounty.

Jesus explained the parable in this way. The sower is the one scattering God’s Word, the seed is the Word of God, and the soils represent the different hearts on which the seed falls. The heart is not even penetrated by the Word falling on the path. The “wicked one” has easy pickings and plucks the seed away. The heart of rocky soil is one that receives the message readily with joy, but quickly stumbles when persecutions and troubles arise because of his faith. The seed fallen on the thorny heart grows for a time, but the temporal concerns and ungodly allurements of the world choke out growth, preventing fruits of faith. “*But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*” (Matthew 13:23) Only by God’s grace does this soil produce anything good. The



Holy Spirit working through the Word sustains the plant and produces a harvest. The size of the harvest, too, is credited to God.

Lessons For Us

What is God telling us from this parable that applies to our post-industrial age? First, that the means of grace, the Gospel in Word and sacraments, are essential to producing believers. The Great Commission commands us to “*make disciples*” of all people. Let us be about the business of sowing. We can also be assured that the “wicked one,” the prince of this world, is still eager to pluck the Word from hearts. At the same time, be on your guard not to harden your own heart against the Word. We also know from Scripture that those who follow Jesus will be persecuted in this life because of our faith in Him. Pray the Spirit to help us stand up in the days of trial that are sure to come. Every generation has its distractions and false promises, the “thorns” that attempt to choke off our faith. You mature Christians should model regular use of the means of grace and show that the priorities in your lives reflect the priorities of our Savior. Plant the seed and regularly nourish the seedling with that “*one thing needful.*” To this end, help us all, dear Jesus!

Almighty Father, bless the Word
Which thro’ Thy grace we now have heard,
Oh, may the precious seed take root,
Spring up, and bear abundant fruit! (TLH 52:1)



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

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

The Means of Grace: God's Gospel-Based Delivery System

A previous "Pillars of Faith" article noted that justification by grace through faith is the central teaching of the Bible. This key doctrine permeates Scripture and often connects with the other doctrines in Scripture. It especially connects with the doctrine covered in this article on the means of grace, for without the means of grace, our soul-saving justification by grace through faith would never have happened.

While it is true that the phrase *means of grace* does not specifically occur in the Bible, the concept conveyed in these words is clearly and repeatedly taught in Scripture. This article's title is inspired by the verse in Romans where Paul asserts, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16). The Gospel is much more than the good news that Christ is our Savior from sin, death, and hell. It is also God's power at work to save people eternally through faith in the Christ that it proclaims. On that basis we can even view the Gospel as essentially defining with one word what the means of grace is.

In the Gospel the power of God is actively effective to deliver what we need for salvation leading to eternal life. In the Gospel God brings us full and free forgiveness of sins, and Christ Himself as our righteousness with God. The Gospel continues to be God's spiritual delivery system from heaven to earth, from His heart to ours.

In fact, as God's prescribed way of dispensing His grace to us, the Gospel does more than deliver what we need to be saved. It also reveals what we would otherwise ignore and despise. It causes us to know and believe the good news as life-saving truth. As the hymn states so well, "it works the faith, which firmly clings to all the treasures which it brings." (TLH 297:4) The US Postal Service cannot cause me to read, understand,

and rightly use all the mail that it brings to my box. God's means of grace, on the other hand, are fully loaded with God's power to ensure that every believer receives by faith what only the Gospel can deliver to hearts and minds.

We can even view the Gospel as essentially defining with one word what the means of grace is.

Scripture makes clear that the Gospel's power is the Holy Spirit. What Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers applies to all believers: "Our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5) From James we hear that God "of His own will brought us forth by the word of truth." (James 1:18) Notice how the activity of God comes across in this

verse. He decided on His own to "bring us forth" from unbelief to faith, using the Gospel "word of truth" to do it. This agrees with Peter's description of believers as "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23)

The apostolic teaching above (called regeneration or conversion) is the subject of a future article on the miracle of saving faith as God's act of creating and preserving it through the means of grace. Future articles will also address the specific form that God's Gospel-based delivery system takes in the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We thank God that in either form of Word and sacrament, His power to save us by grace through faith is continually effective, as promised, and as revealed in the Bible's very essential doctrine on the means of grace.



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

New Brethren in Uganda

In July of 2022 Pastor Mike Gurath and I were finally able to embark on a mission trip to Kenya and Uganda that had originally been scheduled for May of 2020, but was delayed for two years because of COVID. I was there on behalf of the Kinship Committee to visit and encourage the schools that Kinship supports, and to assist Pastor Gurath in some of the teaching and preaching. As you may know, Kinship also supports orphans and orphanages at several of our missions overseas. One potential new Kinship project I was able to visit during the trip was in the town of Iganga, Uganda, under the care of Pastor Daniel Mugeni.

Pastor Daniel grew up in hardship. He was orphaned at a young age and abandoned on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya at age nine. Eventually Daniel made his way back to Uganda and worked many jobs during his young life. It was through one family he worked for that he met his wife, Aidah. The two have been married for eleven years. Having come from the deepest depths of despair multiple times in his life, and going through periods of his life when he had no one who loved or cared for him, he has a deep desire to show love to those who have nothing and no one. Most importantly, he wants to share with them the love of Christ. Pastor Daniel's life is truly an inspiring reminder of the undeserved love of God in our Savior Jesus Christ!



Visiting missionaries Gurath and Bernthal with children cared for by Pastor and Mrs Mugeni.

Pastor Daniel has been preaching in Iganga since 2010, and after praying that God would lead him to a Lutheran missionary, he found Pastor Nathanael Mayhew on the internet. At that time (2011), he had only three people he was serving. In 2014, after several years of continued growth, his congregation, Grace Harvest Church, moved into their current building. Pastor Gurath and I estimated around two hundred people were in attendance for the service we attended, including a large group of students from a nearby school. (In fact, the church was so full there weren't enough chairs for everyone). Pastor Daniel informed us that this is one of two schools in the area that often have large groups coming to their worship services. To see the large and vibrant church he now shepherds is a testament to the grace of God and the miraculous work of His saving Word.

After the service we were invited to Pastor Daniel's home for lunch with him, his family, and the many children who live with them in their home. His wife, Aidah, is an amazing lady and an amazing cook—and regularly cooks meals for more than twenty-six people (her meal was easily the best I had while in Africa)!

Pastor Daniel and Aidah care for twenty orphan children, in addition to their own four children. An older neighbor lady, Elizabeth, whom they have helped in her times of hardship,



Lutheran church in Iganga, Uganda.



Visiting missionary Gurath with Pastor Mugeni.

also helps them out by giving care to the infants. Daniel and Aidah clearly have a deep love for children and both are committed to sharing what they have with others—no matter who they are. A number of CLC members have been sending monthly support for their work with the orphans, and Kinship is in the process of assessing ways we can be of assistance to their orphan care efforts as well. Pastor Daniel also provides support, as he is able, for fourteen other children who are orphaned or living in hardship, as well as several elderly and disabled adults in his community and in the surrounding area.

After meeting the children and those who were caring for them on Sunday, I expressed our love, prayers, and support for them from their brothers and sisters in the U.S.A. They were very happy to hear this, and they wanted me to tell all of you how much they love you and pray for you!

The next morning we had the privilege of meeting with Pastor Daniel for the final stage of his colloquy (which is the process an already-established pastor undergoes to become a pastor in fellowship with our church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession). This last stage entailed a face-to-face meeting with Pastor Gurath and me as representatives

of the CLC, in which we went through an extensive question-and-answer review of the main Bible teachings (135 questions in all) to make sure we are in doctrinal agreement. Pastor Daniel answered the questions well and professed his agreement with the CLC, and his desire to join our fellowship. Praise the Lord! We made our report back to the CLC President after we returned home, and will *officially* be receiving Pastor Daniel and his congregation (which will be the first congregation in the newly formed CLC-Uganda), Lord willing, at our next CLC Convention in 2024.

For a more detailed account, pictures, and videos of our mission trip to Kenya and Uganda, please visit our trip blog: <https://clckenyauuganda.blogspot.com/>



Luke Bernthal serves on the CLC Project Kinship Committee, and is the pastor of Saint Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay in Hayward, California, and Saint Stephen Lutheran Church of the San Francisco Peninsula in Mountain View, California.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Spokane, Washington

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church has proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the corner of Wall and Wellesley Streets for seventy-nine years. This is a much-needed message for a community that has more recently been plagued with the many troubles and difficulties of inner-city life. Trinity sits just a few miles north of downtown Spokane, the Spokane River, and Gonzaga University. As such, the local demographic of our area seems to be made up mostly of college students, life-long residents, and transplants from other parts of the country looking to enjoy the temperate climate and beautiful scenery.

Trinity's membership is made up mostly of the latter two categories. It is a congregation with deep roots. It was first served by Pastor Maynard Witt, who led the congregation out of the WELS and into the fledgling CLC at the time of the split. Many of the current members joined Trinity in the following decades and have been long-time, faithful members since. Still others have been led by the Lord to our flock through spouses, family members, or coworkers.

One of the current challenges that Trinity eagerly welcomes is outreach. Washington State is one of the least religious states in America, and it shows. It is rewarding when our efforts prove fruitful with new visitors and adult instruction classes, though these have been few and far between. We currently have one adult instruction class and will have one catechism student beginning this fall.

Trinity eagerly faces this challenge because the Lord has seen fit to train our flock carefully and patiently with many trials in the last few years. Among these trials was an extended vacancy (three years), which was exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Washington's strict handling of the pandemic made normal

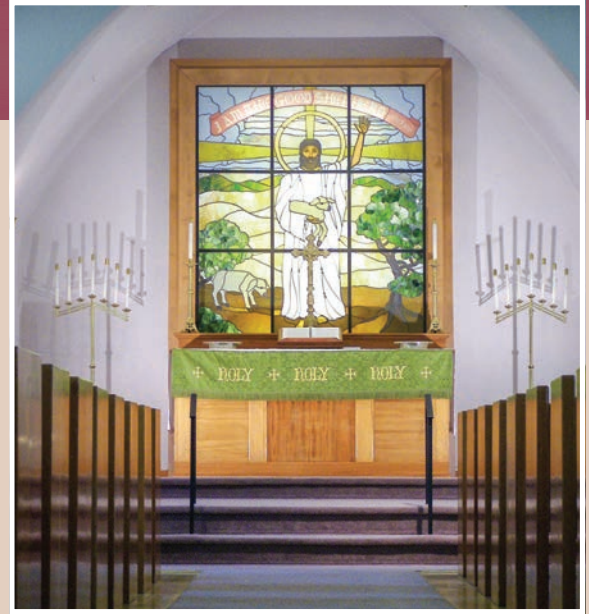
worship practice quite difficult to maintain until just last year. Thankfully, both difficulties have been resolved by God's grace in bringing the pandemic to a close and by bringing a full-time pastor to shepherd the flock.

In the spring of 2021, seminary graduate Drew Naumann accepted the call to serve Trinity and was ordained on the Fourth of July. It's certainly easy to see the Spirit's wisdom in guiding this call at that time, especially since the two congregations in the greater Seattle area would have their pastors called to other fields in the following year. Pastor Naumann has been serving the dual vacancy call to Redemption of Lynnwood and Ascension of Tacoma in recent months. Trinity has been more than gracious in offering whatever assistance they can. This Christian charity comes from being themselves intimately





Some members of Trinity at Christmas.



Sanctuary and altar.

familiar with the hardships a vacancy can bring, and it provides an outlet for the gratitude they have toward those whom the Lord gave to serve them during their time of need.

In addition to regular worship in Spokane and assisting the coastal vacancies, Trinity also serves a preaching station in Mansfield, Washington. Services take place at a member's home once a month. The families in this group are farmers, a profession which grants them a deep appreciation for God's providence and care.

Like many CLC churches, Trinity is also challenged by our contemporary society's growing complacency toward things religious. One may be tempted to ask, "What's the point in preaching a message no one wants to hear?" An aging membership roster leads many to wonder, "How long will we be able to meet our financial obligations with older members being taken to eternal rest faster than younger members come to take their place?" A dwindling clergy roster may cause one to look to the horizon and think, "I don't know that we'd be able to survive another vacancy."

And yet, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, along with the entire Holy Christian Church on earth, has never been defined by our self-sufficiency. We live alone by God's grace in this life and our sure hope in the next. The Spirit has provided us the opportunity to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to a sin-sick world that desperately needs Him. As His redeemed people, called to afflict the comfortable with the Law and comfort the afflicted with the Gospel, we are privileged to show through the clear and inerrant Scriptures that our sufficiency is in the grace of God alone. And so our purpose remains the same as it always has been and always will be, to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:18) To our Triune God alone be the praise!



Volunteers at a church work day.



Trinity parking lot resurfacing project.



Drew Naumann is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.

IN THE PIPELINE

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

Stephen Krause



Age: 21

Program: Education

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born? I was born in Lewiston, Idaho, but my home was in Clarkston, Washington.

Where did you grow up? I moved from Clarkston to Markesan, Wisconsin, and I lived there until I was fourteen years old, when I moved to Watertown, South Dakota.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family. I am not married. My parents are Pastor Paul Krause and Teacher Collette Krause who both serve at Trinity Lutheran Church in Watertown. I am the youngest of five children and I have two older sisters and two older brothers. Alyssa, Dwight, Nathaniel, and Rebecca. My siblings are spread out in our country with my sister Alyssa living in California, Dwight living in South Dakota, and Rebecca living in Omaha, Nebraska

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you? Some of my favorite things to do are bowling, tennis, volleyball, football, and basketball. I have always enjoyed playing piano and I have been playing ever since I was five or six years old.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know. I am able to write calligraphy quite well. I'm not the most artistic person in the world, so not many people know that I can do this.

Which academic subjects especially interest you? A few of my favorite subjects are astronomy, history, geography, choir, and mathematics.

How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career? My senior year of high school, I heard a chapel given by seminary student Drew Naumann and he was talking about using our God-given gifts and talents and how we can always use more pastors and teachers. I looked at my strengths and I found that I had enough gifts that were necessary to become a teacher. The first two years of the teaching program were tough for me because I had to work through the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. When I got to junior year of college here at Immanuel, I knew I had made the right decision, and I am very thankful that God moved me through Drew Naumann's chapel.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC? I am very appreciative of the people I have met and become friends with, I'm thankful for the professors who have guided me through tough times in my life, and I am extremely grateful to be surrounded by God's Word each and every day. That is going to help me a lot when I'm a teacher, because some children might not hear the Word of God much when they aren't in school. I want them to have the same experience being surrounded by God's Word that I was blessed to have in these eight years at Immanuel.

What qualities do you think will most be needed by the future leaders of the church? There are a few qualities that I think are very important to be a leader. You need to be very grounded in the truth of God's holy Word. You have to be kind and compassionate but also firm when tough times arise. God should always be number one in whatever you do. I think 1 Timothy 3:2,7 puts it quite well, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, apt to teach. . . . Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MARCH 2023

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
March 1	TLH 369	Genesis 3:1-15	Certainly we see ourselves in Adam and Eve with all their pathetic excuses for breaking God's command: Tell half-truths. Blame others. Even find fault with God. Yet, in the face of such dishonesty and wickedness, the Lord shows incredible mercy. Praise God for the serpent-crushing power of the woman's Offspring!
March 2	TLH 324	Psalms 51:1-19	It's hard to admit even one sin, let alone to honestly confess our total sinfulness from conception. Only God's Law and Gospel can bring us to true and honest repentance, whereby we admit our sin and rely completely on God's mercy. <i>"According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions."</i> (v.1)
March 3	TLH 377	Romans 5:12-21	In Adam's sin death spread to all, for all have sinned. All deserve hell. What a gloomy truth. Yet, wait for it . . . in Christ all are justified! It's a free gift for all. Will all end up in Heaven? No. <i>"Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God"</i> (Romans 5:1)
March 4	LSB 418	Matthew 4:1-11	Because Jesus never sinned once, He is the perfect sacrifice to take away the world's sin. His sinless life also has been credited to us, giving us the perfection we need to enter into heaven. Finally, Jesus demonstrated that God's Word is our powerful weapon against temptation!
March 6	TLH 437	Genesis 8:1-22	Mercifully, God gave the wicked pre-flood world 120 years to repent. But no one would listen to preacher Noah's call to repentance. Thus humanity was destroyed by a global flood. Yet God could not renege on His promise to redeem the world through the woman's Offspring. His promise was kept alive through flood survivors.
March 7	TLH 370	Psalms 25	In this psalm David prays for forgiveness, guidance, and deliverance from His enemies. As we join David in this prayer, we are confident that the Lord will look on us with tender mercy and loving kindness. As believers, we can count on His help in all our troubles.
March 8	TLH 528	1 Peter 3:8-22	So many diamonds in these verses! A short list includes, 1) Suffering for good is a blessed thing. 2) Sharing our hope in Christ with others is done with gentleness and respect. 3) Dying for the unrighteous, the righteous Christ has brought us to God. 4) Having been baptized, we are guaranteed a clear conscience toward God.
March 9	TLH 279	Mark 1:1-15	Repent! Believe the Gospel! That was Jesus' message to the 1st century world. It continues to be His message in the 21st century. And, just as Jesus called and equipped men like Peter and John to preach the message, so He continues to send His people out with the timeless message of repentance and God's forgiveness.
March 10	TLH 123	Deuteronomy 26:1-15	The Lord gives instructions on how the Israelites should express their thanks to Him for bringing them out of captivity, and for giving them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. You and I thank our Savior God for setting us free from the captivity of sin, and for our inheritance in heaven.
March 11	TLH 425	Psalms 91	Under the Lord's perfect care we can be confident that He will be with us in every trouble, that He will answer our every prayer, and that He will finally show us His salvation. <i>"He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."</i> (v.2)
March 13	LSB 571	Romans 10:1-13	Whoever seeks to establish his own righteousness (perfection) before God will fail in a big way. <i>"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness."</i> (v.4) Christ's righteousness is given to all sinners as a free gift. That means <i>"whoever calls on the name of the Lord [whoever trusts in Him and not his own works] shall be saved."</i> (v.13)
March 14	TLH 388	Luke 5:17-26	Even if it meant tearing apart a roof, nothing would stop them from getting their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Jesus not only had the power to get him up and walking, He had the authority to make the man's soul whole through the forgiveness of sins. Jesus has all we need for body and soul.
March 15	TLH 91	Genesis 12:1-9	Seven amazing promises from the Lord are given to Abram. The crowning jewel is the last one: <i>"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."</i> (v.3) From the descendants of Abraham would come One Who would bring the superb blessings of forgiveness and salvation for all. Yes, that One is Jesus Christ!
March 16	TLH 36	Psalms 33	Praise the Lord as Creator: <i>"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made."</i> (v.6) Praise Him as the Lord of history: <i>"The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing."</i> (v.10) Praise Him as our Savior: <i>"... to deliver their soul from death."</i> (v.19)
March 17	WS 777	1 Timothy 1:1-15	In this world of wickedness, the Law serves to curb the course outbreak of sin. As a mirror it also shows our sin, along with the hell we deserve because of our sin. Our one hope? <i>"... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."</i> (v.15)
March 18	TLH 439	Luke 16:19-31	So the rich go to hell, and the poor to heaven? No. While it is true that living only for the pleasures of this world is foolish and eternally devastating, Jesus' main point is that, whether rich or poor, the only way to prepare for eternity is by giving heed to the faith-creating power of God's Word.
March 20	TLH 496	Exodus 17:1-16	Complain, complain, complain! Sound familiar? Just like Israel of old, don't we find ourselves whining about every little thing? May God lead us to repent of this terrible sin, and then to stand in amazement at how He so richly blesses us despite our grumbling ways.
March 21	TLH 376	Psalms 95	Praise the Lord for His greatness: <i>"Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation."</i> (vv.1-2) But even as we rejoice in His salvation, we need the stern warning: <i>"Do not harden your hearts."</i> (v.8) Because we are sinners we need to be warned, so that we ever listen to the voice of Lord, our Rock.
March 22	TLH 373	Romans 5:1-11	We stand in grace, meaning that even though we daily sin, as believers in Christ we are God's forgiven children 24/7. The sufferings we go through serve to mold our character, so that we persevere in hope; a hope which, unlike all other hopes, will never disappoint.
March 23	TLH 149	John 4:4-26	Jesus asked for a drink of water from the Samaritan woman, and before long, the two were talking about eternal things. He has the living water of life eternal to give to all sinners. Let's turn our simple conversations into opportunities to share Jesus.
March 24	TLH 40	Exodus 3:1-15	True reverence for the Lord is greatly lacking today. Even Christians can get sloppy in their worship practices. God is not some giant teddy bear in the sky. He is a holy and omnipotent God, Who has a burning love for us sinners. <i>"Take off your sandals"</i> and, in humble awe, stand before Him on holy ground.
March 25	TLH 27	Psalms 103	How comforting to know that the Lord crowns us with love and compassion, that he removes our sins as far as east is from west, and that His love for us sinners is as high as the heavens are above the earth. Read the entire Psalm, and bask in all its gracious promises.
March 27	TLH 370	1 Corinthians 10:1-13	Many severe consequences resulted from Israel's rebelliousness in the wilderness. But remember, these things were written for our learning. Yes, let's learn from their poor example, always taking care that we are standing, by the grace of God, on the firm ground of His Word.
March 28	TLH 323	Luke 15:11-32	In this parable God's forgiving grace shines forth in all its incredible wonder. It teaches us that His grace is for outwardly immoral sinners. It's for the self-righteous, who believe that God owes them something. His forgiveness has been won for every sinner by Jesus.
March 29	WS 747	Psalms 150	Praise the Lord with all kinds of musical instruments: trumpet, lute, harp, timbrel, stringed instruments, etc. <i>"Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music."</i> – Martin Luther
March 30	TLH 354	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	The world's sin-tainted wisdom cannot bring it even a centimeter closer to knowing God or the way to salvation. By a miracle of grace the Holy Spirit has caused us to see that true wisdom is found in Christ. While the world sees the cross as foolishness, <i>"to us who are being saved it is the power of God."</i> (v.18)
March 31	TLH 2	John 2:12-25	Jesus certainly was loving, gentle and kind. But whenever evil raised its ugly head, He didn't play nice. Tables were turned, and all who desecrated the temple with their blatant greediness were driven out. Let us find strength in the Lord to bravely speak out against the evils of our day, of which there are many.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Most Parents Desire Money Over Families For Their Children.

"Would you trade your family for money? Which one of your kids would you swap for certain wealth? All parents know what they would answer. None. Never. No way. Yet a new Pew study shows parents would prefer — by a lot — their children prioritize financial independence and a good career over family and children. Eighty-eight percent of parents said it's 'extremely or very important' for their children to be financially independent when they reach adulthood; 88% also said the same of their children having a job they enjoy. Only 21% of parents said it was 'extremely or very important' for their child to get married, and just 20% felt that strongly about their progeny reproducing. This is a giant mistake." Markowicz, Karol. "Tell your kids marriage is more important than money or career — because it IS." *Opinion*. NYPost.com, 29 Jan. 2023. Web. 30 Jan. 2023.

Recent Uptick in Violence Against Christian Churches.

"Family Research Council analyzed publicly available data from the past five years to determine whether there has been a statistically significant increase in acts of hostility against churches in the United States over time. Between January 2018 and September 2022, at least 420 acts of hostility against U.S. churches occurred. The types of acts identified include vandalism, arson, gun-related incidents, bomb threats, and more. There also appeared to be an increase in frequency over the course of the reporting period." DelTurco, Arielle. "Hostility Against Churches Is on the Rise in the United States." *Domestic Religious Freedom*. FRC.org, 1 Dec. 2022. Web. 30 Jan. 2023.

Put Not Thy Trust in ChatGPT.

Recently internet and legacy media have been abuzz with news about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) "chatbot." "ChatGPT is a language generation model developed by OpenAI that utilizes deep learning algorithms to generate text-based responses in a conversational manner. It has been trained on a large corpus of text data, allowing it to respond to a wide range of topics with high accuracy and fluency." E.g., the previous two sentences were generated with ChatGPT. "High accuracy," however, turns out to be a bit of a stretch: when queried about topics with which the user is knowledgeable, ChatGPT returns a lot of obviously inaccurate information. The responses are always well-written and convincing, but many of the facts are simply wrong. Example: a query asking about the Greek terms used in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 produced a very fluent and convincing summary. However, when checked, several of the terms discussed (at length!) are genuine Biblical Greek words, but they *do not occur at all* in the Greek text of 2 Corinthians 6! Another example: a query, "Tell me about Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin" produced the following response: "Immanuel Lutheran College is a private, four-year liberal arts college located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was founded in 1911 and is affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Both the date and the affiliation are incorrect. (-- Editor)