



IT IS WRITTEN: "His mother kept all these things in her heart." Luke 2:51

# LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

THE EARLY CHURCH: **THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES** (PART 1)

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 67:

# ONE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

pg. 14

YOUNG BRANCHES:

**You Are Mine, Even  
Before the Beginning**

pg. 8

HOME MISSION SPOTLIGHTS:

**Grace Lutheran** (Lincoln, Ill.)

**Hope Lutheran** (Farmington, Minn.)

pg. 6

EDITORS SERIES: JESUS' QUESTIONS

**Jesus Asks Questions**

pg. 10

# How's Your Mood?

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

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

How is your mood? Since you are reading this, you probably are relaxed, at least for the moment. Things change quickly. In a twenty-four-hour cycle, our internal atmosphere may go from a warm feeling of joy to an icy feeling of isolation and gloom where no strong coffee or sugar fix will do. A deeper cure must be found.

As Christians, our sinful natures and the surroundings of our corrupted world easily rob us from enjoying fully the eternal treasure we possess by the God-worked faith in our hearts. That treasure, of course, is Christ. It is found in Word and sacrament. Here we have offered to us daily the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation on account of the expiating work of Jesus our Savior.

Words from Psalm 46 come to mind. *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the most high dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress* (vv. 4-7).

By faith in Jesus, we now are in the church, the city of God. This city is well-supplied with water, the chief requisite for life. In fact, God himself is the river, the source of all blessings for his Church. He is found right in the midst of the city. As long as he is there with his Church – which always is the case, for he cannot deny his Word – she will not fall, although nations rise against her. God has promised: *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them* (Matthew 18:20). God's way of dwelling with his church is through his Word: *For everything that was written in the past was written for our learning, so that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope* (Romans 15:4).

Need more than a morning pick-me-up? The psalmist tells us that, for those who trust in the Lord, God's help comes at the

break of day. We are slow to meet him, yet he is never late in helping us. The Lord is up ahead of time. He has all things under his control for our good. He is the one who came into our world not just for the masses, but for you and me personally. He gave his all at Calvary that we, through faith produced by water and the Word, are made citizens in God's city, a token of the Jerusalem above!

If God has secured our greatest need, if he has come to us in our darkest hour, if he now dwells within our city, and if he has a voice that is all-powerful for sustaining this city, then surely he will "make glad" his people in times of suffering anxiety. So may the little square boxes on our calendars, or the digital day display on our iPhones, remind us how God is *always* there at the **break of every day** with his mighty *help*!

***By grace! Sin, death and Satan hearken!  
 I bear my flag of faith in hand  
 And pass – for doubts my joy can't darken –  
 The Red Sea to the Promised Land.  
 I cling to what my Savior taught  
 And trust it whether felt or not.***

ELH 226:10

EDITOR'S SERIES: GOD'S FENCE  
**4 God Gives Good Bread**  
REV. KYLE MADSON

HOME MISSION SPOTLIGHTS  
**6 Grace Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Ill.; Hope Lutheran Church, Farmington, Minn.**

YOUNG BRANCHES:  
**8 You Are Mine, Even Before the Beginning**  
REV. JOHN A. MOLDSTAD

EDITOR'S SERIES: JESUS' QUESTIONS  
**10 Jesus Asks Questions**  
REV. JERRY GERNANDER

EDITOR'S SERIES: THE EARLY CHURCH  
**14 In The Year of our Lord 67: One Apostolic Church**  
REV. CHRISTIAN EISENBEIS

CATECHISM SERIES  
**15 Catechesis Through Scripture**  
REV. TRENT SAARI

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS  
**16 Christ Lutheran School, Port St. Lucie, Fla. ▼**  
REV. CHRIS DALE

**DEPARTMENTS:**

- 2** From the President
- 5** Pastor, I Have a Question
- 12** Synod News:
  - Parkland Celebrates 125 Years;
  - Sexual Challenges to the Word of God



THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL / JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2019 / VOLUME 102 / NUMBER 1 / ISSN 0024-7510



**PUBLISHED BY:**  
The Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

**ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:**  
Rev. Paul Fries  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

**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

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.

**STAFF:**

Rev. Kyle Madson	.....	<i>Editor</i>
Rev. Paul Fries	.....	<i>ELS Communication Director</i>
Rev. Charles Keeler	.....	<i>Contributing Editor</i>
Denise Luehmann	.....	<i>Subscription Manager</i>
Jessie Fries	.....	<i>Proofreader</i>
Ryan Madson	.....	<i>Layout &amp; Design</i>



# God Gives Good Bread

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

In addition to order, life, and spouse & family, God also gives to you everything else. Jesus even teaches us to pray for this everything else when He teaches us to pray, “Gives us this day our daily bread.”

As the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer indicated, our chief duty as God’s redeemed Children is NOT to give or offer something to God, but to **RECEIVE** from God His good things – to receive rescue from sin and death in Jesus His Son... and to receive with thanksgiving His daily bread gifts.

## My Neighbor’s Daily Bread

When a property owner puts up a fence, he means to guard his “daily bread” – the property and goods God has gifted him – from his neighbor. And a fence can certainly assist in that regard. The curious thing about a fence, however, is that it doesn’t only keep a “thieving” passerby out. It keeps me IN – in my daily bread and not encroaching on my neighbors. That God includes in His Fence a prohibition of stealing is an indictment not only on one who would “thieve” our daily bread. It’s an indictment on us, dear Christians.

And it turns out the problem is far more pervasive than at first glance. When we hear “steal,” our mind’s eye easily projects the black-masked man holding up the corner store and making off with the cash or a team of skilled thieves overriding the layers of a bank security system to take the vault’s gold and stacks of cash.

But what if the swindling of “daily bread” were far nearer to home than these? What if it were prevalent in banking and real estate? What if it were a staple in retail exchanges and in the service industry? What if stealing made cover out of government and church budgets offerings? What if this craft of stealing were so pervasive that it even affected children as they trade or exchange petty playing cards? What if our fallen nature were so bent that it proves not only capable of stealing, but subtle and well-schooled in the “trade?”

Luther, in His Large Catechism, says this:

“Thievery is the most common craft and the largest guild on earth... mankind, in all its conditions, is nothing but a vast, wide stable full of great thieves.” (Tappert, 396).

That our civil record may be clean of any convictions of stealing is a far cry from us being “clean” in God’s sight. Our offenses are not only of the commission variety, but also omissions – our failures to help our neighbor improve and protect what God has gifted and is gifting them.

This most prevalent tragedy is only halted and the true good restored as the God who is, takes flesh into Himself in order to be the Victim of thievery FOR YOU – FOR ME. Jesus suffers the loss of throne, of status, of due honor, of good name, and finally of His very life. His rights and righteousness are stolen from Him, by design, so that they might be donated to you – so that you and I and all sinners might have in this grace of God the Bread of Life. For, when faith possesses this most unlikely of Gifts – God’s wealth stripped from Him and supplied to you – then our souls are satisfied with the Bread of Life – Jesus for us. Then our hearts and our hands are freed from our “natural craft” – the getting our neighbor’s bread. And as our souls are satisfied with the Bread of Life, then our bodies are instead animated in the noble work of helping our neighbor to improve and protect that daily bread which our gracious Lord has gifted to them in love. May our Lord, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, persist in filling us with the Bread of Life so that our lives might be spent serving our neighbors in keeping and improving their daily bread.

## The Seventh Commandment

**You shall not steal.**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God, so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or goods, nor get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his goods and means of making a living.

# *I serve on my congregation's altar guild. What is the proper way to dispose of the wine that remains after celebrating the Lord's Supper?*

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

## **Answer:**

After a congregation celebrates the Sacrament of the Altar, it's not unusual for some of the consecrated bread and wine to be left over. (Pastors and theologians have a fancy Latin word for these remaining consecrated earthly elements. We call them the Reliquiae.) No one ever asks about how to deal with the remaining communion wafers; most questions have to do with the wine.

It is worth pointing out that the way someone disposes of remaining communion wine does not cause one to sin against the blood of Christ. Outside of the sacrament, the elements are only bread and wine. Jesus did not only say of the cup, *"For this is my blood of the new covenant."* He also said, *"Drink from it, all of you,"* and, *"This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me"* (Matthew 26:27-28, 1 Corinthians 11:25, NKJV). When the eating and drinking of the sacrament is over, the real presence of Christ's body and blood does not continue.

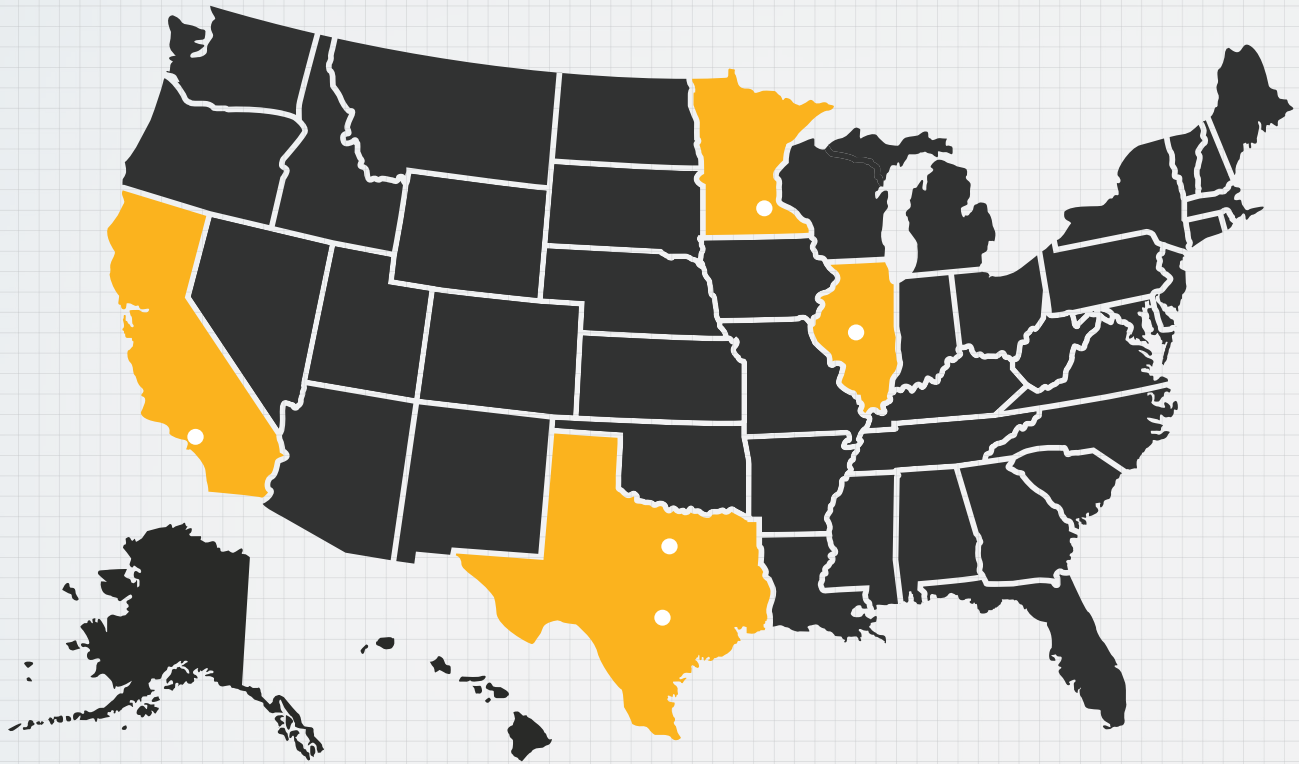
The major concerns, however, are how best to demonstrate a proper respect for the sacrament and how to avoid giving offense to those who have a weak faith. Consider how a new Christian may be impacted by seeing the wine that had just been used in the sacrament unceremoniously poured down the kitchen sink. Someone in that circumstance might even be led to doubt the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament. Therefore, believers will want to show by their actions the deep respect they have for the Lord's Supper.

With that in mind, different congregations have different practices for disposing of the remaining communion wine. The wine from the flagon (the pitcher, usually silver) as well as the individual cups can be returned to the bottle and saved for the next celebration of the Supper. In some churches the pastor and/or elders, as the final communicant(s), consumes what remains in the chalice (the cup). In other congregations, whatever wine is left in the chalice is disposed of reverently by pouring it out onto the ground, returning it to the earth. In some cases, the wine is poured at the root of a tree near the church building. At least one ELS church even has a special sink with a drain that opens into the ground.

If your church has a traditional way of disposing of the remaining communion elements, then learn what that tradition is and follow it. If your church has no tradition, consider adopting one for the sake of uniformity, teaching, and good order. In the end, this is an area where Scripture has given us the freedom to choose which ways will best give glory to God and serve our neighbor.

# Home Mission

# SPOTLIGHTS



*“I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...”*

St. Paul’s 1st letter to Timothy, Chapter 2

There is power in prayer. Not because we who pray are powerful or are doing some great deed, but because the One who hears and answers is powerful.

In our ELS, we are currently supporting five congregations that we view as Home Missions. These are groups of believers whose congregations have only recently been established. Just like your congregation, each Home Mission has experienced joys and celebrations along with hardships and setbacks.

Over the next year, you’ll find a brief overview of each Home Mission in *The Lutheran Sentinel* and you’ll also find specific things for which you can make petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. Let us all approach our God with confidence, knowing He hears our prayers and out of His love and wisdom, He answers them for our good and His glory.

## ELS Home Mission Spotlights

for January–February, 2019:

### GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

LINCOLN, ILLINOIS

**Home Missionary:** Rev. Daniel McQuality

**Home Missionary Family:** Rachel (wife), Kade, and Jacob.

**Membership:** 39 members with about 16 worshipping each week.

**Thank God on our behalf for:** Enabling us to purchase a church building last year, which we have been fixing up.

**Ask God on our behalf for:** Financial growth, for an increase of families, and for a deeper spiritual hunger in our city. For His Gospel to reach the hearts of those to whom we are reaching out with Friendship Sundays and meals. For blessing our veteran outreach efforts and in reaching our neighborhood, which has a great number of spiritual challenges!



### HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

FARMINGTON, MINNESOTA

**Home Missionary:** Rev. Dan Oberer

**Home Missionary Family:** Jody (wife), Seth, and Ella.

**Membership:** 114 members with about 56 worshipping each week

**Thank God on our behalf for:** A huge community response to our recent events.

**Ask God on our behalf for:** Blessing our efforts with delinquent and straying members.



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



# YOU ARE MINE

## Even Before The Beginning

The Milky Way isn't just a candy bar! Go to the Creation Museum and take in the Stargazer's Planetarium. You are in for an awesome treat! It's more to chew on than any lifetime can imagine. What a great Creator we have! The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Psalm 19:1).

We are right to marvel at how God created things and humans at the beginning of time. But have you thought about this? There's something more amazing that involves you and me and "predates" the beginning. Long before you were born – even before the creation of the world – God chose you to be one of his believers! *For he chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will* (Ephesians 1:4).

Have you ever been chosen for an honor? If so, you probably were told something about you that drew your honorable selection. But God's attention has been drawn to you NOT because of you. After all, you and I are sinners and deserve only punishment. We have no reason to believe God would choose us for some special, loving treatment. Review his commandments. Haven't we failed him? Love – not always there. Truthfulness – not always there. Trusting – not always there. Pure thoughts and actions? Well, you get the ugly picture. It's hard for our souls to peer into the mirror of God's law! But what boggles the mind, showing something greater

about our God than even his tremendous power to create the Milky Way and all else, is this: His attention to you and me is so strong that he says, in effect: "Before you were born and before all time began, I chose you to be my own because of what my Son has done to earn your forgiveness and to present you with the gift of heaven!"

Even before the beginning, your Heavenly Father chose you! The reason? It's all found in his Son – Jesus Christ, the Savior. God wants us so much to know and believe this that he tells us he even chose his Son to be sacrificed at the cross before any of his acts in creating the universe. Jesus is "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

Can you know you personally are chosen for eternal life? The explanatory words in our catechism answer emphatically, "Yes! Whenever a person hears the Gospel and trusts in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins, that person can be confident he is one of the elect" (#231). Romans 8:28-30 is listed as proof.

Chosen in Christ, you can be sure every ounce of your being saved is due entirely to God's grace. If even the beginning – before the beginning – is like this, can you imagine how the "ending" will be? What a reason for living now every day for our God!



# Bible Study & Discussion Questions

## ▀ **READ:** Ephesians 1:3-13

1. What makes thinking about / talking about “before the beginning of the world” so challenging?

2. What does it mean that “God chose us” at all?

**2b.** How might this make me sinfully proud?

3. Who/What was the basis of His choosing us?

**3b.** How does this make us properly confident?

4. When might this make us especially comforted?

5. Can you know you personally are chosen for eternal life?

**5b.** If so, how?

In Your best body let me be / E'en as the branch is to the tree / Thy life my life supplying  
**P. NICOLAI**

# JESUS ASKS QUESTIONS

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

The first recorded words of Jesus in His life on earth are a question: *"Why did you seek Me?"*

This is followed by another question: *"Didn't you know that I must be about My Father's business?"* (Luke 2:50).

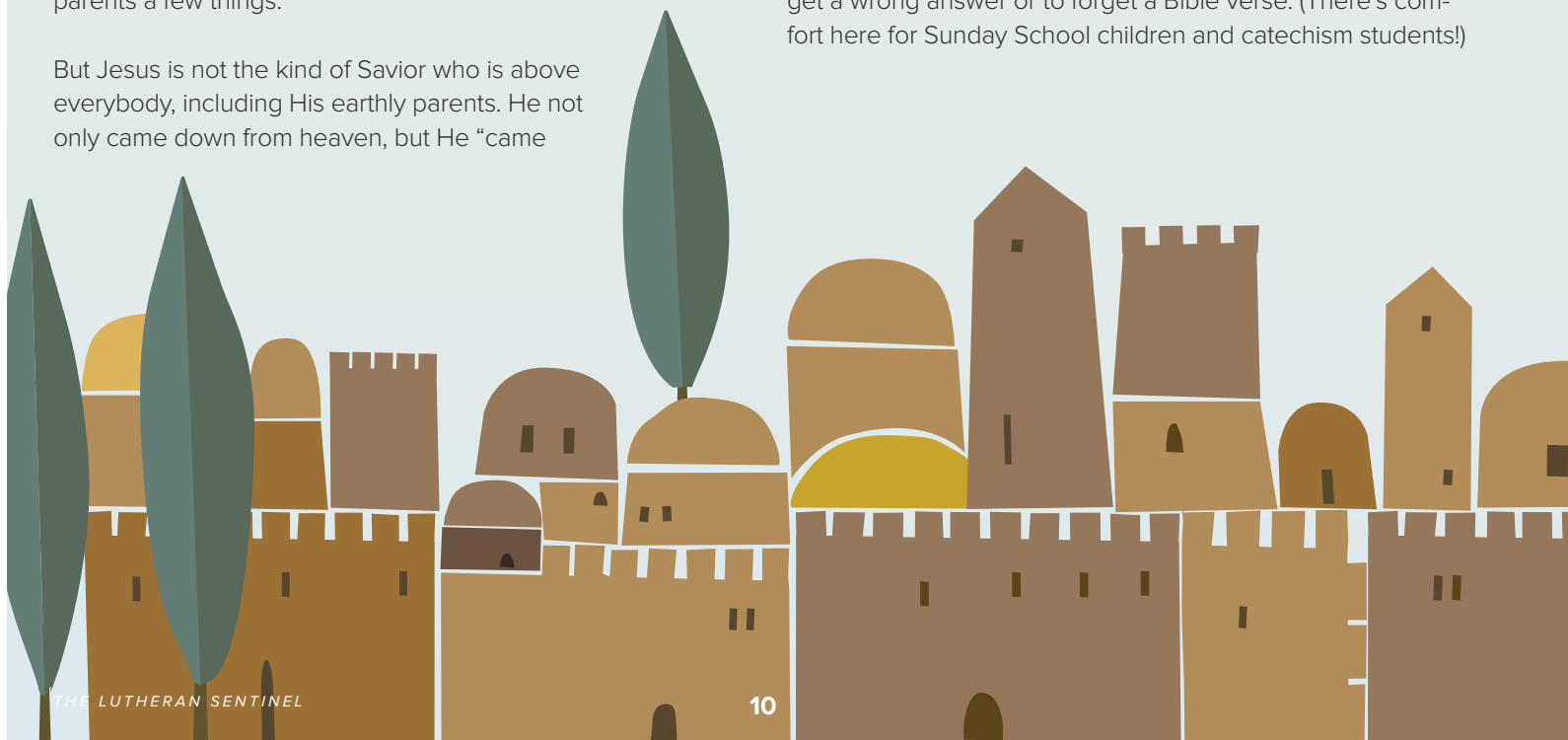
These questions don't produce a clear answer. They produce confusion on the part of Joseph and Mary, but they lead to a good end result: meditation on God's Truth. "His mother kept all these things in her heart."

Jesus' questions—as He purposefully taught—often are frustrating to us because they don't yield simple answers. Often His questions produce more questions. His questions weren't designed to produce an answer which would end the discussion. Jesus doesn't want a quick, brief discussion with an obvious end. He wants the discussion to go on into eternity. So His questions are geared toward true meditation: pondering the truth of God, being led farther into it, continuing to speak with God, asking Him questions, and following Him farther into His Word.

We're beginning a series of articles on Jesus' Questions - how He taught by asking questions. This is a good place to start - with the very first questions of His that are recorded in Scripture. But here, at the age of 12, He was not purposely teaching. We know that as true God, He could have done so. We're tempted to think that He is being a super-smart pre-teen here, displaying his omniscience, and is out to teach His parents a few things.

But Jesus is not the kind of Savior who is above everybody, including His earthly parents. He not only came down from heaven, but He "came

down" in the sense that He became what we are. He humbled Himself. He lived in the state of humiliation, in which He laid aside His powers as God. This includes God's attribute of omniscience and full, perfect wisdom. As it says right after this episode in Jerusalem, "Jesus increased in wisdom." He learned. He got some answers wrong. This includes His knowledge of God and His Word. It wasn't a sin for Jesus to get a wrong answer or to forget a Bible verse. (There's comfort here for Sunday School children and catechism students!)



In Luke 2, we're told about questions He asked prior to these questions He asked of Joseph and Mary. As the Boy Jesus sat with the teachers of the law in the temple, He was "both listening to them and asking questions." Question after question.

It may be tempting to think that the Boy Jesus was teaching the teachers something. But that isn't what He was doing. He was an eager student of the Scriptures! He had learned the Scriptures from Joseph at home from the time He could talk. He had learned the Scriptures from the rabbi in His hometown synagogue. But very likely there were no especially learned teachers in little Nazareth. In Jerusalem, He has access to knowledge of the Scriptures that He didn't have at home. So He takes advantage of the opportunity. He asks questions. Perhaps He was asking more about the Passover, since that's the festival He had just observed. Perhaps He was asking, "Why do so many lambs have to die?" He is eagerly searching the Scriptures from highly qualified teachers of the Word while He is in the temple at Jerusalem for a short time.

This brings us to the moment when Joseph and Mary find Jesus. Mary confronts Jesus with His responsibility to His earthly parents and His love for both Mary and Joseph: "Your father and I have sought You anxiously!" Mary is expressing their fervent love for Him, which leads a parent to worry and worry. She's appealing to the love she knows Jesus has for them. She expects that He'll want to keep from doing anything that would worry them.

So what's with Jesus' question(s)? He has learned from Mary and Joseph that God is His Father. We don't know when they told Him this. Perhaps on this important journey, they had told Him about His birth, the shepherds and wise men, and the words of Simeon and Anna. So now He is saying, "You taught Me that God is My true Father." He's learning that He is the Son of God.

He's now with humility asking more questions about it. His question includes that it is a "must," a "have-to," for Him to be "in My Father's things," which would include doing the work of redeeming the world as old Anna had said at almost the exact same location 12 years previously. He says: Isn't that right? You know this, don't you? What would you say? It's a preview of His question 20 years later posed to Peter and company: "Who do you say that I am?"

Mary kept, or pondered, these words in her heart. The answer to her worries is Jesus' question that leads her into pondering who He is and what He would do for all mankind. She'd have to wait and see it. She didn't need to defend Jesus. He came down from heaven to defend Mary, Joseph, His brothers and sisters, and all people of the world by becoming the Lamb who bears away the sin of the world. Keep all these things in your heart too.

*Lord Jesus, who dost love me,  
O spread Thy wings above me  
And shield me from alarm!  
Though evil would assail me,  
Thy mercy will not fail me;  
I rest in Thy protecting arm.*  
(ELH 569 v. 5)

#### Next Question:

"Do you know what I have done to you?" (John 13:12)



▼ Parkland Lutheran School, c. 1944

▼ Parkland Lutheran School, c. 2017



## PARKLAND LUTHERAN Celebrates 125<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary

by **REV. SAMUEL GULLIXSON**, Contributing Writer  
**PARKLAND LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL**, Parkland, Wash.

**O**n October 14, 2018, Parkland Evangelical Lutheran Church and School began their year-long celebration of 125 years of God's grace. The church was officially organized late in 1893 and the school began its first official year in October 1894.

The celebrations began at the 10 AM communion service with the rededication of the church building after a major refurbishment project in preparation for the 125th anniversary. Later in the service, nine new stained glass windows were also dedicated. Pastor Obenberger preached, while Pastor Gullixson was the celebrant.

The anniversary festival service began at 4 PM. This service pulled features from the four hymnbooks that the congregation has used over the course of the 125 years. Rev. Theodore Gullixson (son of a former pastor) opened the service with the Opening Prayer of Rite 1 in Norwegian. Rev. Peter Faugstad (former pastor) preached, Rev. Steven Sparley and Rev. Glenn Obenberger served as lectors, and Rev. Samuel Gullixson was the officiant.

After the service and group photo in the newly refurbished church sanctuary, the meal was served to 280+ guests with a special anniversary meal prayer spoken by Rev. Frederick Theiste (son of former pastor). Rev. Alexander Ring (former pastor) gave the keynote speech of the evening program. In addition to John Harstad (grandson of former pastor) and

Noel Handberg (son of former pastor), several longtime members and recently-welcomed members gave shorter remembrances and encouragements. Greetings were read and shared from various individuals.

Memorabilia was also available for purchase. One such item was a cross made from the wood of the window diffusers that had hung in the church for 48 years, but were recently removed to allow for the installation of the stained glass windows.

The evening closed with a devotion by Pastor Samuel Gullixson. The concluding remarks were as follows:

*This anniversary celebration is a celebration of what God has done and is still doing for His people. It is to rejoice in the Father's work of creation and preservation, and electing His people from eternity; the Son's work of redeeming the world and His interceding for us still today; and the Holy Spirit's work of calling us by the Gospel, gathering us together around Word & Sacrament, enlightening us with His gifts, sanctifying us and keeping us in the one true faith.*

*As we ourselves have been the beneficiaries of His work in previous ages and generations who have commended God's work to us, so may we, by God's grace, commend His works to the next ages and generations for another long time.*

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

# Sexual Challenges to the Word of God

**C**hallenges to the truths set forth in God’s immutable Word continually come from the world in which we live and even our own flesh. Ever since the time of his own fall from grace and from our first parents’ fall into sin, Satan has worked to thwart the will of God and to undermine the verbally inspired and inerrant writings of Scripture. The Bible is clear in its denunciation of sin and unbelief, and it is equally clear in its proclamation of the one-and-only way for salvation – faith in Jesus Christ, who has made atonement for all sin through his life, death, and resurrection. To keep people from the saving Gospel is the chief goal of the “father of lies.” One of the devious tactics Satan uses to accomplish this is to soften the deadly impact of sin, or even to have people call what is sin something to be embraced as acceptable or good. Prominently, social conditions and attitudes are rapidly changing concerning sex and gender iden-

tity. In many cases, this is due to a public education system which not only allows a philosophy of sexual diversity but aggressively advocates experimentation among students in areas of gender identity, homosexuality, and sexual relations outside of the traditional marriage institution between one man and one woman.

Sadly, such immoral social trends are finding acceptance among some in our congregations. Realizing this current vogue, our synod in convention this summer adopted an important resolution. It is entitled “Sex and Gender Identity” and was authored by our ELS Doctrine Committee. We post it here for all to read and study, and we refer you to our webpage for a full version that includes the wording of the scriptural quotations ([https://els.org/core/download/doctrine/Sex\\_and\\_Gender\\_Identity.pdf](https://els.org/core/download/doctrine/Sex_and_Gender_Identity.pdf)).

## POSITION STATEMENT:

# On Sex and Gender Identity

- God created the human race with unique gender distinctions as male and female (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 15:45a; Gen. 3:20).
- According to their innate maleness and femaleness, men and women relate to one another in various complementary and mutually-fulfilling ways, within marriage and the family, and also in the larger human community (Gen. 2:18–19a, 20b–24; 1 Cor. 11:11–12).
- The distinctive procreative anatomy of men and women is an essential mark and feature of the maleness of men and of the femaleness of women (Gen 1:28; Is. 49:15a).
- Rare and unusual cases of biological abnormality do exist, where a person may have both male and female chromosomal and genetic indicators, and both male and female anatomical features (Matt. 19:12). But when it is unambiguously clear that a person is biologically either male or female, then before God and as a creature of God that person’s objective gender identity—which is unchangeably fixed from birth—corresponds to his or her biological sex (Is. 43:6b–7). This remains true in spite of any psychological confusions pertaining to gender identity with which someone may be afflicted (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:4b). A person who suffers from such confusions can find peace, relief, and spiritual healing in the redemption and forgiving love of Christ, and with God’s help can seek to overcome these confusions (2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 12:1–2).
- It is contrary to God’s will for someone whom he has created as male to live and identify as a woman, or for someone whom he has created as female to live and identify as a man (Deut. 22:5)



# IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 67: ONE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

by **REV. CHRISTIAN EISENBEIS**, Contributing Editor  
**FIRST TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Marinette, Wisc.

Many Christians today long for a time when the Church was purer in doctrine and more pious in practice, when “*all who believed were together and had all things in common*” (Acts 2:44). The first five “Christian centuries”—the five hundred years after the Lord’s ascension—seem like a time when this dream was a reality. Yet we find the same problems then as now: political and cultural pressure, moral bankruptcy, and endless controversies over the teaching of Scripture.

This first article addresses this last problem. What was to blame for all the controversies in the early Church? It depends on whom you consult.

Many experts say that Christian doctrine developed during this time. At first, there was a variety of doctrines—until men stepped in. Men invented the Trinity and defined who Jesus was. Men decided which books belonged in the Bible and which ones didn’t. Without the work of men, there would be no unity of doctrine, and no possibility of unity, because the Bible did not provide it. As one expert puts it: “Many suppose the Bible is a seamless garment of God’s literal pronouncements from Genesis through Revelation. It is not.” There are as many doctrines as there are men who wrote the Bible. When disagreements arise, the fault is not in ourselves, but in our Scriptures.

But what do those Scriptures say? Around the year 67, as he prepared to die for his faith, St. Peter wrote, *Count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures* (2 Peter 3:15-16 ESV). This is a remarkable passage for three reasons. First, the two apostles had disagreed sharply several years before. Peter had begun to confuse faith with works and Paul confronted him publicly. This passage shows that Peter repented and was reconciled to Paul. Second, it states that controversies come because men distort the Word of God to suit themselves. Third, the epistles of St. Paul, at this early date, are counted equal to “the other Scriptures.” The word of the prophets and the word of the apostles are both God’s Word. Both Testaments are inspired of God and united in proclaiming Jesus Christ the Savior.

God guaranteed the unity of Scripture in the Old Testament: “*I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them*” (Jeremiah 32:39 ESV). In the New Testament, Paul wrote that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). Through baptism, we are united in the death and resurrection of Jesus. *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross* (Colossians 1:19-20 ESV).


Through the unity of the Scriptures, God reveals the unity He desires with us. His Son promised that those who listen to His voice “shall be one fold” under “one shepherd” (John 10:16 KJV). By His Word, the Spirit gathers sinners into the “one holy Christian and Apostolic Church” and “keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith” (Explanation to the Third Article). The desire for reunion with the one Apostolic Church has already been granted—it is ours by faith!

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen* (2 Peter 3:17-18 ESV). Jesus Himself promises that “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life.

As we walk through these first five Christian centuries together, the Holy Scriptures will be our unailing guide. They are the fountainhead of pure doctrine, the seamless robe woven in one piece from top to bottom around the Person of Jesus Christ.

#### For further reading:

Luke 24:36-49;  
John 17:20-26;  
John 19:23-24;  
Galatians 1:6-2:16;  
2 Peter 1:16-21

**PART TWO:**   
“*Would you die for your teacher?*”



by REV. TRENT SAARI, Contributing Writer  
 LAKEWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH, Lakewood, Wash.  
 OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH, Yelm, Wash.

# Catechesis Through Scripture

## 1st Chief Part – The Law

► Read John 8:2-11 & Mark 10:17-22

The moral Law of God, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, tells us how we are to be and what we are to do and not to do. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). God uses His Law as a curb, mirror, and guide for Christians. By nature, man knows nothing of the Gospel. As a result, people view the Law as the means by which they might earn salvation. This understanding leads to some serious and deadly conclusions. The two texts cited at the top of this article demonstrate what happens when a person looks to the Law for salvation.

By nature, we are all good at using the crosshairs of God's Law to condemn the sins of other people. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the act of adultery. They knew that the Law condemned her sin. They fell into the sin of self-righteousness because they failed to see that the same Law condemned their own sin equally (John 8:2-11). Jesus said to them, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*" Then those who heard it, being convicted in their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last (John 8:7, 9).

He who prays the prayer of the Pharisee, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11), has not looked into the mirror of the Law truthfully and honestly. *By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20). The standard of God's Law is, "Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). We become like the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees when we believe that our own sins are not big

enough to warrant God's wrath and condemnation. *Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2:10).

St. Paul writes: *If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe* (Galatians 3:21-22). Looking to the Law for salvation can also lead a person to the pit of despair (Mark 10:17-22). A rich man came to Jesus thinking that he could justify himself by pointing to his attempts at keeping the second table of the Law. He soon fell into despair when Jesus exposed the sin of idolatry lurking in his heart. The Law also leads us to the pit of despair when we place our hope of salvation in it. We can never measure up to its standard.

The Law does its main work when it shows us our lost condition and need for a Savior. *The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith* (Galatians 3:24). *If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain*" (Galatians 2:21). The righteous demands of the Law, and the curse which the Law pronounces on those who transgress it, are both met in the person of Jesus Christ.

*As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous*" (Romans 5:19). *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us* (Galatians 3:13). Jesus has paid the wages of your sin with His own life on the cross. In the Gospel, in word and sacrament, Jesus bestows upon you His righteousness, the forgiveness of your sins, and ushers you into the presence of your holy God. By faith in Jesus, you stand before God forgiven and acquitted from the just punishment that your sins deserve (Romans 3:23-24).

***What curses doth the Law denounce  
 Against the man that fails but once!  
 But in the Gospel Christ appears,  
 Pard'ning the guilt of num'rous years.***  
 (ELH #489 v. 3)

Next Issue: *The Creed*

## MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:



by **REV. CHRIS DALE**, Dean of Students  
**CHRIST LUTHERAN SCHOOL**, Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Christ Lutheran School is a K-12 Classical Lutheran School serving mostly low-income students and families of many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Many of our students come from Christian homes, though most are under-churched or even unchurched. Only about 10% of our students are members of our church, though we pray that God will use our work to increase that number. Each morning, one of our pastors leads us in a chapel service, where the entire campus gathers together to be blessed through God's Word. This year, each of our students has their own personal copy of our Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary. During chapel, students become familiar with the historic church year as they sing hymns, hear Gospel and Epistle lessons, and pray the collects for the current week. In addition, students quickly memorize the Office of Prime and the Order of Matins and are eager to say and sing the responses in each.

One of our goals when we started Christ Lutheran School was to try to connect our students to Bethany Lutheran College. This year, we have three high school students taking BLC online courses and for the first time this coming February, we are taking five high schoolers to Bethany for a recruitment weekend. We pray that the Lord will lead these young people to enroll there in the future.

CHRIST  
LUTHERAN  
SCHOOL

Port St. Lucie, Florida

THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL