



LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

DEVOTIONAL SERIES:
**A Devotion for
St. Michael and
All Angels**

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YOUNG BRANCHES:
**Youth, Conscience
and the Doctrine of
Election**

pg 14

Daybreak over Mt. Ararat, Turkey

GOD'S FENCE

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Incomparable News

by REV. JOHN A. MOLDSTAD, President
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD, Mankato, Minn.

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Ever feel that much of the news is of no great consequence?

Shocking? Yes. Entertaining? Possibly. Frivolous? Often. When a bit of info strikes our eyes or ears by social media, TV, or print, the lasting value of the item, picture, or story frequently fades within a minute or two. Just one example: the front page of the newspaper at my doorstep carries a report of how Salem, Massachusetts – town of famous witch trials – literally is sprucing up its memorial, planting new trees at the site.... Yes, I suppose that news is “earth-breaking,” but hardly earth-shaking!

There is news of extreme importance needing to be heard by every person on this globe. It is the most consequential message ever reported. God loves sinners so much that He sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins – the sins of all people. When souls hear the message of Jesus as the Savior and by the power of the Holy Spirit take hold of this good news of God’s free and full forgiveness of sins for their life, they escape the deserved and inevitable eternal punishment. Instead, by grasping this message, they enjoy peace with God for the here-and-now, and then for eternity they will have, as a free gift through Christ, life in heaven! (John 3:16.)

But here is the sobering thought. Not all people hear the message. Apart from hearing, reading, and absorbing this message, there is no hope. Are we who have been privileged to know the news that counts convinced that all is lost without the hearing of the Gospel? Of the heathen, the apostle Paul states: *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* (Romans 10:14-15). If a person does not come into contact with God’s Word, then we are bound to conclude that the individual has not, and cannot, be connected by faith to the benefits of Christ’s cross. Our Lord’s great commission involves the baptizing and teaching of all nations. There is no other avenue for the generating of faith than through sharing the news that is truly heaven-sent (Romans 10:17)! We are told the Thessalonians received the word of God from the apostles and “*accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God which is at work in you who believe*” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

With the incomparable news of a crucified and risen Savior who is both true God and true Man, the whole world is changed! There is a restored relationship with the holy God and a guarantee of a future happiness that will never end!

We can easily do without the many bits of info bombarding our minds 24-7. But not without THE news as found in the holy Book. Can we, who by God’s mercy have been permitted to hear the Word and believe, devote more time, energy, prayer, and money to bringing the good news of Jesus to fields ripe for harvest before the night comes when no one can work?

May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us,
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us
That we His saving health may know,
His gracious will and pleasure,
And also to the heathen show
Christ’s riches without measure
And unto God convert them.

(ELH 591:1)

Scarville Lutheran Church
Scarville, Iowa



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Pastor, I have a question: Where is the Ark of the Covenant?

...on television I see people searching for the ark of the covenant. Yet in Revelation, John sees the ark of the covenant in heaven. Is this the actual ark? If so, they could stop searching.

by **REV. S. PIET VAN KAMPEN**, Contributing Editor
CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH, Green Bay, Wisc.

Answer:

The mystery surrounding what happened to the ark of the covenant has fascinated people for decades, a fascination on which filmmakers capitalized in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1980). Archaeologists and treasure hunters have sought the ark's location. One of the most prominent modern "ark-hunters" is Ron Wyatt, a Seventh Day Adventist who believes that he has found the ark's location. At this point, however, his claims about the ark of the covenant have not been verified.

In 2 Chronicles 35:3, the last place to refer to the location of the ark, King Josiah instructed the Levites to "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built." This took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, as the nation turned away from idolatry and celebrated the Passover once more (2 Chronicles 35:19).

Forty years later, in 586 BC, the Babylonian army invaded Jerusalem, destroying both the city and the temple. The ark was never seen again. When the Israelites returned and rebuilt the temple, the Holy of Holies remained empty, partially fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy: "*Then it shall come to pass... that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore*" (Jeremiah 3:16).

Jeremiah's words also pointed to a later time when the Messiah would come and the ark would no longer be needed. According to John's gospel, Jesus' arrival fulfilled that prophecy: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Jesus Christ became the visible presence of God on earth, fulfilling the ark's purpose. And by shedding His blood at the cross, Jesus satisfied God's righteous requirements in our place.

Scripture is not clear about what happened to the ark. Interestingly, Jeremiah 52:18-22 lists in detail the items that the Babylonians removed from the temple. The ark is not on the list. It could have been destroyed or be hidden away somewhere. At one point in the Book of Revelation, John says, "Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple" (Revelation 11:19). Did God miraculously remove the ark of the covenant prior to the destruction of the temple?

The reference to the ark in Revelation may or may not be the literal ark. John's visions in Revelation are often symbolic (based on Old Testament imagery) and there are no other clear passages that speak to the ark's location. Regardless, the passage makes a larger point. The ark of the covenant symbolized God's presence among His people, but the ark was always hidden. No one saw it except the high priest. In Revelation 11:19, however, the ark—God's presence—will be visible to all! Those who through faith in Christ reach the heavenly temple will have free access to stand in God's presence for all eternity!¹

The mystery of the ark will continue to fascinate people. In the end, though, is finding the ark that important? If people wanted, they could stop searching. We don't need an ark to be in God's presence; we have Christ, "the Mediator of the new covenant... that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

1. Becker, Siegbert W. *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song*. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee: 1985, p. 178.

A Devotion for St. Michael and All Angels (September 29th)

by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor, *The Lutheran Sentinel*
NORSELAND LUTHERAN CHURCH, St. Peter, Minn.
NORWEGIAN GROVE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Gaylord, Minn.

What is popular culture's impression of angels? What are they like? What do they do? A quick Google image search gives us a pretty good indication. Culture's angels might just be beautiful women, perhaps auditioning for a Victoria's Secret contract. Culture's impression of angels could be dainty little children — almost like precious moments dolls — with halos and cute little wings.

If we take our cues from motion pictures, angels could be creatures that exercise supernatural powers to make a floundering baseball team fabulous. If we take our cue from television, angels just might be a few elderly women who heal fractured families and touch people's emotions in Hallmark-like ways.

But then, how does God's Word concur with or contradict this cultural impression of angels?

A few biblical examples:

After Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from the serenity of Eden, God sent angels with fiery swords to keep them away from the tree of life. (Genesis 3)

When an angel appeared to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem to announce the birth of Jesus Christ, his presence struck fear in the Shepherds. (Luke 2)

When Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) questioned the angel's word concerning the birth of a son to his wife Elizabeth, here's what St. Luke records:

And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time"
 (Luke 1: 19-20).

So God's Word offers some clarity to culture's clouded picture.

Angels are not beautiful women. In fact, the only time angels are mentioned by name in the Bible, they are given male names. Angels are not cute little cupids. They are heavenly



beings, spirits of imposing presence and wielding great power. They serve at the behest of God and for the benefit of God's people. Often in Scripture their role is as simple as their name-sake — they are messengers of God to His people.

And finally, this from Jesus himself in the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

(Matthew 18:10-11)

Angels are guardians of "little ones." By "little ones," Jesus certainly includes these "ones" little in age. But the guardians and keepers Jesus promotes here are not only for the young in age. Rather, these "guarding and keeping" angels are for the entire Kingdom of Heaven. Because this Kingdom of which Jesus speaks — The kingdom of Grace and Forgiveness for sinners — is only for "little children" — those who know God in the "childishness" of humble faith — faith that receives God's love in Christ.

Scripture:

For (The Lord) shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways (Psalm 91:11).

Hymn:

I walk with angels all the way,
 They shield me and befriend me;
 All Satan's power is held at bay
 When heavenly hosts attend me;
 They are my sure defense,
 All fear and sorrow, hence!
 Unharmed by foes, do what they may,
 I walk with angels all the way. (ELH; 252 v.4)

Prayer:

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend myself, my body AND soul, and all things. Let your Holy angel then be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me. AMEN.

GOD'S FENCE



We often look at God's 10 commandments as those things which we are or are not to do, and they certainly speak clearly in that way. They are more though. In this series of articles we'll look at these commandments functioning like a fence.

A fence PROTECTS valuable gifts from being harmed.

A fence PROHIBITS what's inside from becoming abused or lost into the abyss of all that exists outside its boundaries.

A fence PROMOTES the value of that which exists within.

Using this three-fold function of a fence, we'll begin taking a look at God's familiar 10 commands. *continued on pages 7-9* →



A Jealous God

by **REV. MICHAEL LILIENTHAL**, Contributing Editor
OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, Albert Lea, Minn.

A FENCE PROTECTS VALUABLE GIFTS FROM BEING HARMED.

"You shall have no other gods." This is the first (and greatest) commandment, and its meaning should be rather clear. In the *Small Catechism* we answer the question, "What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." When this commandment was spoken by God on Mt. Sinai, he further instructed the Israelites not to create any idols, no images of things that they would worship instead of him. He explained, "*for I the LORD your God am a jealous God*" (Exodus 20:5). "Jealous," he calls himself. To some, this might seem petty. Is God so insecure that he puts these restrictions on our behavior and our affections like a jealous boyfriend?

It's too bad that "jealous" has taken on such a negative connotation. When God says he's a "jealous God," he is rather like a jealous husband—but not in any abusive way. In a marriage, husband and wife are devoted to one another, exclusive of all others. If the wife pursues an affair with someone else, the husband is right to be jealous, both for himself because the vow made to him has been broken, and for his wife because she is bringing herself harm by breaking the vow, making herself a liar and an adulteress (who can trust her now?).

God, who defines marriage, is jealous when people serve gods other than him. They are forsaking him who is alone the true God, and they are damning themselves by rejecting him. We know from his Word that he "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). He therefore puts this commandment in place to protect us—there is no salvation, no truth in other so-called gods. They are all "mute idols" who only lead to death (1 Corinthians 12:2). It is in confessing Christ Jesus that salvation is ours—he alone is "*the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). With the Father and the Holy Spirit, he alone is true God. He has made himself our Bridegroom, and we are his Bride, the Church. If we are truly his Bride, then we receive the great blessings that belong to him. St. Paul describes what Christ has done for the Church: he "*loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

It is in the interests of safeguarding this gift for us that God has given this command. He has won something so surpassingly great as Jesus' own holiness and purity and righteousness and eternal life, and it is only ours if we remain in faith to him and him alone. Of course, this is not something that we can do, for "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in

the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Jesus has not only sent the Holy Spirit in order to create this faith in our hearts, but throughout his perfect life, in obedience to the whole Law, he has kept even this commandment.

As a boy, Jesus kept this commandment—for while his parents thought him lost, he told them, "*I must be in my Father's house*" (Luke 2:49). As both youth and adult, Jesus taught the truth of God's Word in the temple and synagogues regularly, leading the people to the true God. When the Devil tempted him to bow down to him, Jesus answered, "It is written, '*You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve*'" (Luke 4:8). When Jesus faced his ultimate suffering and death, he prayed, "*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42).

We are not so ready to let the true God be our god, to pray that his will be done, even if it means that ours is not. But through Jesus' perfect obedience to his Father, the true God, the jealous God, he created a clean record; and through his innocent death in our place, he removed the punishment for our idolatry, our rejection of the true God. Now we are washed clean through his Baptism in the name of that Triune God, we are given his perfect body and sacrificial blood through the Supper, and we are declared righteous by his Word—this is the vow of our Bridegroom, our God. His true Word declares, "*if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself*" (2 Timothy 2:13).

We must admit that we fail repeatedly, continuously, to keep this most important of the commandments—from which all other commandments come—yet in Jesus this commandment has been perfectly kept, and his perfect record is counted as ours. In this, God is faithful, and therefore, being so jealous over us, he is faithful also to keep his vow to give us eternal life and the blessed joys of his heavenly mansions.

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.



God Has a Name

by **REV. MATTHEW MOLDSTAD**, Contributing Writer
PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, North Mankato, Minn.

A FENCE PROHIBITS WHAT'S INSIDE FROM BECOMING ABUSED OR LOST INTO THE ABYSS OF ALL THAT EXISTS OUTSIDE ITS BOUNDARIES.

A number of months ago, my wife planted a garden. After a few weeks, she was pleased to see many of her plants start to grow and flourish. But it wasn't too long before she discovered a problem. Something was eating the leaves of her plants. She told me we were in need of a fence. We needed some sort of barrier to keep out the deer or whatever else was eating those leaves and destroying her garden. Fences can certainly serve to protect something precious.

In this series, we are considering how the commandments of God act as a fence, especially in order to protect something for our benefit. As we consider the second commandment, we ask the question, what exactly is God protecting? The answer should be obvious—His holy name. But perhaps the more difficult question is why? It's easy to see why God commanded us not to steal, or not to murder, or not to have other gods, but is taking care to use God's name rightly really a serious sin? Does it actually warrant God's further warning: "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain?"

When God called Moses up to Mt. Sinai, He said that He would pass before him and proclaim His name. In doing so, this is what God declared: "*The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation*" (Exodus 34:6-7). God revealed to Moses that his name Yahweh, or the LORD, referred to himself who was the God of justice and grace.

Certainly the name of God should be revered by all because it is the name of the one who judges, but more importantly because it is the name of the one who saves by grace. Those who misuse this name dishonor and blaspheme the one who has the authority to condemn and the power to save. This is why God puts up a fence around his name that it be regarded as holy among us and among others as we bring to them the truth of both God's Law and Gospel. God's saving name is so precious that we want to only use it rightly, especially to pray, praise, and give thanks.

Yet there are times when we have been guilty of using God's name in a careless way. Perhaps using it as a filler word when we see something amazing or shocking, "Oh my God" (or even its abbreviation "OMG"). Sometimes we misuse

God's name when we have cursed others. Sometimes we have misused God's name to lie or deceive, hoping this will give what we say that extra oomph needed for the other person to believe us. Sometimes we have misused God's name when we have made an oath to Him, perhaps in our marriage or in our calling and yet have not been faithful to what we have sworn to God. At other times, we have sought to use God's name in prayer, but it has been mere lip service as our thoughts stray far from focusing on the words we say. Yes, we must confess that we all have violated this command of God and drug his most precious name through the dirt. We fall under God's condemnation, "*The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*"

Thanks be to God for the one he has given us, His Son Jesus Christ, who has himself submitted even to this law of God in our place. God reveals in 1 Peter 2:22, "*He committed no sin, and no deceit was in his mouth.*" God would have us look to Christ as our Savior and to be comforted that he has fulfilled this law perfectly in our place. And as the apostle Paul testified to the Corinthian Christians, "*I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus... who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 1:4,8). Be assured of this when you consider your sins against this commandment: the grace of God has been given to you through faith in Christ. Because of him, because of his perfect life and innocent death for you, you are guiltless in his sight.

What precious names God has revealed to us then, especially the name of our Savior God and our redeemer Jesus Christ! What an important reason he has in establishing a fence around this holy name! This truly is the name of the one with all power and authority in heaven and on earth, but most importantly this is the blessed name of God our Savior. Amen.

The Second Commandment

You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God, so that we do not curse swear, practice witchcraft, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.



God Speaks

by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor, *The Lutheran Sentinel*
NORSELAND LUTHERAN CHURCH, St. Peter, Minn.
NORWEGIAN GROVE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Gaylord, Minn.

A FENCE PROMOTES THE VALUE OF THAT WHICH EXISTS WITHIN.

Have you ever been given the cold shoulder – the silent treatment - by someone you care about very much? Maybe it was spouse, a son or daughter, possibly a mother or father? If you have, you understand the meaning of the saying, “The silence was deafening.” I want you to think of all the things that you considered doing or saying with the hopes that you might cajole your loved in into speaking to you – anything to you – again. You were like a court jester just hoping to woo the favor of your master back in your direction.

What if our knowledge of God stopped at His existence and His name? What if all we knew was that the One who made us and remains our master exists and that He has a name by which we can call out to Him? What if, as far as we knew, He hadn't spoken and wasn't in the business of speaking to us? Could we ever be comfortable with that scenario? Would we be confident with our standing, our place... or would we be nothing more than that court jester, dancing and performing with the hopes that we might muster some word – any word – out of His mouth?

There is really One God, One God who created all that you see with your eyes: the spring bloom, the summer green, the fall colors, the winter dormancy. And that One who created all things preserves them and supplies benefits through this creation to all the earth. And that One has a Name by which you may call on Him and speak to Him. But even more, that One calls out to you! He does not leave you as a desperate, dancing court jester hoping to draw a kind word or a happy smile out of His silence.

In fact, His speaking is where this creation came from. “And God said...” is the construction implement of the world's creation! What God said, is. And even when the crown of His creation betrayed Him and deified themselves, the One God with a Name did not revert to be a cold-shoulder God. He remained the God who speaks. He spoke compassionately of His redemption and reclamation of His beloved infidels. He spoke to His people through Moses, through Aaron and his sons, through priests and the blood of animals, through prophets' warnings and words of promise. And that One God who is and who has a Name remains the God who Speaks.

The Devil, try as he might, can't make the true God a mute. But he does his damndest to deafen your ears or dull my hearing. “Did God really say?...” – that wasn't a one-timer. The Devil is an old dog with “old” tricks, as time-tested as they are treacherous to you and me. If he can confuse or convolute God's immutable speaking, that will serve his

crafty and hellish purposes just fine.

And worse, the Devil has allies. He uses your words and the words of the culture around you to muddy up God's speaking as well. Just as a little child is far more interested in you hearing all they have to say to you than what you are speaking to them, so is our fallen flesh with God. Our flesh is most happy when God “gets all His words” from our thoughts and wills and ways.

So when God gives us the 3rd Commandment – “You shall keep the Day of Rest Holy” – He's doing more than giving us a requirement to meet (one which we fail at daily and hourly). He's also setting up a protective fence around something invaluable to us and to the world – His speaking. This protection shows us just how vital and necessary His word is for us. It means to protect that Word in our midst even from us and our despising (devaluation) of it.

This command locates where the God who is and who has a Name, is for us and for our benefit! What the law of Moses etched as requirement, Jesus states in gift form: “*These Words I am speaking to you, they are spirit (breath) and they are life*” (John 6:63). God means to spare the whole blood-bought humanity from devilish delusion or self-induced suffocation. He desires that all those whom He has redeemed with the blood of His Son would breathe deeply on the “breath” of His Word and live fully on the Life gifted in the promises of that Word. To consult our feelings, hoping to “sense the spirit” somewhere, somehow, is to underestimate how God has promised to speak to us. To rely on dreams or profound private visions to “assure” our faith is to look past God's kind and compassionate Word already speaking to you. The God who is and who is Named, is the God who speaks to you through His written Word for your reading and His Word preached and proclaimed through servant mouths for your hearing and believing. Jesus the Christ is that Word and He is breath and life for you.

The Third Commandment

You shall keep the day of rest holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

**Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
Curb those who fain by craft and sword
Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
And set at naught all He hath done.**



Proclaim the Wonders God Has Done:

Divine Mercy Lutheran Church

Hudson Oaks, Texas

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Weatherford

Dallas

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San Antonio

Divine Mercy Lutheran Church

is a mission congregation located in the **Weatherford/Hudson Oaks** area just west of Fort Worth. This area is currently experiencing incredible growth with much more on the horizon. This growing and changing landscape presents challenges in keeping up with the pace of the community, but it presents a rich opportunity to share the message of Christ with people of all ages.

by **REV. JAMES KASSERA**, Contributing Writer
DIVINE MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Hudson Oaks, Texas



Members of Divine Mercy in the community

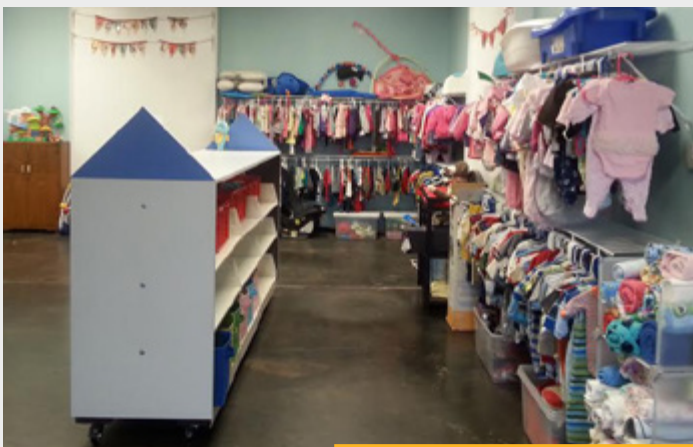
Finding a suitable place for a mission to meet for worship is a challenge. Since mission work began in this region of Texas, the congregation has worshiped in several places: a hotel, a school, and presently in a storefront at 3310 Fort Worth Hwy. The current worship facility has given our congregation much more stability and public visibility. Yet we also know that God has greater plans. For the past year, our congregation has been searching for land to be our permanent home. God has blessed us. This summer, we have agreed to purchase a piece of property on the frontage road of Hwy. 20 not far from our present location. This would give us incredible visibility to the massive flow of traffic heading to the main shopping and restaurant section of Weatherford. It may not look like much now (*note pic of vacant lot*), but with our Lord's help, this will soon be the place where Divine Mercy brings the truth of salvation to the surrounding communities.

Becoming a part of the community is one of our main challenges. Our congregation is always looking for ways to participate and interact with our neighbors. Besides participating in the Veteran's Day parade and handing out candy and church information, this past year we put on a fall carnival, Pumpkins in the Park, where over 250 kids and their families came to decorate pumpkins and play games. While we are in a heavily mega-church, Baptist, and Methodist area, we

want people to get to know us so they can see what makes our Divine Mercy so special. While many people don't even know what a Lutheran is, we hold in our hands, and offer to them freely, the truth of God's Word and sacraments that teach us we are saved through Christ alone. Praise God for the gift we share!

We also operate our "Loving Life" family center. We gather donations of gently used baby clothes and other items and invite families in need to come once a month as we share these at no cost to them. We also provide diapers and wipes to each family and invite them to join us in learning about Jesus. Many of the mothers we help come month after month and we get to see the blessings God has provided through Loving Life.

We are so grateful for the generous support and prayers we have received from the members of our synod. In addition, we have received incredible support and donations from individuals and congregations across the nation in support of our Loving Life ministry. Please continue to support us, our home missions and our Anniversary Offering so we can continue to establish the Lord's church here in north Texas. To God alone be all glory and honor!



Loving Life Family Center



Proposed Building Site

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT & SENDING IT TO:

The Anniversary Offering, 6 Browns Ct, Mankato, MN 56001.

Or go to els.org/donate and designate your gift for the "Anniversary Offering".





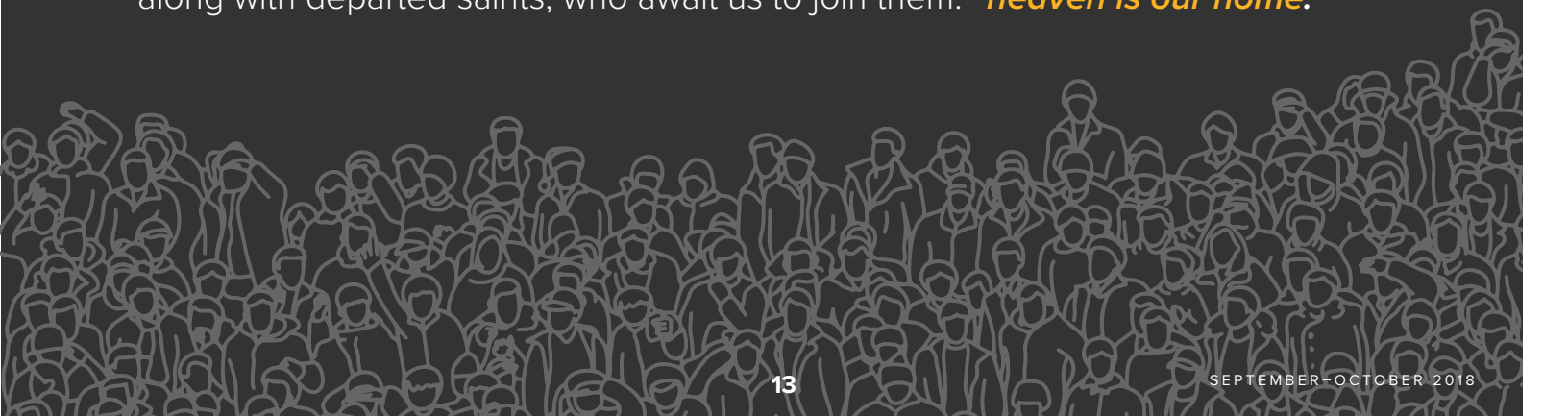
The Half-Circle Altar Railing

a Norwegian Lutheran Architectural Custom

by **REV. THOMAS RANK**, Contributing Writer, Professor of Religion
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, Mankato, Minn.

The altar railing in our church, **Scarville Lutheran Church**, (pictured) is shaped as a half-circle. It is where we kneel to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

The railing is shaped as a half-circle, but the spiritual symbolism is that of a complete circle. While we gather here on earth to receive God's gifts at the half-circle altar railing, the saints in heaven complete the circle, joining us in the heavenly feast. Before we go to the altar, we hear the pastor chant: "therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven..." It is a great joy to know that we never commune alone or in a small group—but where God's people receive His gifts, there He is along with departed saints, who await us to join them: "**heaven is our home.**"



YOUTH, CONSCIENCE AND THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Why the doctrine of election, fought for by the early fathers of the ELS, is important to youth today.

by **REV. JERRY GERNANDER**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Princeton, Minn.

“You’re doing it wrong!”

Don’t you hear that all the time? This is the voice of judgment. You might hear this voice at school from a teacher or a coach. You might hear it from your parents. You might hear it from one of your peers.

But sometimes it’s your own voice. It’s inside your head. “You’re doing it wrong.” This is the voice of your conscience. This is when you have doubts about yourself or your place in life.

It might be that something isn’t going right in your friendships. It might be that something is “off” in your relationship with your parents. It might be that you can’t seem find your purpose or find some career path in which you’ll find joy, but others have it all figured out. It might be that you don’t excel in your classes or activities like others do. It might be that you aren’t noticed like others are. So many things can produce doubts inside you that “you aren’t doing it right!”

You’re one of your own harshest judges. You judge based on what you see or feel. Something inside you - your conscience - assumes that God judges you to be lacking too.

But this is actually a wrongly informed conscience that only takes its knowledge from your own short-termed thoughts and feelings. This comes from introspection - looking inside yourself. The devil loves introspection. He wants you to look inside yourself for evidence of faith or how strong or good you are, so that he can produce doubt - first self-doubt, but then to doubt that God is good or kind to you, or to complain and have doubts about how God made you.

A rightly informed conscience doesn’t look inside to see what you are. A rightly formed conscience looks outside yourself and sees what you are in Christ. This is what the Bible’s teaching of election is about. This is what our ELS forefathers were so careful to protect in 1918.

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The Bible's teaching of election (especially Ephesians 1:4-6, 1 Peter 1:3-5, and Romans 8:28-30) says that in eternity, before time began, God elected - called or chose - you to be His own. He chose you by grace, His undeserved love. His election of you was in Christ. Before time began, God saw you in Christ - so that in your life, you could (a) see how God sees you in Christ, and (b) see yourself in Christ, as God sees you.

What came in between? What happened between "before time began" when God called you to be His own, and today when you struggle to not judge yourself harshly, when you struggle not to have doubts? What happened is that "Christ came down from heaven ... for our salvation."

Because Christ came down from heaven to die for you, it shows God's determination to save you. It shows that God was serious when He called you! And He also had you baptized, and Christ continues to come to you in the preaching of His Word, and in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Always to keep you His own.

This is what rightly forms your conscience to see yourself in Christ as God sees you: being clothed in Jesus' perfect, pure righteousness; having no fault or sin as you stand before God; acceptable to God, pleasing to Him, beautiful, pure, lovely, and good. You are important, worthy, and valuable to Him - so important that He sent His own Son to die for you! "He made us accepted in the Beloved [Christ]!" (Ephesians 1:6)

The judging voice is not God's voice. He doesn't join in with all the judging voices, including yours. He defends you. He's for you. He pronounces you good, even excellent, for Jesus' sake. He has a purpose for you that He'll gradually unfold to you. He not only notices you but rejoices over you (Zephaniah 3:17, Isaiah 65:19).

It all starts with seeing yourself in Christ, just as God sees you. He says: "You are Mine!" Faith says: "Amen! I'll agree with you, Lord, because You say it!"

BIOGRAPHY BRIEFS:

The ELS of 1918

We continue with a series of biographies of the pastors who attended the reorganization convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1918. There is evidence for the presence of at least thirteen pastors along with two hundred guests at this convention.



In 1918, **J. E. Thoen** was farming near Oklee, Minnesota having served several Norwegian Synod parishes and as the principal of the Norwegian Synod's Albert Lea Academy, 1903–14. Following the synod's reorganization in 1918, Pastor Thoen served Our Savior's

Lutheran Church near Amherst Junction, Wisconsin. He is remembered as a prolific author who clearly expounded the Biblical teaching of salvation through Christ alone in the face of the unbiblical teaching of Opgjør. From 1930–39 he was the editor of the synod's newspapers: the Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende and the Lutheran Sentinel. Having married Caja Wulfsberg, he was a brother-in-law to the Rev. Christian Anderson. He died in 1947.



In 1918, **G. P. Nesseth** was a pioneer pastor who helped to organize many congregations in a newly opened mission field in northern Minnesota. In 1918 he quietly and faithfully was serving five congregations. Among these was Gran Lutheran Church where the log

church is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Lengby. He married Bertha Moen. He died in 1937.