

March–April 2013

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25–26)

In This Issue

- 2 From the President
- 3 Why Must Jesus Be God and Man?
- 4 How Certain Is Our Salvation?
- 5 How Am I a Follower of the Lamb?
- 6 On the Synodical Scene...
- 7 The Seminary Stavkirke
- 8 God Answers Prayer
- 9 Why Christ's Resurrection Must Be True
- 10 Pastor, I Have a Question...
- 11 The Good Shepherd's Table for Our Troubled Souls
- 12 Body-Building Christians
- 13 Lessons from Mom
- 14 IDK
- 15 Editorial: Good, Bad, and Still Ugly
- 16 The Ottesen Museum: Celebrating Its Tenth Anniversary



Lutheran Sentinel

VOLUME 96
NUMBER 2
ISSN 0024-7510
March–April 2013

Staff

Theodore G. Gullixson Editor
Robert Harting Assistant Editor
Paul Fries Business Manager
Erica Jacobsen Proofreader

Contributing Editors

James Braun, Charles Keeler, Kyle Madson.

Published by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

The *Lutheran Sentinel* is the official publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and is published six times per year. The subscription price is \$12.00 per year, with reduced rates available for blanket subscriptions at \$10.00 through a member congregation.

Address Editorial Correspondence To: Rev. Theodore G. Gullixson, 5530 Englewood Drive, Madison, WI 53705.

Address Circulation Correspondence and Address Corrections To: *Lutheran Sentinel*, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

Periodical Postpaid at Mankato, MN 56001 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send changes (Form 3579) to *Lutheran Sentinel*, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.



www.els.name/lis

From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

Which is a better symbol: a cross that is empty, or a cross with a body on it, a crucifix? Maybe you have been in on a discussion like that. The empty cross properly reminds us that the work of redeeming the world has been completed, as Christ's resurrection proves. The crucifix properly reminds us that Jesus most certainly became a man and suffered and died with our human flesh. His agony and pain were very real for you and me and all. So, both crosses teach vital truths! "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

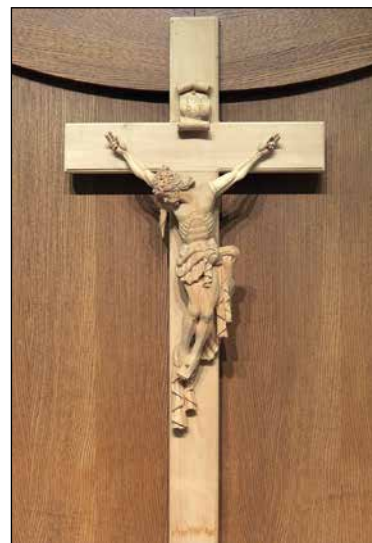
The 2012 movie *Lincoln* has drawn attention to the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. What did it take to bring about the passage of the amendment that formally ended slavery in our country (1865)? The politicking was not pretty. You would think the gravity of the issue itself would easily have carried the day. When all was said and done, the declaration stood. The individual slave heard the declaration—not to be overturned—believed it, and so became personally free.

There is a far greater emancipation. It was not accomplished by political maneuvering, but it was done, never to be questioned even in the court of divine justice! What did it take? It took our Savior Jesus to go loaded with our sins to the cross and there to pour out His holy blood as the substitute sacrifice for every single person in the world who has been under the bondage of sin. We can be sure this emancipation will never be overturned, for the Father raised His Son from the dead as the testimony of completion!

The declaration of this divine emancipation is meant to ring out into every home and every heart: "You are free! Free from sin's dominion, free from guilt and punishment, and now also free to live in thankfulness to God for His tremendous mercy!" The moment we hear and hold to this promise—even through water and Word—we personally possess for our souls the full benefits of this divine declaration: remission of sin, renewal of life, and the assurance of life everlasting with our God in heaven.

You might have both kinds of crosses around. Good. Keep them in your sight daily. The death of our Lord and His glorious rising from the grave carry sensational blessings! Remember: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!" (John 8:36).

John A. Moldstad
John A. Moldstad, President of the ELS



This crucifix hangs above the altar in the chapel at Bethany Lutheran Seminary.



Why Must Jesus Be God and Man?

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:1,14)*

Winston Churchill once described Russia as “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” One could use the same phrase to describe the how and why of the dual nature of Jesus—God and man in one person.

“True God and true man” is a teaching that has been a challenge to human logic for generations. One example: When Jesus died on the cross, did God die? The answer: When Jesus died, it was the true God and true man—the one person—Jesus, who died. Thus the Good Friday hymn states, “O sorrow dread! Our God is dead” (ELH 332:2).

But why is the incarnation, “the Word becomes flesh,” essential for our redemption? God’s Word states: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:14, 17).

Simply put, Christ had to be truly human to be a valid substitute for the payment of sin and a righteous life. Jesus had to be truly God to make this payment and righteous life supernaturally cover all mankind from creation to Judgment Day.

The Bible gives us another reason for Christ’s dual nature: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). We have someone who understands us and can truly give us real answers to our real problems because He really is one of us.

The following story (in a different version) was made famous by radio personality Paul Harvey and drives home this need to be the man/God that makes Jesus our perfect Savior.

There was a man who didn’t believe in God. One Christmas Eve, the little church his wife and daughter attended was having a special program. “Daddy, won’t you please celebrate Christmas with us?” his daughter begged. “Sorry, little one, I’m busy,” he responded. Watching them leave, he thought, “Why would God leave heaven and become human? Christmas and God don’t make sense.” He turned on the TV. The weatherman announced that a snow storm was hitting their county. A few hours passed and he heard a noise—a pecking on the window pane. Small birds were hitting the glass, trying to escape the snow and extreme cold. The man was moved with compassion. He thought about how he could help the little birds. He knew his barn would be warm, and the birds could ride out the storm in the barn. Quickly, he put on his coat and made his way to the barn. He opened the huge barn doors and began to try to shoo the birds from the window into the barn. He tried and he tried, but the birds flew back to the window. He thought, “If only I could become a bird, then I could lead them into the barn and out of harm’s way. We are like the birds. So you became like us to save us. Now I understand.”



How Jesus can be both the infinite God and finite man, how the eternal God can participate in Jesus’ death, how the He who was dead now lives—these truly are mysteries inside an enigma. But these mysteries about Jesus are the central truths of our salvation. Jesus must be true God and Man to be our Mediator and our Savior.

Jeff Londgren is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Rogers City, Michigan.

How Certain Is Our Salvation?

Everything fell into place! The air miles were redeemed, and the itinerary was very workable; a short Sunday afternoon flight to Minneapolis, a brief layover, and another short flight, and my wife and I would be basking in the southwestern sun for a few days. The return itinerary was equally workable: the same flights in reverse and we would be home again in plenty of time for the next Sunday's activities. Of course, it didn't work out that way. A faulty communication circuit board, a plane needing fuel, a fuel truck with a broken axle, a long line at the de-icing station, and a sensor indicating ice buildup on the right wing only made sure that our "best laid plans went awry" as poet Robert Burns once declared they often do. Living in a world of misunderstandings, mistakes, mishaps, and misfortunes, we have come to expect that few things ever work out the way we intend them to or even hope they will. Our sin-filled world simply contains too many variables to allow things to work out perfectly.

As God's people, we look forward to taking a most amazing trip in the future. This upcoming trip will not be for the purpose of thawing out our chilly bones in the Arizona sun, but rather a final and permanent trip to receive our eternal inheritance along with the Son. St. Paul tells us about our final inheritance in these words: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:16–17) He also tells us about our final journey to receive this inheritance: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1Thessalonians 4:16–17) The air miles are redeemed, and the itinerary has been set by the Lord God Himself. Will logistical problems thwart our Judgment Day journey to eternity?

God says of Himself, "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). Therefore, His promises never change! The angel Gabriel announced to Mary: "With God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). He has

already overcome Satan, the greatest obstacle to our eternal happiness! The Holy Scriptures also declare: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). His atoning work has been completed and cannot be rescinded. With our almighty God and with Jesus Christ our Savior, there are no faulty circuit boards or broken axles, no weather delays or changed plans to thwart our salvation. With our Savior God, there exists only the plan of our salvation, forged in eternity, promised through the prophets, brought to completion on Calvary, and sealed at the empty tomb, a fool-proof plan that is as absolutely certain as the almighty and eternal God Himself.

Since the day that Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, sinful men have devised their own plans to

gain immortality. But all of these plans must fail, for they depend in whole or in part on the sin-filled efforts of mankind. True immortality is provided to mankind only through the perfect work of our Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth. Although He is a human being in every respect just as we are, there is one great difference between us and our Lord Jesus. He is also divine, and therefore He is perfect and sinless.

Therefore, the propitiatory

life He lived for us, the vicarious suffering He endured for us, and the substitutionary death He died for us are also perfect, an atoning sacrifice that He offered to our Father in heaven on our behalf to cancel our sins and their guilt and to grant us the deed to an eternal mansion in heaven prepared especially for us. Because Christ's sacrifice for us is perfectly acceptable to our Father in Heaven, our salvation has been completed. Paul's promise to the jailor in Philippi holds fast: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Praise God—our salvation is absolutely certain!



Nile Merseth is pastor of River Heights Lutheran Church, East Grand Forks, Minnesota.



How Am I a Follower of the Lamb?

How am I a follower of the Lamb? What if I am an active church member who lives an upright life? What if I'm someone who doesn't engage in open, gross sin? Does that mean I'm always a faithful follower of the Lamb?

In God's eyes, our sinful thoughts are just as bad as the act. The sin of malice is a good example. Malice is defined as the desire to have suffering, pain, or distress inflicted on another person. Maybe the malice is caused by jealousy of someone who outshines you in something you cherish. Or perhaps it's because you did not get the credit you thought you deserved for something.

Have you ever spent part of your day taking pleasure in malicious thoughts toward another person? St. Paul says: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Instead, as a follower of the Lamb, Paul writes: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians

4:8). The next time you are thinking about another person, pay attention. You might be guilty of malicious thoughts toward them—thoughts you would not want them to think about you.

That is when we need to go to the Lamb. In Him we have forgiveness for our sinful thoughts too. He became guilty of all our sins including the sin of malice. He suffered and died on the cross, guilty of all our sins and the sins of the whole world. He arose on Easter morning and won for you and me and all people forgiveness for every last one of our sins. And we can claim that forgiveness as free by faith alone. (John 3:16)

By faith in Jesus and His forgiveness, we can be more faithful followers of the Lamb. Instead of malicious thoughts, we can pray for other people. Even as we still battle thoughts of malice in our Old Adam, we can pray in Jesus' name, claiming His righteousness. In Jesus' name we can pray that our relationship be restored peacefully. If the other person is in the wrong, we can pray that God would show them the error of their ways and lead them to repentance and faith in Jesus' forgiveness. And we can do even more

than that. We can pray a more general, unconditional prayer. We can pray that God would help us to love other people more.

We can be faithful followers of the Lamb by repenting of our sin and trusting in the Lamb for our salvation, and by hearing His Word and eating and drinking His precious body and blood in the Sacrament. That alone is what saves us. Our holy life adds nothing whatsoever to our salvation. We will battle our sinful nature as long as we live. As St. Paul says: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ...Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I

press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14). And again: "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:19,24,25).



Ron Pederson is pastor of First Lutheran Church in Suttons Bay, Michigan.





On the Synodical Scene...

Arizona/California Mission Rally Meets

The Arizona/California Women's Mission Society rally was held at St. John's Lutheran Church (WELS), Victorville, California, on February 9, 2013. Church members from Fort Mohave, Lake Havasu City, and Scottsdale, Arizona, and from Bishop and Irvine, California, were in attendance. Dr. Lynn Stenske, and the Rev. Bill Stehr, both of Faith Lutheran Church, Irvine, California, presented on the subject of the Church's response to mental illness. Dr. Stenske is a clinical psychologist for the Department of Mental Health of Los Angeles County.



Dr. Lynn Stenske and Pastor Bill Stehr.

Lois Weseloh (1921 – 2013)

Mrs. Lois Weseloh, of Redwood Falls, Minnesota, went to her heavenly home on March 9, 2013. She was 91 years old. Lois taught in a country school in Fairhaven, Minnesota, where she met her future husband, Gerhard Weseloh. Rev. Weseloh served English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, Minnesota, for many years. Their daughter, Debra, is married to the Rev. Thomas Fox. They reside in Burlington, Massachusetts.



Announcing the 96th Annual Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the 57th Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.



“Engaging Families with Jesus” June 16–20, 2013 Mankato, Minnesota

Synod Sunday – June 16

- 3:00 - Synod Sunday Service
- 4:30 - Supper (free will donation)

Monday – June 17

- 9:30 - Opening Convention Service

Tuesday – June 18

- 5:00 - Anniversary Service

Wednesday – June 19

- 9:00 - Convention Essay
- 7:30 - Communion Service

Thursday – June 20

- 8:45 - Convention Essay continued

*Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad, Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Synod*

The Seminary Stavkirke

There is nothing so Norwegian as a stave church (*stavkirke*). It reminds one of the great Viking ships that filled southern Europe with fear during the Viking invasions. These churches were built between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Such timbered churches, which were built



The stavkirke in Borgund, Norway, was built between A.D. 1180 and 1250.

around huge poles planted in the earth, made their appearance about the same time as Christianity entered Norway. They are called “stave” churches because of the heavy corner posts and wall planks of their construction. Some of these wooden churches are still standing after 800 years. These churches are a symbol of Christianity among Norwegian Lutheran people. They show how Christianity took root in northern Europe.

The replica of a stave church placed in the seminary atrium was given to the seminary by Viola and Robert Knott of Tracy, Minnesota. Viola’s family has deep roots in the old Norwegian Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Her forefathers were among the people who helped reorganize our Zion parish in Tracy after the Norwegian merger in 1917. They strove to maintain the Word in its truth and purity and Sacraments rightly administered on the plains of western Minnesota. Viola, who is a double cousin of the late Melvina Aaberg, enjoys rosemaling and everything Norwegian. She graciously provided the decorative rosemaling in the entrance of the Ottesen Museum.

The stave church was recently refurbished by Pat Hull of Bethany Lutheran College. Pat put many painstaking hours into restoring it to its authentic appearance.

The seminary is very grateful for this gift. As we enter the seminary, the stave church reminds us of our Christian origins. We stand on the shoulders of many generations of faithful Christians who trusted in Christ as their only Savior from sin. It indicates that we are Lutherans. The Lutheran Reformation spread from Germany into all of Scandinavia, making Norway a Lutheran country that confessed that we

are justified or declared righteous by faith alone in the Savior. Finally, this stave church emphasizes that our synod has a strong Norwegian tradition. Our forefathers wanted to remain faithful to the doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway.



Viola and Robert Knott.



President Gaylin Schmeling and Pat Hull.

God Answers Prayer

Recently, my wife and I were reading in our morning devotion about prayer and healing. The Bible passage used for the devotion was James 5:13–18, where the apostle says, “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him... and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well” (v.14) and “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (v. 16). This does not mean, as the devotion pointed out, that God is always going to answer in the way we think He should or even with a “yes.” Nevertheless, we are to persevere in prayer and believe that God will do what is best.



In that connection, we remembered what happened some years ago when an elder of our congregation visited a sick man in the hospital. This man had received instruction from me, but there was an important teaching of God’s Word he needed to accept—that a person is lost eternally who does not believe in Christ’s saving work. That teaching was difficult for this man because he was a Jew and he understood that this would mean he was accepting the fact that without Christ, his family would be lost eternally. But the prayer offered that day by the elder had a wonderful effect. The man’s health improved almost immediately. And he took that as a sign that he needed to believe what

God’s Word says about Jesus. Not long after that, he was confirmed.

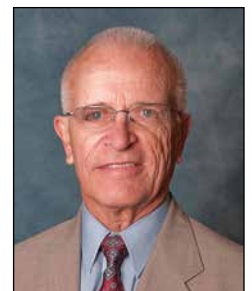
We also have a personal example of God answering prayer. Many years ago in Michigan, I was pastoring a congregation in Suttons Bay and a congregation nearby in Traverse City that was begun as a mission. The work there was difficult, and it was a struggle to gain members. One day, I went to visit an elderly man in Traverse City. As I came to the door, a preacher from a Christian church (not Lutheran) exited. We talked a little and he asked if he could pray. I said yes. His prayer reminded me of the prayer given

at my ordination into the ministry because it contained important points about the work of a pastor. For example, he prayed for blessing upon the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. That evening upon returning home, I mentioned this to my wife. She asked: “Do you know what this day is?” What? Some thought was required. Then it dawned on me that it was exactly ten years ago that day that I had been ordained. Quite a coincidence, no? But that isn’t the end of this story.

The following Sunday (two days later), three new families were in attendance at Concordia, the Traverse City church. As they left, they said they wanted to join the church. So we have always said that a minister who was not a Lutheran prayed people into a Lutheran church.

God wants us to pray as James instructs. He wants us to believe that He answers prayer and that our prayers are powerful and beneficial. Let us do

so with complete confidence that God is listening and will do what is best.



David Lillegard is a pastor emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Why Christ's Resurrection Must Be True

Have you ever seen a bad movie? I'm sure we all have. One thing that makes a movie unbearable for me is when no one's motives make sense. The bad guys need a reason to do what they're doing the way they're doing it. If they have a complicated scheme, it had better be clear why it needs to be so complicated. The good guys also need clear motives for how they act and go about defeating the bad guys. Action or drama without motives is boring and makes no sense.

If Jesus' resurrection did not happen, nobody's motives in early Christianity would make any sense.

For example, consider the Christians: why would they promote worshiping their leader who let them down and didn't rise like He said? Why would they be willing to lose so much or even die in persecutions for someone they would have known was a fraud? Even if they wanted to start a new religion, why would they need to make Jesus' resurrection such an important part of it if it didn't really happen? Why wouldn't they have just made up a religion without it?

The motives of the Christians' opponents would also make no sense if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead. A modern assertion of people who deny the physical resurrection is that Jesus would have been eaten by dogs from the cross because supposedly people who were crucified weren't even taken down and buried. If that were true, why didn't the opponents just say that Jesus' resurrection was impossible because he was eaten by dogs? Why would anyone in Jerusalem have even given Christianity a second thought, let alone converted to that faith, since they would have known better? Wouldn't it have been laughable, then, for Peter to assert that Jesus was the "Holy One" prophesied not "to see decay" (Acts 2:27)? If Jesus' resurrection was false, Christianity's opponents would have squashed the early church with loads of evidence. Yet, in reality, Christianity became a real threat to their beliefs because Jesus' resurrection was true!



In spite of the evidence for Jesus' resurrection, we can never by our own power and reasoning prove that Jesus lives or cause people to believe in Him. Think about those people who deny that the United States' space program ever landed on the moon. There is evidence in the form of eye-witnesses, the spaceships that were built, moon rocks, and even the recorded videos. I doubt that any additional moon rocks or videos would convince the skeptics. Likewise, there will never be enough evidence to prove the certainty of Jesus' resurrection to the satisfaction of skeptical hearts, even our own sinful, doubting hearts.

The Holy Spirit is the only One who can truly convince people's hearts. Paul makes that clear when he writes, "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Holy Spirit must come to us through God's Word and Sacraments to create and strengthen faith in our hearts. When He hits us with the Law, showing us our sin, we see our desperate, helpless situation. When He comes to us as Comforter in the Gospel, we see our Savior, Jesus. Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection for us, we find joy and confidence in our restored relationship with God and the heaven He promises us.

The evidence we have for Christ's resurrection is a great comfort. After all, the Bible continually stresses how Jesus rose again "with many convincing proofs" (Acts 1:3). In that same Word, the Holy Spirit works on our hearts to believe in Christ's resurrection and salvation. He gives us our lasting Easter confidence and joy!

Nicholas Proksch is pastor of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Holland, Michigan.



Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *On the way to church one Sunday, on the radio a preacher claimed that the Bible never commands us to baptize babies. Is that true?*

Answer: False prophets have different and interesting ways to confuse us. We might counter by saying that the Bible never forbids us from baptizing babies. The Bible neither directly commands nor forbids applying the “washing of generation and the renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5) to little ones.

Sometimes it seems that those opposing infant baptism dominate. We might think that most Christian denominations forbid it. However, the vast majority of Christian churches baptize babies. The practice is traced to the earliest Christians and Jesus’ great commission. Jesus said: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20). He does not mention babies or adults. Nations are peopled by both.

The early Church obeyed. Men and women were baptized. (See Acts 8:12.) Whole households were baptized. (See Acts 16:15, 33, Acts 18:8.) The passages mention a prominent person (Lydia, the jailer of Philippi, Crispus) and all those belonging to the households. Babies are not specifically mentioned, nor are wives or servants. One household might be childless and even two. It seems unlikely that three households contained no children. Babies were baptized.

Jesus welcomed and blessed little children. He said they believed. “They brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’” (Mark 10:13-15).

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Jesus explained the way to eternal life. He said no one at all could enter God’s kingdom unless they are regenerated. Nicodemus wondered how. Jesus connected rebirth to Baptism, saying, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6).

Children are born in sin, as God says in Psalm 51:5 and Romans 3:23. Jesus is the only Savior. God forgives sin by the power of the Spirit calling us to faith in Jesus.

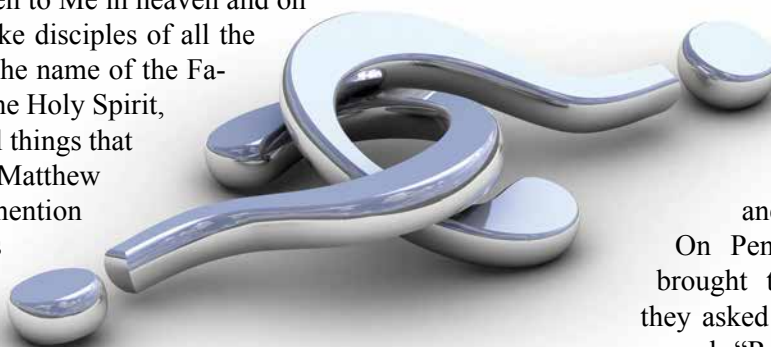
The Spirit creates faith in our hearts. God wants little children to be in His Kingdom of Grace.

We want them to be born anew of water and the Spirit.

On Pentecost, when God’s Law brought the people to repentance, they asked what they could do. Peter answered, “Repent, and let every one of

you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39)

We want our children to repent and believe. The Bible may not specifically command us to baptize babies, but it does specifically command us to bring them to Him. We obey Jesus and “bury” them into Jesus’ death by Baptism so that they may be raised with Jesus and “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).



Send your questions to:

Pastor Charles Keeler
117 Ruby Lake Dr.,
Winter Haven, FL 33884



Charles Keeler is pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.

The Good Shepherd's Table for Our Troubled Souls

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

When Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), he is alluding to Psalm 23, where we are told that the Lord is our shepherd. This is a statement about His person. He is explaining to us who He is. He is the Lord, the shepherd of Israel, true God from all eternity. He is our one true shepherd.

Then He explains how we became sheep of the good shepherd. He says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). In Bible times, pastures were not fenced, so the sheep could not be left to graze alone. Rather, the shepherd tended his flock, leading them to green pastures and gently flowing waters. Such a place of gentle waters was an absolute necessity for the sheep, but it was also a place of maximum danger. Here lurked the wild predatory animals waiting to snatch the sheep while they were drinking. The shepherd often had to defend his sheep from wolves and other animals. It even happened that the shepherd was killed as he was fighting to save his sheep. The dying wolf, in one last desperate attempt, lunged forward and ripped open the shepherd's neck with his long, sharp teeth. The shepherd was able to kill the wolf, saving the sheep, but in so doing, he lost his own life. So great was the shepherd's love.

This is the picture we should have in mind when Jesus says, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). All of us by nature were wandering sheep. We were lost in hatred, bitterness, covetousness, and greed. We all had gone astray in the terrible corruption of sin. Satan, that old wolf, had attacked us, grabbed us by the neck with his sharp teeth, and was dragging us to his den in hell, where we would be devoured eternally.

Yet the good shepherd came to our defense. He did battle with the old wolf throughout His life, culminating in the battle of the ages on the cross. There, He crushed the old wolf, freeing us from his terrible grasp. But as the old wolf was being destroyed, he was able to give the good

shepherd the death wound with his sharp teeth. Jesus then died, destroying the power of sin, death, and the devil. Still the sheep were not left without a shepherd. On the third day, the good shepherd arose triumphant from the grave, our victorious Savior.

Now He continues to guide and lead us all this journey through life, providing all that we need for body and life.

Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will not fear, for the good shepherd is with us. He prepares His Table for us in the presence of our enemies (Psalm 23:4-5). Here He feeds us with himself. He gives us His true body and blood, which forgive our sins and which are the true nourishment and strengthening for body and soul. His Supper is the balm to soothe our troubled hearts and the healing of our infirmities. It is the green pasture and gentle water where our souls are revived.

This Table of the Lord assures us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He dwells within us with His body and blood. When we falter or fall by the way, He picks us up from all the confusion and sorrow of this maddening world and holds us in His loving arms against His strong breast, where all our fears and anxieties subside. He carries us all the way to the heavenly homeland above. He is indeed the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

Prayer: *O good shepherd, we thank you that you laid down your life for us, your wandering sheep, and that you have prepared your Table for our troubled souls, assuring us that you will hold us in your loving arms all the way to heaven's home. Amen.*

Gaylin Schmeling is president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota.



Body-Building Christians

I distinctly remember my uncle's weight set from my early childhood. I would watch him "pump iron" and wonder when I would be grown up enough to participate in such manly activity. At my young age, I could pretend, but I wanted the real thing!

A few years later, in my early teens, it was still being debated whether or not it was good for teenagers to aggressively lift weights while the body was very actively growing. As soon as I got to high school, our athletic teams went "all-in" with the weightlifting. We were given a regimen by which we were to become bigger, faster, and stronger—supremely equipped for competition. It made my muscles sore and my pride even more sore (I was very weak compared to my peers). The weightlifting regimen was breaking down my body and my pride, but this breaking down of body and soul was, in a mysterious way, also building me up.

Jesus has given a soul-building regimen to His Church as well, the Holy Ministry—the delivery of His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation to His redeemed people. By this regimen, the Holy Ministry, Christ says, He builds up His body—you—His Church (Ephesians 4:11–12). By breaking down our sinful flesh and pride, the ministry of the Word then builds the Christian into Christ. The Holy Ministry of Christ's Word builds you into "Christ's body."



During exercise, shockwaves fire through nerves to little pads fixed to the skin upon a certain muscle or muscle group. You may sit still in your La-Z-Boy, but you are bodybuilding—or rather, your body is being built! Too good to be true? Perhaps for physiology, but not for theology. Christ's soul-building regimen for the Church is His saving Word and Sacraments applied by means of His Holy Ministry.

The modern church, like the culture in which I grew up, has often questioned whether or not this soul-building regimen is good for young children or even young adults. Won't the same old confessing and absolving, preaching and communing just stunt their growth (make them stop coming)? Isn't this liturgy business meant for middle-aged adults and white-haired eighty-somethings? Not at all. This regimen of preaching and liturgy is Christ applying His Holy Word to otherwise unholy people. This regimen is for "equipping the saints"—all of them—those who are washed by the blood of the Lamb and dressed in the white robe of His righteousness.

What a masterful soul-building regimen this is! One size fits all because the 6-day-old, the 16-year-old, and the 96-year-old are all called to "do" the same thing: be still and receive the exercise of Christ's Ministry, His Means of Grace. One body (the Holy Christian Church), made up of people of every age and ability, is being built into Christ's body. That is God's Holy Ministry. That is Christ "soul-building" Christians.

Series Title: *Growing Up into Christ*

This series is produced on behalf of the ELS Board for Youth Outreach. The aim of the series is to invest in the youth of the ELS by building up the households and parents of those youth in the "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). While there are many cultural chasms between adults and adolescents, the body of Christ (the Church) provides us one marvelous location where post-pubescent teens and parents are meant to be together: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5)—in short, together Growing Up into Christ.

NEXT TIME: "The Unity of the Faith"

Kyle Madson is co-pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan.



Lessons from Mom

The same thing happened almost every year. At some point in the spring, my mother would have my brother and me go up to our closets with a large black plastic bag and sort through our clothes. If pants or shirts or shorts did not fit anymore or were not worn that often, into the bag they went. When full, Mom would take the bags to be donated, either to the local thrift store or to the Goodwill trailer sitting outside the K-Mart.

My brother and I perhaps did not always understand what Mom was doing for us at the time. Now that we are older, looking back, we can see that our mother was teaching an important lesson about helping those less fortunate. It was one of many lessons Mom poured into our young, mush-filled heads.

Lessons in Thanksgiving

In Proverbs 31, such generosity is one of the listed qualities of a “wife of noble character.” In addition to all that she does managing her home and helping the family make a living, “She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy” (v. 20). In line with their God-given family roles, wives and mothers often take the lead when it comes to charitable giving. Usually, it comes down to a matter of time. Mom had the time to sort through the closets looking for clothes to give to the needy.

Not that husbands and fathers are not generous. Far from it! Yet where did we husbands and fathers discover generosity? More often than not, we learned it as children by watching our mothers in action.

That wasn't the greatest lesson our mothers taught us, though. Proverbs 31 also describes a good wife and mother as one who “opens her mouth with wisdom” (v. 26). What greater wisdom is there than the Gospel, the good news of eternal salvation in Christ? For many of us, it was Mom who brought us to the truth and wisdom of God's grace early on. It was Mom (and Dad) who brought us to the baptismal font where the Holy Spirit put that truth into our hearts. It was Mom who maybe was the first person to teach us not only

how to be generous, but why we are generous: “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Lessons for Which We Give Thanks

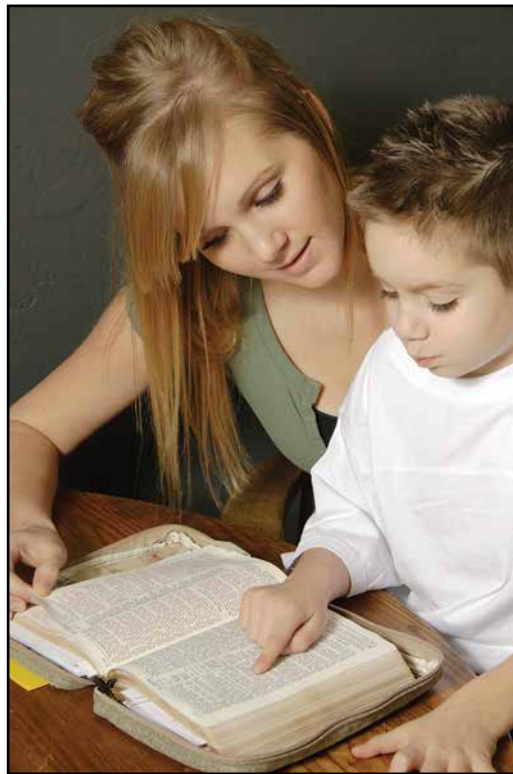
The lesson of God's love in Christ is a lesson for which we can still be thankful. Thankful that God would have such love for us, even though as sinners we do not deserve it. Thankful that God would choose to reveal His love to us through His holy Word. Thankful that God gave us good moms (and dads) who wanted us to know His love in our lives, and provided us with good examples to imitate when it came to learning to be faithful Christians.

Once again, we have an opportunity to express our thankfulness together for all the lessons God taught us through our moms: the Mother's Day Offering for the ELS World Needs Fund. Give thanks to God for His great love for you with an offering of generous love that will help people in need here at home and around the world. You may use the special Mother's Day envelopes provided by the ELS through your congregation or you may send your gift directly to the Synod:

ELS World Needs Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Synod
6 Browns Court
Mankato, MN 56001

Moms, you have taught us many important lessons over the course of our lives. Thank God for the lessons; and thank God for you. Happy Mother's Day!

S. Piet Van Kampen is pastor of English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, Minnesota, and serves as chairman of the ELS Board for Christian Service.





Text language is a language unto itself. Back in the day when we wrote letters to people, we may have put the initials L.O.L (notice the punctuation!) and that meant, “lots of love.” Now, in texting language, it means, “laugh out loud.”

There are quite a few text language abbreviations that I’d blush to put to print and explain here. But there is one that I’m seeing more and more, too many times, actually, and not while texting. Too often the students in confirmation class are writing as an answer on their quizzes: **IDK**. It means, “*I don’t know.*”

“I don’t know”; its use angers me a bit, but saddens me more. All the work that I assign as their pastor is done so from a shepherding, loving heart that yearns for them to know in their heads, yes, but more so to believe in their hearts. I am seeking to help their parents build a foundation that will last them a lifetime, carry them through the dangerous good times, sad times, tempting times, so that they will be “*faithful to the point of death*” and eternally wear, “*a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). More so, what I teach them and give them to put to head and heart is meant to give them all the absolute certainty and comfort that there are in a gracious God: Father, Son, and Spirit. “I’m sure!” is a whole lot better than **IDK**. I don’t want them or anyone to face life or death with **IDK**.

At one time, ancient Job dealt with a tough life. Many would use a more harsh set of adjectives, maybe horrible, horrid, crushing, even “hellish” life. The devil was unleashed against Job. In the span of two days Job lost everything. His children died in a terrible wind storm. Nomadic invaders killed and looted his servants, property, animals, and possessions. His crops (future profits) were burned. And for those who say, “If you have your health, you have everything,” Job lost that, too, with oozing, painful sores that covered his body from head to toe. The only relief was to scrape the skin eruptions with broken pieces of pottery!

Job’s friends offered no comfort, only heaped blame on his broken, burdened heart. So it was no wonder that Job’s wife told him to curse God and die!

But through it all Job put a twist to the text language, **IDK**. For Job, **IDK** meant, “*I DO KNOW!*” He did know that the LORD loved him. He did know that his story didn’t end in pain, in tears, in suffering. He did know that “hellish” would be exchanged for the word “heavenly” in describing him, his life, his present, and for sure, his future. His broken heart and body would be whole, restored, strong, happy, full of joy.

Why could Job embrace an **IDK** (**IDOKNOW**) faith, hope, and perspective? Because Easter would be real for him. His Redeemer would rise from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection, though many years later, prophesied for sure fulfillment then, caused Job to burst forth, broken as he and his life were, in the confession: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25–27).

Through all your brokenness and shattered life situations, whatever they may be, however they are affecting your relationships, your emotions, your heart, your physical well-being, however Satan attacks your soul to cause you to doubt that you are fully and freely forgiven, that God does indeed love you, that death has been swallowed up in victory, that you can face the end of your life with the absolute certainty that heaven is your home and that your body will rise in glory, and that those who believed in Jesus and were taken from you, you will see again and will be given a reunion ... sing with Job, **IDK, I do know...** “that my Redeemer lives; what comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, He lives, who once was dead... He lives to comfort me when faint; He lives to hear my soul’s complaint... He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears; He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart... He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death. He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there... Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives!’” (*ELH* 351) **IDK!**



David Russow is pastor of Redeeming Grace Lutheran Church in Rogers, Minnesota.

Good, Bad, and Still Ugly

The resignation of Pope Benedict brought the Roman Catholic Church into the limelight once again. In one sense, the election of the new pope is “much ado about nothing” since Jesus Christ does not need a vicar on earth. Jesus can lead His Church very well without help. In another sense, the election will determine the course of the Roman Catholic Church for the next decade or more.

The good: We could thank outgoing Pope Benedict for trying to steer his church back from the Vatican II theology of the liberals and their leftist “Liberation Theology.” We should always rejoice when God’s Word is restored to its place as the basis of talking about God and Jesus’ salvation.

The bad: The next pope will continue to deal with the fallout from the many scandals of abuse by its clergy and the subsequent cover-ups by its bishops. This crisis will not easily be set aside or go away.

In the nations of historic Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church will also feel the growing secularization that is driving people away from organized religion and towards more secular expressions of spirituality. The closings of parishes, schools, and universities will not be easy to stop—due in part to a lack of priests and to fewer people willing to attend and support the outward churches. Much will depend on what the new pope emphasizes if this trend is to be lessened or reversed.

The still ugly: Articles 22-28 of the the Augsburg Confession (AC), are titled, “Articles in which are Recounted the Abuses which have been Corrected” (*ELH*, pp. 14–28). These articles describe the practices within the Roman Catholic Church that are contrary to Scripture and sound practice. These practices still continue in the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

Article 22 speaks about the Roman Catholic practice of lay communicants receiving only the body/bread of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. The AC states, “But it is evident that any custom introduced against the commandments of God is not to be allowed, as the Canons witness” (*ELH*, p.15). Where the Roman Catholic Church forbids its priests to marry, Article 23 notes: “In 1 Timothy 4:3 Paul calls a teaching that forbids marriage a ‘doctrine of demons.’ This is now easily understood when the law against marriage is enforced by such penalties [as death]” (*ELH*, p. 16)

Concerning “The Mass,” the AC complained about the Lord’s Supper being used to collect money to say private masses to take away daily sins. The AC states that “the Mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefits are received through Christ and should cheer and comfort the troubled conscience” (*ELH*, p. 17). In conjunction with the Mass, there was the abuse of confession of sins. The Roman Catholic Church required a complete enumeration of sins and the payment of satisfactions, or penance. The AC says, “The people are most carefully taught concerning the faith and assurance of absolution, about which before there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly esteem absolution, for it is the voice of God proclaimed by God’s command” (AC 25, *ELH*, p. 18).

Article 27 speaks about the distinction of foods and fasting, which the Roman Church claimed were works that merited grace from God. The AC objected because “traditions were placed far above the commandments of God. Christianity was thought to consist wholly in the observance of certain festivals, rites, fasts, and vestures” (*ELH*, p. 19). Observing human traditions cannot merit grace or make someone justified.

The vows of monks and nuns were dealt with in Article 27. The AC notes that in the beginning monasteries were voluntary associations, but when discipline declined, vows were added to restore discipline. Some in the Roman Church taught that life in the monastery was more virtuous than Christians living in the world. Such ideas detract from Christ’s work of salvation, adding, “For Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, again to have great faith, to trust that for Christ’s sake we have a gracious God, and to ask of God and assuredly to expect His aid in all things that are to be borne according to our calling” (*ELH*, p. 23).

The last article, 28, in the AC deals with the power of the bishops and pope in the Christian Church. In the AC, the Lutherans state that “the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power of commandment of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer the Sacraments” (*ELH*, p. 24), to be exercised only by teaching and preaching. The civil government has no authority to teach or preach, but to “restrain with the sword and physical punishments in order to preserve civil justice and peace” (*ELH*, p. 24). And the bishops have no power to introduce ceremonies or make laws that are contrary to God’s Word.

While a new pope may catch the attention of the world for a time, the Augsburg Confession helps us realize how greatly the Roman Catholic Church has refused to listen to Scripture in its practices and how it continues to fall under St. Paul’s condemnations in 1 Timothy 4:1–3 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12.

Scripture states that Jesus Christ is the head of His Church (Ephesians 1:22) and that Jesus cleansed the Church “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26) so it would be holy before God. All who believe that Jesus is God and their Savior from sin have both forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We should thank God that He continues to give His grace to us as we live amid a perverse and wicked generation.

Theodore Gullixson is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin.



THE OTTESEN MUSEUM: CELEBRATING ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

What is the Ottesen Museum? This is a question I've been asked many times over the past few years. The short answer is that it is the official museum of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. But even that answer leaves a lot of questions. So, let's start with a short history lesson.

Rev. J.A. Ottesen was one of the founding pastors of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in 1853. His spinster daughter, Hannah, was the executor of his will, and Rev. Ottesen's home and its contents in Decorah, Iowa, went to her. By the time she died in 1931 she had set up her own estate and designated that the contents of her house should go to what we now call the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS).

In 1941, the Ottesen estate arrived on the Bethany Lutheran College campus, and a group of sixteen women met to start organizing a museum in time for the Synod's 25th anniversary in 1943. On May 29, 1943, the Ottesen Museum officially opened. Over the years, the Museum has moved around to various places on the Bethany campus—including classrooms, closets, and the synod Archives.

In 2003, a house owned by the Synod was converted to the Ottesen Museum's first permanent home at 4 Browns Court in Mankato. The Museum now contains more than just the original Ottesen collection, adding artifacts and displays portraying Synod history.

Retired ELS President George Orvick was the first regular director of the Ottesen Museum. Under his leadership, the Museum started to receive more donations and added two more rooms, a "Log Cabin" room and a "Chapel". In 2010, Pres. Orvick retired and in 2011, Mrs. Rebecca DeGarmeaux was named the Director of Programming at the Museum.

So, what is the Ottesen Museum? First and foremost, it is a church history museum with the main objective of teaching.

The museum teaches the history of the ELS. Various displays tell about Norwegian immigration, the first Norwegian Lutheran congregations and pastors in the United States, and the growth, struggles, and blessings of the Synod through the years.

The artifacts in the Museum are arranged, more or less, with the idea of giving life to the story of the ELS. They range from pieces from the Ottesen home, to artifacts from the foreign mission fields, to displays that portray everyday congregational life. One display changes every year to highlight one specific aspect of Synod history. This year it highlights Rev. George Lillegard's mission work in China, which began in 1912. Another display highlights the most recently acquired artifacts.



Aside from regular tours, the Museum also offers special programs. Visiting groups can learn about teaching Synod history in the parish, congregational preservation of artifacts, or life in a log cabin. For the past two years, the Museum has hosted a Christmas Open House to encourage people to tour the Museum and to teach various Christmas customs from around the synod. Visitors sing carols, make Christmas crafts, and sample Christmas treats.

This year, the Ottesen Museum celebrates its 10th anniversary in its current location. Because of recent accessions, some displays have changed or been expanded. If you are ever in Mankato, please feel free to stop in and visit the Ottesen Museum during its regular hours of Tuesday through Thursday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Or, contact the Museum's Director, Rebecca DeGarmeaux, at 507-344-7421 or museum@blc.edu to schedule an appointment or learn more about the programs available.

Rebecca DeGarmeaux is Director of Programming at the Ottesen Museum in Mankato, Minnesota.