

NOVEMBER 2024 VOL 67 NO. 5

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**Then they will see the
Son of Man coming
in the clouds with
great power and glory**

—Mark 13:26



Pages 10-11

IN THIS ISSUE NOVEMBER 2024

COVER STORY - SECOND COMING

Waiting for the Second Coming 3

DEVOTION - THANKSGIVING

Thank God 4

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Final Reassurance and Blessing 5

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

The Ten Virgins 6-7

GEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Heart of Thanks in the Belly of the Fish 8

VOICES FROM THE PAST - OTTO J. ECKERT

Accidents 9

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Proclaim the Gospel..... 10-11

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Gift of God Lutheran Church—
Mapleton, North Dakota 12-13

BREAD OF LIFE READINGS, NOVEMBER 2024 14

HYMN OF THE WEEK PLAN (NEW!)

Introducing the Hymn of the Week 15

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: Vance Fossum and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Michael Eichstadt, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Nathanael Mayhew, Drew Naumann, Karl Olmanson, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauer, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, 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: Steve Lentz, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu. Subscription Manager: Jessica Lau. 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.

WAITING FOR THE SECOND COMING

The pioneers took up to six months to get from Missouri to California. Now, it takes less than six hours by plane. In 1860, the fastest way to get a letter from Missouri to California was by Pony Express. It took ten days. Now, the fastest way to send a letter is by email. It takes ten seconds. Research used to be a long and laborious process. Now, the internet provides instant access to vast amounts of information. Add AI (artificial intelligence) into the picture and who knows how fast our desires will be satisfied? As a result, we can easily become a people who desire instant gratification.

Six thousand years ago, God gave Adam and Eve the promise of a coming Savior. Eve thought that baby Cain was the fulfillment. It soon became evident, however, that he was a sinner, incapable of crushing the power of Satan. So, the people waited and waited.

It was three thousand years after creation that a man named David became king of Israel. He too waited: *“I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the LORD more than those who watch for the morning—yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”* (Psalm 130:5-8) So, the faithful waited, but others wanted instant gratification of their desires. Instead of waiting in righteousness, they plunged themselves into sin and idolatry.

In love, the Lord disciplined them. Moreover, He sent prophets to graciously warn the recalcitrant and encourage the faithful. New details about the Savior were slowly released: Who He would be, where He would be born, and what He would suffer for the redemption of His people.

Over the next thousand years, believers repeated the words: *“My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.”* And, they were not put to shame. At the right time, in the right place, and to the right mother, the Savior was

born, Christ the Lord. It was as Isaiah promised: *“Israel shall be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed or disgraced forever and ever.”* (45:17)



After completing His redemptive work, Jesus entered into glory. On that occasion, the angels told the Apostles, *“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11) Two thousand years have passed since then. Two thousand years! The scoffers laugh and say, *“Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”* (2 Peter 3:4)

We talk about the second coming, but it hasn’t happened. Learn from the Old Testament believers and wait for the Lord. The time is not right, yet. The last of the elect has not been saved, yet. Therefore *“we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 3:20)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, who are waiting in confident expectation, you will not be put to shame. It will happen—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

The desire for instant gratification doesn’t fit the Christian life. The Lord will come when He is ready. *“The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”* (Lamentations 3:25-26) *“Blessed are all those who wait for Him.”* (Isaiah 30:18)

“‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)



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

THANK GOD!

The mother cried out, “Thank God!” as she learned that her children had escaped harm in the car crash that could have been fatal. The family sighed, “Thank God!” when they learned that Grandpa and Grandma had been spared from the tornado that roared past their home. Such dire situations, where loss of life has been miraculously prevented, speedily produce a “Thank God!” Yet “ordinary” miracles are provided by God every day and go without comment from heart or mouth. You are alive, today! You can breathe! The cupboard and/or freezer have much inside! The car runs! The electricity is on! Such things happen daily.

Sinful pride engendered by Satan makes us think that such small things are somehow our “right” and are guaranteed to us. After all, “We are good, and the world revolves around us.” It’s not just the youngster who receives a package in the mail and childishly does not so much as acknowledge to the sender that it has arrived or respond with a word of thanks. Youngsters need heartfelt training from Dad and Mom—not just an iron fist—to learn these things. Adults are much the same. A compliment that the lawn looks good is met with the inner thought, “You better say that,” or with words, “I put a lot of work into that”; but no simple, humble “Thank you!”

Humility and thanksgiving go together. It’s difficult to muster up a “thank you,” be it verbal or in writing, when the gift is considered minimal, and “not so much” in comparison with what the person thinks he should get. “Hmmp. Why say thanks?” If gifts are “deserved” then they really are not gifts at all!

This same thinking carries into the spiritual realm. It’s easy to assume, “God owes me.” “God owes me good weather, happy times, healthy children, an easy job, mercy and pardon. Look at all I do for Him—maybe not at church, but in my life.” It is self-righteousness, is it not?

You are not the cause of your own blessings. The truth is, you are His, each day, purely by His grace/gift in Christ—trespasses forgiven, all charges dropped! Why does He do it? Because His Son walked the last mile for you into death. Jesus’ battle and victory against that wolf in sheep’s clothing, against

viral sin, against inevitable death, is your victory. Jesus has won your pardon. His bursting forth from the grave gives to you life eternal instead of eternal death. His comfort, in life and in death, is a precious gift to be admired every day. “Thank

God!” Why should it take a near disaster to squeeze out, “Thank God”?

The word *disaster* is noteworthy—“dis” + “aster.” “Aster” is the Greek word for “star.” A “dis-“aster” is a harsh event that happens (supposedly) because the “stars” are in “dis-“array!

No such thing! Dear Christian, take heart! Christ is your “Bright and Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16). Jesus, your Savior from sin, is the Star promised from

Jacob’s line (Numbers 24:17). He is holding you safe in every little detail every day, miraculously leading you closer to Him forever. Each day “disaster” is turned away from those in Christ the Savior! “Thank God!”

*“Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!”*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:*

*Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,*

*Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,*

*Who satisfies your mouth with good things
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:1-5)*



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

A Final Reassurance and Blessing

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; And so does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:8-14)

Peter’s final words of this letter provide a striking recap for the persecuted Christian. All their sufferings are part of an all-out assault from our archenemy, the devil. Like a hungry lion on the prowl, Satan zeroes in on his prey—God’s people. In deceiving and frightening them, he has one goal—to devour them, to destroy them spiritually and eternally.

Sound terrifying? Hopeless? Not if believers employ the weaponry with which God has equipped them (Ephesians 6:10-17); not if we remain vigilant, trusting in the Lord’s strength and promises of an already accomplished and assured victory over Satan; not if we remember the many believers who have resisted him and remained faithful.

“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4) While we are no match for Satan, he is no match for God. He wasn’t when he led the doomed angelic rebellion in heaven (Revelation 12:7-9) and, because of Christ, he ever remains an eternal loser who can only cower and cringe before the might of the Lord (James 2:19).

Peter’s closing doxology (verses 10-11) takes us through our life’s struggles to their eternal outcome. Not only will God’s grace *“perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle”* us in the here and now, that same grace that called us will deliver us safely to eternal glory. *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) Yes, even though the storm clouds are gathering (treated in our upcoming 2 Peter study), those clouds will soon give way to the light and glory of Paradise. *“To Him be the glory and*

dominion forever and ever.”

Peter concludes by acknowledging the role of Silvanus (likely Paul’s missionary companion Silas) as his scribe or messenger of this letter to all the scattered and persecuted churches and souls throughout Asia Minor. “Babylon” (the mighty Old Testament enemy of God’s people and the Revelation name for Satan’s kingdom) may symbolize the spiritually hostile environment of Rome itself, in which Peter and his fellow Christians labored for Christ.

How precious are the Apostle’s closing greetings of spiritual *“peace in Christ”* and the *“kiss of love.”* Do we not also cherish our own many expressions of

Christian fellowship and peace in our homes, in our church families and yes, also within our CLC fellowship (Psalm 133)? In spoken and written words (including the *Lutheran Spokesman*, *Daily Rest* devotions, *The Branches* women’s fellowship, as well as digital forums), in personal messages of comfort and encouragement, in the face to face faith-strengthening fellowship of our churches and synod, in our joint and joyful gifts and support for the Lord’s work—in all of this we are truly greeting one another in *“peace”* with a *“kiss of love.”* May such customs ever flourish among us!

***“He who is in you
is greater than he
who is in the world.”***



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

The Ten Virgins

(Please read Matthew 25:1-13)

When I was a student in college and seminary, I maintained desperately frugal ways, particularly when it came to squeezing a maximum period between trips to the gas pump. Old habits die hard, so later, when my wife and I stopped by the airport to pick up a fellow pastor and his wife for the CLC convention, we arrived with my gas gauge tickling the 'E.' We left the arrivals level and accelerated onto a ramp with a long-sweeping curve, bound for the highway and parts east. That's when my little 4-cylinder started to buck and cough. "What's wrong?" someone asked. I admitted that we might be a little low on gas. "Well, Pete" chipped in my colleague, with a knack for deadpan, "If we'd known you needed gas, we would have brought some."

It's no fun to run out of fuel. Is that the lesson of the Ten Virgins? Well, perhaps. But the larger lesson is about readiness. This parable was told by Jesus as part of what is known as the Olivet Discourse. It

took place during the week leading up to Jesus' Crucifixion. Leaving the city one afternoon, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and answered the disciples' questions about His predictions that Jerusalem would be destroyed, that there would be signs leading up to that event, and that He Himself would return. The parable itself comes specifically in connection with talk of Jesus' (the "Son of Man") coming at an *unspecified* time (Matthew 24:36-44).

So the message of the parable is really very simple: Believers, be ready! It doesn't take a whole parable to convey that thought, but any reader is bound to be moved by the rich detail

and powerful imagery

Jesus uses to underscore what His coming means to us. The group of ten virgins is central to the parable—the number ten typically indicates completeness, a whole; the virgins, young women of the wedding party, convey the ideal of innocence and purity. This party represents the visible Christian church, the total number of those on earth who profess faith in Christ.



Alive by faith in Him, they are quickened by His groom-like promise: “I will come again and receive you to myself.” (John 14:3)

It is late, dark, and their lamps are their Christian confession. The wedding custom behind this parable is this: at the height of the wedding feast, the bridegroom leaves his house to go to the bride’s family home, collect his wife, and bring her to their future home (a 19th century commentator asserts that the custom in Palestine in his own day still followed this pattern). As the bridegroom approached the bride’s childhood home, the virgins would wait to meet him and accompany him to the celebration. The procession would offer a striking image: lamps swaying and bobbing in the darkness, a chatter of voices, singing and laughter filling the dark void.

But light requires energy; lamps require fuel. Here Jesus divides the group: half were wise, and half were not. The wise made sure there was fuel for the journey; the foolish failed to look ahead. A lamp does not shine on yesterday’s fuel.

What does it mean that they “*slumbered and slept*” (verse 5)? Since this detail is said of all the virgins, it is hard to say that it applies in a specific way to the reality of the Kingdom. It may simply be a necessary detail for the parable to work. At a time when nobody was particularly *thinking* about the bridegroom showing up, He did. The disembodied announcement “*Behold the Bridegroom!*” (verse 6) may relate to “*the voice of an archangel*” ushering in the Day (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

So if the lamp represents one’s Christian confession and expressed hope, the oil that fuels that hope and activity is the work of the Holy

Spirit. When the wise tell the foolish “*no, lest there . . . not be enough for us and you,*” they are affirming that no one can claim entrance to the Wedding Feast based on some near and dear person’s faith: not a son on his mother’s, not a wife on her husband’s, not a parishioner on her pastor’s, not a citizen on his ruler’s. We stand or fall before the Judge based on our personal faith in Christ—ours alone. Whoever lacks faith must find it in the Means of Grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, and when the Lord comes, that store will be closed.

The wise virgins, warmed and aglow with faith, will enter with joy into the presence of their Lord. The foolish, who once professed such a hope as well, are excluded because they had nothing but cold, dark faith-lamps to show when the Day arrived.

I hope that these notes offer a helpful commentary on this parable. For a truly wonderful commentary on this whole scene, I urge you to look up Philip Nicolai’s hymn “*Wake, Awake!*” (See *The Lutheran Hymnal*, #609).

The curve straightened out, my little motor settled down and purred on until we could get into a nearby gas station. Our journey continued as planned, and we arrived at the convention at the appointed time. May the Lord grant that all who read this, all who wonder at this parable, all who await the Day of the Lord, will daily and faithfully hear the Word and attend to the task of welcoming Jesus in His Day.



Peter Reim is a former pastor who now teaches English at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He makes his home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

A Heart of Thanks in the Belly of the Fish

"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD." (Jonah 2:9)

Thanksgiving is a joyful time of year, isn't it? Getting together with friends and family, magnificent feasts, everything at the store goes on sale—who could possibly be saddened by Thanksgiving? Yet even Thanksgiving can be overshadowed by circumstance. Maybe you or someone you love is spending the holiday in the hospital. Maybe there's an empty seat this year that was once occupied by someone who is now estranged or deceased. Maybe you're far away from home and must spend this Thanksgiving eating frozen pizza, watching football, and trying not to think of the home that you longingly ache for. Paul encourages us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* But sometimes you find yourself in a place where it can seem hard to give thanks—not unlike the prophet Jonah.

Jonah, if you recall, was summoned by the Lord to go to the wicked city of Nineveh and cry out against it. In fear and trepidation, Jonah instead fled to Tarshish by sea. When a storm arose, the sailors discovered that Jonah's disobedience was the cause of their disaster, and they threw him overboard to his certain death. Except he didn't perish—the Lord sent a great fish to swallow him. And from—of all places—the belly of this fish, Jonah praised God and gave thanks to Him.

It was the prophet's sin that had placed him in this predicament. His disobedience is what kicked off the chain of events that landed him in this (to put it mildly) uncomfortable situation. Sin brings hardship for us as well. It is the corruption of sin that causes hospital visits and estranged families. It is sin that lies at the root of loneliness, fear, and, yes, even death (Romans 6:23).

The belly of a fish seems like the last place from which one would be inspired to thank the Lord. Upon closer inspection, however, it makes all the sense in the world. God had saved Jonah's life by sending the fish, and so he says, *"I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. . . Salvation is of the LORD."* (Jonah 2:9) And in saving Jonah, He also preserved the 120,000 residents of Nineveh.

Wherever you find yourself this November 28, you have good reason to give thanks. To the sick and the lonely, the Psalmist reminds us, *"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."* (Psalm 147:3) To the bereaved and estranged, Jesus says, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20) To the heart strangled by guilt, where shame threatens to overwhelm thankfulness, Paul assures, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1)

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so also was our Lord in the grave for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). His triumphant resurrection means our justification. And our justification means our triumphant resurrection unto eternal life. Wherever you spend Thanksgiving this year, even if it's in the belly of the fish, you have good reason to give thanks to the God who redeems you, protects you, and comforts you in every distress.



3rd Century Christian grave marker with a relief of Jonah and the great fish



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



Otto J. Eckert
1901-1974

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Otto J. Eckert (1901-1974) was a leader in the formation of the CLC. He held several pastorates in Lower Michigan, including Hemlock, Tawas City and Saginaw. He was a prolific contributor to the Lutheran Spokesman. This article is from the November 1972 issue. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

Accidents

An August 2 editorial in the *New York Times* states that the 1972 presidential election “is fated to be decided by human accident, blunder, and caprice, by things unplanned, unforeseen, and untold that leave the actors and spectators alike stunned with disbelief. The whole scenario would have been different but for the Kennedy tragedy at Chappaquiddick, the bullet in George Wallace’s spine, Tom Eagleton’s fatal silence at Miami Beach, Hubert Humphrey’s vain yearning for one last chance, and Ed Muskie’s emotional outburst in the New Hampshire primary. In a flash these accidents change the question, close the door on some careers and open it to others.”

The Unseen Hand

The editorial calls all these things accidents, and they may be so called in the sense of being unexpected and unforeseen. But be that as it may, God still rules in all things, whether they be purely accidental or the result of human passion, misjudgment, or even crime. This does not mean that God is responsible for mistakes in accidents or for evil in deeds. . . . But accidents and evil deeds cannot occur without God’s permission, and when they occur He uses them in His providential rule in the affairs of men. Thus we would never blame God for all or any of the wickedness of those who brought our Savior to the cross. Their wicked deeds were theirs to answer for alone. But God . . . took them into His plan and worked them in accordance with His own counsel and will to achieve His desired end.

That is true also in the affairs of nations and of our nation and its election. “*The Kingdom is the Lord’s: and he is the governor among the nations.*” (Psalm 22:28) A presidential election is by the people. Our votes have a share in it as we use our best judgment in the interest of our country’s welfare. But the unseen hand of God directs it, and the outcome will be according to His scheme. “*The powers that be are ordained of God.*” (Romans 13:1)

God’s Aim and Purpose

What is the aim and purpose of God’s providence in all this? Sometimes it may be to bring judgment upon the wickedness of men. . . . But for the church there is a blessing in God’s providence. Ephesians 1:22 tells us that all things have been put under our Savior’s feet and that He is given to be the Head over all things to the church. . . . He works in all things and makes all things work together for its good in all that He permits, directs, and controls, so that “*the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*” (Matthew 24:14)

Our Comfort

God’s providence extends no less to the smallest gnat than to the biggest elephant and concerns itself as much with the lowliest worm as with the majestic lion. The sands of the sea and the infinitesimal number of ultra-microscopic atoms are in His hand as much as the brightest stars of the firmament. So are also all big things and little things in our lives. . . . Our failures in spite of our best efforts, our successes in spite of our blunders, the coincidences and accidents in our life, and the grief and sorrow that come to us, are all in His control.

More Than Sparrows

For us who are worth more to Him than many sparrows all has to work out according to His pattern devised in love and wisdom and carried out by His might. We may not always understand. . . . Luther says, “Our Lord God works like a printer, who sets his letters backward; we see and feel His setting, but we shall see the print yonder—in the life to come.” Meanwhile, “*we walk by faith and not by sight.*” (2 Corinthians 5:7) This is not fatalism, . . . we should commit all things to God’s direction in our prayers, knowing that He will ever hear and bless, sometimes miraculously. May God strengthen us in such faith!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

Proclaim the Gospel

Most of our seminary students in the U.S. have grown up hearing sermons that correctly preach the Good News that our sins are forgiven and we have eternal life because of the perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus. This precious part of our Lutheran heritage helps them to be faithful preachers of this Gospel. Many of our pastors and seminarians overseas have not been blessed with this upbringing, however, especially in areas like West Africa, where the Lutheran church is almost unknown. They need more instruction and encouragement to focus on the true Good News.

It can be easy to focus on the many earthly blessings God gives us. I remember hearing one sermon that talked only about how Jesus helps us with our problems in this life. This is true, and it is certainly

good news, but it isn't THE Good News. From the explanations found in Luther's *Small Catechism*, my students have learned the distinction between the Law, which tells us what we should do, and the Gospel, which tells us what God has done for us in His Son Jesus. I have to remind them not to end the definition there, but to remember that the Gospel tells us what God has done for us in Jesus *to earn for us forgiveness of sins and eternal life*. In order to encourage them to preach the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, rather than simply focusing on the many temporal blessing we have in this life, we point them to what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19: *"If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."* (ESV) What God gives us in His Son is far greater than any earthly hope or treasure.



Preaching at West African Pastoral Conference

The “prosperity gospel” is preached all over Africa. Our church used to be located next to a “Deeper Life” church. One Sunday before our service started, I was listening to their Bible study (which they were blaring over loudspeakers). The pastor cited 2 Peter 1:3 (ESV): “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. . . .” and he explained, “God gives us everything we need for this life, including success!” What a misuse of this verse! I think we would all agree that Paul was a successful missionary, but I don’t think Paul’s life—filled as it was with illness, shipwrecks, beatings, persecutions and imprisonments—would fit this pastor’s definition of “success.” I doubt this pastor taught what Paul did in Acts 14:22 (ESV): “*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*” This is something I often emphasize in my sermons. Jesus promises us heaven, but He does not promise us heaven on earth.

Not far from my apartment in Lomé I stumbled across a church with big billboards advertising services of healing and miracles. There are also many billboards around the city advertising evangelism campaigns promising the same. I have heard many sermons that say that Jesus heals us. But we must remember that Isaiah 53:5 is talking about eternal, spiritual healing: “*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*” (ESV) Jesus performed many miracles, but these were just signs pointing to the eternal deliverance and healing Jesus gives us in paradise. Jesus healed many people, but where are they now? We have no evidence that Lazarus did not die again; that is why Jesus told Martha: “*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.*” (John 11:25 ESV) This is the Gospel we must remember to proclaim.

Pastor Blewu in Togo used to have a radio program on a Christian radio station based in Assahoun, a town between Lomé and our seminary. Many people would call in during and after the program because the message (the Gospel) he brought was so different from the other programs they heard. Pray that we will be able to establish a church in this town,



Preaching at the 2024 West African Pastoral Conference

as many have been interested in attending our church after hearing the true Good News.

Having grown up hearing all these pale imitations of the Gospel can make it more difficult for our students and pastors to preach the true Good News. Pray that our instruction and encouragement will equip them to faithfully proclaim the Gospel, as Jesus sends us out to do.



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

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Gift of God Lutheran Church Mapleton, North Dakota

The year was 1880. Nine years before North Dakota became a state, and one year before the Gunfight at the OK Corral, a small church was built near the Maple River in the town of Mapleton, North Dakota. That church building was purchased in 2001 by Gift of God Lutheran Church—a congregation newly formed that same year. The walls where we worship are adorned with Scriptures that remind us that God Himself is present. Last summer's hail storm provided us with the opportunity this year to put on new shingles and gutters. We've also been pondering doing some renovations to make additional Sunday School rooms and a dedicated nursery.

Mapleton's population has grown from 604 in 2001 to 1,470 in 2024! The outreach efforts of Gift of God have mostly been directed toward the youth in Mapleton via Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, and catechism classes. Many of the nonmember parents in town are happy and even eager to have their children study the Bible and learn Christian teachings from the catechism. We look



upon these as opportunities to sow the seed of the Gospel in the hearts of the children, and also a way to connect further with the parents.

We had our VBS in July. The theme was, "God Is the Giver and Designer of Our Life—Our Creator and Redeemer!" Many members of Gift of God volunteered and blessed the





2024 Vacation Bible School

children with outstanding crafts and treats. Fourteen of the students who attended were from families who live in Mapleton but are not members of our congregation.

Our city celebrated Mapleton Days in September. Gift of God Lutheran Church had a booth with a game and prizes for kids. We also handed out new trifold brochures recently printed for this occasion and the future.

Mapleton is located in the Red River Valley, through which the Red River and its tributaries flow on their way to Hudson Bay. The valley was once the bottom of a huge body of water called Lake Agassiz. That's why the eastern part of North Dakota has such rich farmland. Many fields here have corn that's head high by the Fourth of July!

Mapleton's heritage has been a rural one blessed with many gifts of God. More and more, it's also becoming an urban one. Only the Lord knows what the future holds, but in view of the mission outreach opportunities of the present, we're looking forward to more blessings in the future; specifically, being able to bring the greatest gift, Jesus, to receptive hearts! Amen, may it be so!



2024 Vacation Bible School



Delwyn Maas is pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota, and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ponsford, Minnesota.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS NOVEMBER 2024

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
November 1	TLH 215 / LSB 701	Song of Solomon 1	The poetry of Song of Solomon, or Song of Songs, records romantic dialogues between a king (Solomon) and his bride. The relationship between this king and his bride serves as a beautiful metaphor for the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church.
November 2	TLH 364 / LSB 524	Song of Solomon 2	The bride describes her courtship with the king, their wedding, and their consummation of the marriage.
November 4	TLH 350	Song of Solomon 3	The bride dreams of searching for and finding her beloved. Solomon arrives for their wedding.
November 5	LSB 546	Song of Solomon 4	Solomon admires the beauty of his bride.
November 6	TLH 362	Song of Solomon 5	Solomon and his bride eat and drink in his garden. The bride searches for her beloved. The bride praises her beloved.
November 7	TLH 657 / LSB 537	Song of Solomon 6	Solomon and his bride are together in his garden. The two delight in one another.
November 8	TLH 345	Song of Solomon 7	Solomon praises his bride. The bride invites her beloved.
November 9	TLH 623	Song of Solomon 8	The bride longs for her beloved. The bride comments on love. Chastity is to be desired and promiscuity to be avoided. The king longs to hear the voice of his bride. The bride anticipates the arrival of her beloved.
November 11	TLH 624	1 Kings 17	Elijah predicts to King Ahab a drought. During the drought, the Lord instructs Elijah to stay at the home of a widow in Zarephath. Miraculously, the oil and flour last throughout the time of drought so that Elijah and the widow and her son may eat and live. The son of the widow dies and Elijah revives him to life miraculously.
November 12	TLH 19 / LSB 819	1 Kings 18	Elijah and the prophets of Baal face off on Mount Carmel. The Lord reveals Himself as the true God. Elijah and the Israelites kill the prophets of Baal. The Lord sends rain on the land once again.
November 13	TLH 414 / LSB 705	Psalm 1	The psalmist contrasts the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked.
November 14	WS 773 / LSB 825	Psalm 2	The enemies of the Lord may appear to prevail for a time, but the Lord triumphs in the end. Those who are wise submit to the Lord.
November 15	TLH 653 / LSB 887	Psalm 3	Confident in the salvation of the Lord, David prays to the Lord for deliverance from his enemies.
November 16	TLH 201 / LSB 490	Daniel 12	Daniel records a prophecy of the last judgment and the end of the world.
November 18	TLH 554 / LSB 880	Psalm 4	Despite the malice of those who speak evil of him, David trusts in the Lord for deliverance. Knowing that the Lord will deliver us from every evil, we may sleep peacefully at night.
November 19	TLH 535 / LSB 737	Psalm 5	Boasting and deceit lead to destruction. We rejoice that the Lord has redeemed us and has covered us in His own righteousness.
November 20	TLH 321	Psalm 6	The first of the traditional “Penitential Psalms,” Psalm 6 is a prayer of David for deliverance from the anxiety resulting from an awareness of his sinful condition. We join David in this penitential prayer. We share with David the confidence that our spiritual enemies are defeated through the work of Christ on our behalf.
November 21	TLH 239 / LSB 905	Daniel 7	Daniel records a vision of four beasts. In his vision Daniel sees God the Father seated on His throne in judgment, defeating the four beasts. Daniel sees Jesus coming with the clouds and receiving an eternal dominion.
November 22	TLH 472	Jude	Jude warns the faithful against false teachers and calls them to persevere in the true faith.
November 23	TLH 143 / LSB 439	John 18	Judas betrays Jesus, and the chief priests and the Pharisees arrest Jesus. Jesus stands on trial before the high priest. Peter denies Jesus. Jesus stands on trial before Pilate.
November 25	TLH 549	Psalm 7	David petitions the Lord for deliverance and for justice. We join David in this prayer. Covered by the blood of Christ, we are righteous in the sight of God.
November 26	WS 744 / LSB 801	Psalm 8	We praise the Lord for His wonderful creation. We praise the Lord for making man the crown of His creation. We praise the Lord for sending His Son as man to redeem us and to rule over us for our eternal benefit.
November 27	TLH 370 / LSB 575	1 Timothy 1	Paul urges Timothy to oppose false teachers, reminds him of the power of the Gospel, and encourages him to continue fighting for the truth.
November 28	TLH 313 / LSB 617	1 Timothy 2	Paul encourages Timothy to maintain proper order in the public services of the local congregations. This proper order includes the prohibition of women exercising authority over men.
November 29	TLH 98 / LSB 384	1 Timothy 3	Paul lays out the qualifications for one who would serve as a pastor or as a deacon in the church. Paul confesses the true faith in Christ through what appears to be an early creed or hymn.
November 30	TLH 655	1 Timothy 4	Some, deceived by the teaching of demons, will renounce the faith. Paul encourages Timothy to persevere as a faithful servant of Christ, teaching the truth and setting a godly example.

HYMN OF THE WEEK PLAN *New!*

The Lutheran church enjoys a long tradition of identifying a “Hymn of the Week” for every Sunday of the church year. Such a hymn should reflect the unifying theme of the service, and is intended to be sung on that Sunday every year. Pastor Nathanael Mayhew introduces the series, which begins with this issue.

INTRODUCING THE *Hymn of the Week*

The Lutheran church has long been called “the singing church.” This is an apt description for many reasons. Congregational singing was one of the rich blessings restored to God’s people through Martin Luther and the Reformation. Luther himself loved music and knew the importance that hymns could play, both in church and at home, when sung and learned. This is what motivated him to write many hymns for congregational singing and to encourage his fellow reformers to do the same. Luther wrote, “Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.”

When Luther reformed the Roman Catholic Mass for use in Lutheran worship in his *Deutsche Messe* (“German Mass”), he included a congregational hymn which eventually came to be called the “chief hymn” of the worship service. From this simple change, something new developed in Christian worship. A fixed hymn was assigned to every Sunday and festival of the church year. This “hymn of the week” was usually sung every year on a specific Sunday or festival, as the seasons of the church year came and went. In this way the congregation came to know the hymn well and learned Christian doctrine through the repeated use of the hymn year after year. This practice continued for well over two hundred years, until it was set aside at a time when rationalism and pietism plagued the Lutheran Church, both doctrinally and liturgically. Over the last seventy-five years, there has been a growing awareness of the value of a “hymn of the week” plan, and there has been an effort within confessional Lutheranism to revive this practice in Lutheran worship and life.

What are the benefits of having and using a “hymn of the week” plan? Since the time of the Reformation, Lutherans have used hymns to teach and confess the Christian faith. We emphasize hymns that teach the objective truth of God’s Word, and instruct us in the work of God in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. Lutherans use hymns for

delivering and confessing doctrine, and for presenting the life of Christ and His work for us as celebrated through the liturgical year. The hymns of the week are adept at professing and teaching the truths of the Christian faith. The repeated use of these hymns, both at church and at home, will deepen our faith and enrich our understanding of, and appreciation for, the seasons of the church year, and the themes of each worship service throughout the year.

This article is the beginning of a series on the hymns of the week. In the coming months, as we journey through the church year, we will highlight a hymn for every Sunday of the church year as well as for a number of church festivals. We will reflect on the connection of the hymn to the theme and Scripture readings for that Sunday or festival. These hymns will be found in either *The Lutheran Hymnal* or *Worship Supplement 2000*, and will be based on the themes in the Historic Lectionary. (Note: A lectionary is a collection of Scripture readings to be read and preached from throughout a church year. Think of it as a Bible reading plan for worship services.) There are a variety of different lectionaries available today for congregations to use, and while there are similarities, there are also differences among them. This means that the schedule that we will be following and the themes that we cover in our series may not perfectly align with the readings and themes used in your church. Still, we pray that the review of the themes of the church year and the connection to these rich hymns will be instructional and encouraging to you during the coming church year. May the Lord bless our use of God’s Word through the hymnody of the church!



Nathanael Mayhew is a pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota.

Lutheran Spokesman

501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2024 Southeast Pastoral Conference

Resurrection Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas
October 8-10, 2024

Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Ecclesiastes 10:1-10—Pastor David Koenig
- New Testament Exegesis: Galatians 3:6-14—Pastor Robert Sauers
- A Critical Examination of the Critical Theory of Westcott and Hort—Pastor David Baker
- The Proper Use of AI Technology in Sermonizing—Pastor Frank Gantt
- The Importance of Teaching Critical Thinking Skills, Based Upon Scripture—Pastor Glenn Oster
- Leadership: Training Faithful Men in Our Churches—Professor David Schaller
- (Essayist's Choice)—Professor Mark Weis
- The Question of God: CS Lewis & Sigmund Freud Debate—Pastor Matthew Hanel

Chaplain: Douglas Priestap

—Pastor Dennis Rieken, Secretary



Installation of day school teachers,
Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Installation. In accord with our usage and order, Joshua Ohlmann, who was called by Gethsemane Evangelical Lutheran Church and School of Saginaw, Michigan, to be its principal and upper grade teacher, was installed on August 11, 2024.

—Pastor Michael Wilke



Teaching staff of Holy Trinity Lutheran School, West Columbia, South Carolina



West Central Pastoral Conference, September 10-12, 2024,
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Loveland, Colorado



Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference, October 1-3, 2024,
St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Mountain View, California