



# LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

2019 SYNOD CONVENTION ESSAY

## My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

pg. 8





# Help from The Maker

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

## Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Delegates to our June synod convention were treated to an essay and devotions centering on the wonders of God's creation. A verse from Psalm 121 served as our theme for the week: "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (verse 2). More than an opportunity for us to reflect with thanksgiving and awe on the great goodness of God in calling our world into existence and keeping it functioning, the topic provided another purpose. Behind our selection of the creation motif was an **apologetic** objective.

Christian apologetics can be loosely defined as giving a defense for what we believe, teach, and confess as Christians based on the clear words of God in the Bible. The aim of apologetics is not "to win an argument," but to give opportunity for the Word to be heard. We want the individual(s) to see Christ as our loving God and Savior from sin, death, Satan, and hell. Here, of course, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is key. So our observations of creation in light of God's Word help us "always to be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have," and we pray that God has us do this "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

In relation to creation, we wish to set the stage for the Christian worldview. This way of looking at the universe contrasts sharply with the prevailing theory on how everything evolved over eons of time. To keep the focus on our Creator and Redeemer – Christ Jesus – the Genesis account must be underscored. Otherwise, the fall into sin and the consequential necessity of humanity's fallen nature to be rescued will not be fathomed or grasped. Presenting what God's Word states on sin and then on forgiveness, as bought by a promised Savior, is how the Holy Spirit moves hearts to embrace the Christian message.

In our efforts to be true Christian apologists, we constantly need to check that our lives and demeanor support our message. Martin Luther gave this reminder:

Since we, as Christians, have the forgiveness of sins and are now the people of God and children of the Kingdom, who no longer belong to this Babylon but to heaven, we should also know that during the time we are still to live here among strangers we should live godly, honorable, and orderly lives. We should aid in maintaining the common civic and domestic people and by our advice and help serve and benefit even the wicked and ungrateful. Meanwhile, however, we are continually to remember and ponder our inheritance and the Kingdom for which we are destined (cf. E. Plass, *What Luther says*, no. 669).

Within our synod, a specially formed committee is suggesting annual seminars to serve as a workshop for apologetics. The second such seminar occurred this year on the day following the synod convention. The focus was: ***Making the Case for the Truth of the Bible: Bringing Jesus to My Unbelieving Neighbor.***

We look forward to more of these opportunities planned on our Bethany Lutheran College campus. **A generous donor has offered a pledge challenge to support the seminars:** a \$10,000 matching-fund gift to be granted per each of the next two years. **If you are interested in contributing, please use this address:**

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# Do I Have To?

Christian Freedom... and What Faith Does with It.

by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor, *The Lutheran Sentinel*  
**NORSELAND LUTHERAN CHURCH**, St. Peter, Minn.  
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“Aww, Mom! Do I have to?” objects the three-year-old when instructed by his mother to take a nap.

With the benefit of some years and perspective on rest... you and I might not offer the same objection if someone “instructed” us to take a nap.

“Do I have to?” hopes to hear a negative answer – “No, you don’t. You’re free from obligation.” And this question has a corresponding relative that hopes to hear an affirming answer: “May I...?” Both of these questions are inquiring into what the Scriptures call *Christian Freedom*. Neither is a bad query in and of itself. But neither *Do-I-have-to’s* “No”, nor *May-I’s* “Yes” place us at God’s good end in regard to Christian Freedom. Rather, they place us right at the beginning.

Christian Freedom, as St. Paul coins it, is a wonderful gift. It’s a gift afforded to the Christian by the New Covenant – liberty from righteousness-by-law through Jesus, our Law-fulfiller. But what about when it’s granted? What does the Christian do with freedom? Anything I want? The world is my oyster? Paint the town red? What is the Christian to make of freedom?

When Paul writes to the Christian congregations in his New Testament epistles, he has plenty to say on freedom (or liberty). Nowhere is freedom or its fruit more honed in on than in Paul’s letter to the Galatians:

**“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another”** (Galatians 5:1).

## Freedom Not for Serving Flesh (“Self”)

*May I? – Do I have to?* If God neither commands a particular activity nor forbids it (sometimes called “adiaphora”), then we have arrived at *Christian Freedom*. But as Paul clearly states with the very free Galatian Christians, freedom is a gift that comes with responsibility: “only, do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.”

It’s quite an indictment of our nature, isn’t it, that Paul foresees flesh misusing Gospel-granted freedom, namely as a license simply to “serve-self?”

- “**May I** drink alcohol?” Great! Then I’ll have as much as my flesh wants as often as I want it.
- “**Do I have to** go to church services EVERY Sunday?” Great! Then I’ll go as little as I find necessary or desirable.

The sum and substance of God’s good news (Gospel) is freedom from slavery. That good news comes with one particularly cold, hard fact: that this slavery is self-imposed and self-perpetuated. Not only are we victims of this slavery, we are also perpetrators.

So the good news of the Gospel means, among other things, that we are set free from “self” – from the devastating and damning pursuit of always satisfying “me.”

**“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God”**

(Galatians 2:20).

The Gospel freedom afforded the Christian is the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus bled for you – for me. The resulting fruit of this good news is that the forgiven sinner is no longer enslaved to sin – the perpetual slavery of an “all-roads-lead-to-me” existence. Your life, dear Christian, is lived **“by faith in the Son of God.”** This means your satisfaction is fully and freely met by what is donated to you through faith. And what is yours through faith? The forgiveness of all your sins, life in Jesus the Son of God, and the promise of body-and-soul eternity with Him on the last day.

Dear Christian, **“the Son has set you free”**

(John 8:36).

Live freely!



# Are our churches and pastors “on the clock” with the expectation that a worship service will run no longer than one hour?

*What are the pressures and tensions that play into this consideration?*

*Do we members express “felt needs” in this area that are harmful to the worship life of the church?*

## Answer:

Complaints about the length of sermons and worship services are nothing new. Dr. Martin Luther himself used to give his own pastor a hard time about his often-lengthy sermons. On one Sunday, Pastor Bugenhagen (Luther’s pastor in Wittenberg), while preaching in the pulpit, accidentally tore his robe on an exposed nail. When Luther found out about it, he reportedly joked, “I always thought he was nailed in!”

Pastors often do feel “on the clock” when it comes to expectations about the length of the worship service. Sometimes, the pressure is self-inflicted. Many pastors understand that time is a precious commodity and they don’t want to take more time for the worship service than necessary. It’s a matter of stewardship. Farm chores, less-than-ideal work situations, or even taking care of an elderly loved one can place constraints on the amount of time a person can spend at church. So pastors do their best to accommodate the needs of their people by planning and arranging liturgy, hymns, and preaching so as to conclude the worship service on time. And, for the most part, we’re successful—though not always.

Sometimes, the pressure to limit church to one hour comes directly from the parishioners. If the Divine Service has been running consistently late for several weeks in a row, members will usually let their pastor know it—either by telling him themselves or by communicating through the officers of the congregation and the board of elders.

In those instances, there’s nothing wrong with church members expressing concerns about the length of the service. The manner in which members express that concern has a greater impact on the congregation than the concern itself. Occasionally, pastors and congregations receive ultimatums from certain members to “shorten the worship service or else...” Such demands are not helpful, nor do they reflect a love that bears and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7, NKJV). Believers in Christ, rather, will want to express their

concerns—about the length of the worship service or anything else—with a spirit of gentleness and patience (Ephesians 4:2), the same spirit with which pastors and church leaders will also want to hear and address those concerns.

The Savior Himself said, “He who is of God hears God’s words” (John 8:47). When addressing the length of the worship service, believers will also want to check their underlying motives to make sure that they are not approaching the issue from the desires of the sinful flesh. The prophet Amos preached God’s judgment against Israel because they couldn’t wait for the Sabbath to be over so they could get back to their buying and selling (Amos 8:5). God knows our hearts. Trying to balance our need for God’s Word with life’s other obligations is one thing. It’s a whole other matter when we find ourselves selfishly staring at our watches, waiting for church to end so we can get back to doing all the things we want to do.

In the end, Christians gather for worship so that God can serve us with His life-giving Word. Whether it’s the weekly day of rest or a holiday, God has blessed us with that time so we can spend it with Him. In worship, Jesus offers us rest (Matthew 11:28-30). Rest from our endless labors in the promises of God’s grace. Rest from the burdening guilt of our sins in the forgiveness Jesus won by His death and resurrection. Rest that will find its fulfillment in the eternal mansions of heaven. Remembering our rest in Christ will help keep our discussions about when we rest and how much rest we need in their proper perspective.



*Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?*

- > Send them via email:  
[pastorspvk@christthekinggb.org](mailto:pastorspvk@christthekinggb.org)
- > Send them via “snail mail”:  
1700 Cardinal Ln,  
Green Bay, WI 54313



## 2019 Seminary Commencement

(back, L to R) Paul Agenten, Abraham Faugstad, Ethan Urtel, Sean Scheele, Peter Bockoven, Colin Anderson  
(front, L to R) Roger Emmons, Jacob Kempfert, Karim Yaghleji, Nicholas Lillienthal, Samuel Johnson, Adam Brasich, John Spivey

The Commencement Service for Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, which included the assignment of calls, occurred on Wednesday, May 8, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. in Trinity Chapel.

The **Rev. Daniel Basel** served as preacher, **Pres. Gaylin Schmeling** served as liturgist, and **Mr. John Baumann** was the organist. The sermon was based on Matthew 10:16 with the theme “Wise Yet Gentle Servants.” In the sermon, Pastor Basel explained that those in the public ministry should be wise as serpents and gentle and harmless as doves. The public servant will be shrewd, properly using the good things of this world for the kingdom, and gentle and harmless, causing no offense to the Gospel. They will use every effort to proclaim the full forgiveness of sins in our crucified and risen Savior.

**Jacob Kempfert** was assigned as vicar of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church (Mankato, Minnesota);

**Ethan Urtel** was assigned as vicar of Hartland Lutheran Church (Hartland, Minnesota) and Manchester Lutheran Church (Manchester, Minnesota);

**Karim Yaghleji** was assigned as vicar of Bethany Lutheran Church (Port Orchard, Washington).



# My Help Comes from the Lord, The Maker of Heaven and Earth

by **REV. DR. DOYLE HOLBIRD**, 2019 ELS Convention Essayist  
**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE**, Mankato, Minn.

This year is the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin's seminal work "On the Origin of Species." At the time he wrote it, few people realized that the hypothesis that Darwin proposed in this book would sweep across every continent and change the way that even most church bodies think about God's role in creation. Most church bodies try to harmonize Genesis with evolutionary theory by promoting some type of theistic evolution. Confessional Bible-believing churches, on the other hand, such as the ELS, have held to what God's Word says about creation in six days as reported in Genesis, chapter 1.

This year's ELS convention essay took up the issue of God as Creator. The goal was to show that things are not as clear-cut as evolutionists often say they are. The essay addressed four different issues about creation vs. evolution. We will briefly discuss three of these issues in this article.

## I. Can Scripture and Evolution be harmonized?

This depends upon what is meant by evolution. Many times, when scientists talk about evolution, they are talking about small changes within a particular kind of animal or plant. These types of changes can occur because animals in different living conditions have different needs. God placed a great amount of genetic variation in the plants and animals He created for just such circumstances. These small types of changes are not a problem for Bible-believing Christians. Macroevolution, however, is another story altogether. Macroevolution says that one very simple form of life came into being by natural chemical processes about two billion years ago. All other living organisms have descended from that one very simple life form over the last two billion years by a process of mutation and natural selection. This understanding of evolution definitely conflicts with Scripture.

A mutation occurs when the DNA of a living organism is accidentally changed. Evolution says that sometimes mutations are harmful, but sometimes they are helpful (in truth, helpful ones are extremely rare). But when a beneficial mutation does happen, then it will give the animal or plant that possesses it an advantage over its neighbors. The one with the advantage will then outcompete its neighbors and its offspring will tend to be the ones that survive. After millions of years, each individual of that kind of animal will possess the better gene because the ones without it were all outcompeted. When animals with an advantage survive more than those without the advantage, it is called natural selection. So these two conditions, beneficial mutations and natural selection, are the engine that powers evolution and caused all life forms to come into existence according to the theory of evolution. As you can see, it is impossible to remain true to Scripture and also believe in evolution. The most problematic issue is that Adam and Eve couldn't be real people according to evolutionary theory. Therefore, according to this theory, there was no fall into sin and thus no original sin from which we need redemption.

Some people try to harmonize Scripture and evolution by saying that the days of creation are figurative. Yet after each day of creation, God defines a day for us by declaring that "the evening and the morning were one day." This makes it impossible to harmonize the Bible with evolutionary theory.

## II. Some Evidence Supports Evolutionary Theory, But Are there Other Explanations?

Lots of evidence is cited in support of evolutionary theory. One bit of evidence is that when fossils are found, they are often found in a certain order. The simplest organisms are found down in the bottom layers of the fossil record while more complex animals are found in the top layers. This corresponds to evolutionary theory because over the millions of years that the rock layers were supposed to be forming, animals were supposedly evolving to become more complex.

There are big problems with this explanation, however, because in many places around the earth, fossilized footprints in shale rock are found with no trace of the animals that made them. What is interesting is that the footprints continue as you move up higher in the layers of shale, but still no animals. Often though, several (40 or so) feet higher than the bottom prints, you can find the animals that made them. How can it be that footprints in mud would last long enough to be preserved if each layer of shale took thousands of years to be deposited? And why are the animals found in layers that are higher than their footprints? It would take only one good rain to wash footprints away. A better



explanation is offered by **Kurt Wise**, a creationist geologist who wrote the following about trilobite footprints:

*What if, when the “fountains of the great deep were broken up” (Genesis 7:11), the spreading waters surprised the trilobites living on the ocean bottom? As the water became muddy, trilobites scurried about in terror, leaving their tracks behind them. Then as a layer of mud covered their tracks, they climbed through the mud and left tracks on the next layer repeating this process until they finally succumbed in exhaustion and were themselves buried and preserved.*

This not only explains trilobites, but much of the rest of the fossil record. Those animals that were able to move the fastest as floodwaters were climbing would be able to move to higher ground. Slower ones would be buried in the lower levels. This is but one example of how the evidence for evolution has another, better explanation if we will just take the time to look for it.

### III. Have the Events of Genesis Left Behind Evidence of God’s Handiwork?

The clearest evidence we find would be evidence of the great flood. Sure enough, we see evidence all around us of a catastrophe of a kind that doesn’t happen anymore. We see canyons carved out quickly by water. We see fossil graveyards all over the world. This is evidence of the flood. We even see fossilized fish on the tops of mountains, evidence that water once covered them. In fossil dinosaur bones, soft tissues have now been found. Cells with some intact DNA has even been discovered inside dinosaur bones. This is evidence that dinosaurs didn’t live millions of years ago as evolution teaches because DNA doesn’t last for millions of years in nature.

Some exciting news involves recent evidence from the DNA of people who live in different places all over the world. It turns out that if we examine some special DNA, called mitochondrial DNA, we can piece together the ancestry of people. Scientists back in the year 2000 did a study from 53 individuals from different countries all over the world. By using their mitochondrial DNA, all of those individuals can be traced back to three individual women. Now, we might ask the question: “Using Bible history, do we ever see a time when there were just three women of childbearing age, whom we know had children?” Yes! We know that on the ark there were three women, married to Noah’s sons, who became the ancestors of all living people. This study was repeated in 2014 with over 200 people from all over the world. The results of this study are the same and are

## 3 Human mtDNA Lineages



**Figure 1:** Image from Jeanson, showing the ancestry of humans from all over the world coalesces back to three women. This is what would be expected if all people derived from three women on the ark.

shown in *Figure 1*. This is amazing affirmation of what we already knew to be true based upon the Scriptures. This same kind of study can be done with the Y chromosome of males. Once again, when that study was completed, it showed exactly what we would predict based upon Scripture. We can trace the Y chromosome of all living men back to one Y chromosome. This is just what we would expect because all the men on the ark had identical Y chromosomes (*Noah’s sons would have gotten theirs from Noah*).

Those of us who believe the Scriptures would expect that the number of mutations in humans would be far fewer than those expected by evolutionists. This is because evolutionists believe humans have been on earth far longer and every generation of humans receives about 100 new mutations. But sure enough, the results of new studies have shown that the number of mutations in the human genome is what would be expected if we have been on the earth between 5000 and 6600 years.

Much of the evidence that is coming to light affirms what those of us who believe the Bible have believed all along. God has purposely made His creation, and this emboldens us to say with the Psalmist:

***“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well”***  
(Psalm 139:14).

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## Anju Stafford's Birthday

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## MAGNIFYING MISSIONS:

# PRAYING FOR HARVEST LABORERS

by **REV. THOMAS HEYN**, Contributing Writer  
**BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH**, Administrator

*When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

(Matthew 9:36–38, ESV)

*“... but the laborers are few.”*

A shortage of laborers, shepherds, pastors, is nothing new. It already was evident in Jesus’ time. It is evident in our time as well. In our Evangelical Lutheran Synod, about one congregation in twenty is without a pastor. In our sister synod (WELS), about one congregation in twelve is seeking a pastor.

The fields affiliated with our Board for World Outreach also have their shortages of pastors, in some cases quite severe. Together with our brothers and sisters in foreign lands, we work to resolve these shortages.

# SOUTH KOREA



**In South Korea**, a theological institute exists for the training of future pastors. To have an institute and teachers is one thing. To have students is another. In South Korea, a modern and prosperous country, they face the same challenge we face in our country. Where there is prosperity, people often fail to see their need for God. It is true in our country, and it is true in South Korea as well. The institute actually attracts students who want to learn more about Lutheran theology, but they are non-Lutheran pastors who are unlikely to become Lutheran pastors.

Two congregations are currently served by pastors. **Hope Lutheran Church** in **Anyang** (a “suburb” of Seoul) is served by **Rev. J.W. Kim**. **Seoul Lutheran Church** in **Seoul** is served by **Rev. Dr. Sam Choi**, who also serves as director of Seoul Lutheran Theological Institute. There are no future pastoral candidates currently studying. However, one former student is now studying at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and will return to serve in Korea, or another Asian country, in the near future. After he completes his studies, who will replace him?

# CHILE



**In Chile**, one pastor, **Mario Galvez**, serves the **Family of God** congregation in **La Cisterna, Santiago**. Two vicars, **Guillermo Ruz** and **Victor Hernandez**, serve small congregations in two other parts of **Santiago**, the capital city of Chile. These men serve faithfully at their own expense. They support themselves with secular full-time work while dedicating themselves as pastors of their congregations. Not many men are willing to do that.

Three hours south of Santiago lies the city of **Linares**. This congregation has been without a pastor for years. In the past, it has been difficult to find someone able to dedicate the time to preparing for the ministry while maintaining his work schedule. Recently, a layman in the congregation, **Jon Gross**, has offered to become better trained to lead the congregation in worship. But at this time, becoming a pastor is not part of the plan. A laborer for the harvest is needed. We continue to work with this field to address the shortage.

**What can you do?** Do as Jesus said: pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. Your prayers—and your gifts—help God’s people to carry on harvest work. Pray that the Lord would lead Christian men to consider preparing for pastoral ministry. Pray that the Lord would bless the message in these countries so that men’s hearts are touched by the Gospel and they seek ways to serve him. Pray to the Lord of the harvest!

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# IN THE ORDINARY...

## You are mine.

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

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me.  
 You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
 You understand my thought afar off.  
 You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
 And are acquainted with all my ways.*

**(Psalm 139:1-3)**

One temptation common to sinful flesh is the desire to be great. You might wonder if that is really a temptation to sin. That only shows how much our world convinces you that the main goal in life is to be great or do something great.

It isn't sinful, of course, if what you want to do is use your God-given abilities faithfully, to do your best with what He has given you for His glory. But it is easy for the devil to twist it so that you want to be noticed and praised for what you do, and if what you are doing is not seen as "great," then you think what you are doing is not important.

On the other hand, you might shy away from attention and are uncomfortable with it (what is called being "introverted"), or you may think you have no great achievements. By comparing yourself with others who seem to get more attention or have more friends, you can be tempted to feel jealous or resentful, or wish God had made you differently and given you different gifts and abilities. You might feel alone, ignored, or forgotten.



God's goal is not for you to do things that are great by the world's measurements. He does not think that the little or simple things are less important.

Instead, in the simplest activities that take place in the home (where nobody outside your family sees what you are doing), in your bedroom where you are alone with your thoughts, at your desk where you do your homework, or even having fun responsibly with your friends, everything is "sanctified" – made holy – "by the Word of God and prayer."

The Bible and the Small Catechism direct us to the most ordinary callings – father, mother, brother, sister, employer, employee, citizen, even youth – for the most important activity in heaven and earth: confessing the sins you commit in these situations, believing that you are forgiven, and doing better with the help of God.

This is glorious and holy. A good way to think of this is to remember what happened in the Book of Joshua. The children of Israel were led into the Promised Land. Everywhere they stepped – although previously it had been defiled by the presence of idolatrous heathens -- now was holy ground. It belonged to them. Why? God was with them.

Wherever you step is holy ground. You are baptized into God's family. He is with you. You are not alone, forgotten, or ignored. And nothing you do is second-rate, for the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses everything you do.

So we Lutherans learn that when you rise in the morning or lie down at night (as we pray in Psalm 139), it is good to remind yourself that God is with you and talk to Him right away, to make the sign of the holy cross, the sign marked on you in your baptism, and pray:

*"Into Your hands (Lord) I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things; let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen."*

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### 1. Is it sinful to do great things?

*Explain:*

### 2. For the Christian, Who/What sets the standard for "doing great things?"

*What might some of these "great things" look like?*

### 3. How can the account of the Israelites stepping into the Promised Land help us understand the "greatness" of our own daily steps?

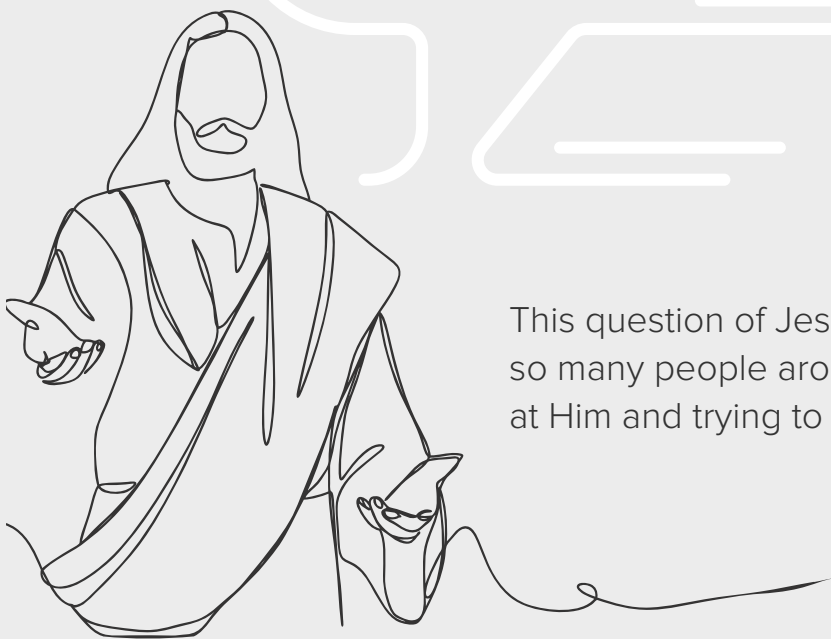
### 4. Consider the familiar phrase from Luther's Morning / Evening Prayers: *"Into Your hands (Lord) I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things..."* What does this routine and simple prayer phrase teach us about our ordinary things and the Lord to whom we belong?

# JESUS ASKS QUESTIONS

by **REV. JERRY GERNANDER**, Contributing Writer  
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*Who  
touched  
Me?"*

(Mark 5:31)



This question of Jesus amazed the disciples. There were so many people around Jesus, clamoring for Him, tugging at Him and trying to get His attention.

It turns out that the person Jesus singled out didn't want His attention. She was a woman "who had a certain flow of blood for 12 years." Her condition of chronic menstrual bleeding was addressed in Leviticus 15 among the purification laws that God gave to Israel. God singled out her condition, decreed that such a woman "shall be unclean for as many days" as this condition lasts, and that if anyone so much as "touches" her or she touches anyone, that person also is "unclean." This was part of Israel's ceremonial law. It wasn't about physical uncleanness. It was being unclean before God. It meant she could not worship publicly.

This woman had had this condition for 12 years. She suffered great frustration and emotional pain in addition to the toll it took on her body. Perhaps worst of all, she was excluded from public worship. Her life the past 12 years was truly miserable. But she had heard about Jesus. In fact, her emotional and physical pain brought her to Him. She had heard about His power to heal.

St. Mark tells us she came up behind Jesus unannounced, telling herself, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." She was hoping to get away unseen. She had lived with so much shame and embarrassment. Others shunned her.



She feared being noticed and coming under disapproval. She didn't want to incur the anger of the religious leaders and feel more of the sting of the law. Although she had done nothing wrong to cause her condition - it was not a punishment for her own sins - still she was a victim in this way from sin being in the world. She didn't intend to touch Jesus, only His garment.

Jesus' question stopped her in her tracks:

***"Who touched Me?"***

In that brief moment between the time she touched his robe and He asked the question, she was healed. Normally if she touched a person, it would make that person unclean. But this time, Jesus took her uncleanness from her and He gave her His purity. She was immediately and totally clean in God's sight. St. Mark says that the flow of blood dried up and she felt it instantly. She was healed. But nobody else knew it. Now it seems that she wanted to slip away unnoticed. But Jesus' question didn't allow her to do that.

For this woman who was so ashamed and trying not to be noticed, to be singled out terrified her! She is described as "fearing and trembling." But Jesus was not trying to embarrass her. For Jesus it isn't enough just to take away her uncleanness. That's the negative part. What Jesus wants for her is so positive. It's the Gospel: that He takes her uncleanness to be His own and He makes her completely clean, and her life is no longer a matter of avoiding uncleanness, but of living out her cleanness in Him. He brings her to tell Him "the whole truth" (Mark 5:34) about her condition and touching His garment, not to embarrass her but so she can hear the new truth, the Gospel: that His power has gone into her, she is clean through faith in Him, and is completely "well."

He asked the question, "***Who touched Me?***" to highlight His touch. No less than ten times in St. Mark's gospel, Jesus is shown touching someone. His touch doesn't illustrate His message. His touch IS His message.

This question of Jesus highlighted for the woman that Jesus - the Lord of all - did not shun her. He did not exclude her. He did not stay apart from her. He was not ashamed of her; in fact, He not only took away her shame, but He gave her His complete approval and His total embrace. He restored her in body and soul. He took away her emotional pain and gave her joy, showing He was emotionally connected to her.

This question of Jesus is important for us, too. Feeling ashamed and embarrassed is one of the first by-products of sin. We are ashamed because we know that we are unclean. We come in contact with the unclean world, we get dirty, and it's our own doing. Our own sins produce first guilt and then shame. The devil plays this trick: he gets a person to sin,

which produces guilt, and then uses shame to keep that person away from God's house and away from other Christians who can help him to stand.

But it's not only our own sinful actions that produce shame. We also are victimized by many things, just as this woman had this condition not because she asked for it and not as a consequence for anything she herself did, but just because she lived in a fallen, corrupt world. We are unclean not just because of what we do, but also because of what's done to us or what happens to us. It may be sins, abuse, or neglect that come from others and affect you. Perhaps it produces bitterness or an inability to trust or have hope. This cuts you off from others. Sometimes it's not even something other people do to you; depression, anxiety, grief, or some other cross can keep a person disconnected from the assembly of God's people, and that person will easily feel low and worthless and alone.

If any of this describes your experience, then you need to hear Jesus singling you out with His question so that He can make you aware that His touch is for you. Jesus doesn't make you seek Him, but He comes to you in His Word, in the Lord's Supper, just as He came to you in Baptism. He uses physical things. He touches you with water in Baptism, bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and the mouth and hands of the pastor He sends to preach the Gospel and bestow absolution on you. Through these means of grace, He pours into you His forgiveness and cleansing, His power and strength... and confidence.

Jesus doesn't shun you. You aren't alone; He never stays apart from you. He isn't ashamed of you. He not only has taken away your shame, but gives you His complete approval and His total embrace. He includes you, wraps you up, in His love, no matter how introverted you are. He's connected to you not only spiritually, but also emotionally and physically (body and soul). He came to know and share all that you feel, suffer, and experience. In His Word, He comes to you, to touch you and make you whole.

*O what precious balm and healing,  
Jesus, in Thy wounds I find  
Every hour that I am feeling  
Pains of body and of mind.  
(ELH #293 v. 1)*

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# *Catechesis Through Scripture*

## 4<sup>th</sup> Chief Part: Baptism



► **Read:** 2 Kings 5:1-15; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-39

Jesus told Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). Most of Christendom is in agreement when it comes to how salvation was won. Most Christians agree that Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins. However, there is quite a divergence in Christian teaching when it comes to the matter of how the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation that Jesus has won for sinners is distributed and received. This is very apparent when we examine what the various churches teach concerning the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Are the sacraments mere outward symbols of an inward work, merely man’s work of obedience offered up to God, or are they God’s gracious work for the benefit of sinners? These questions are not difficult to answer if one stays with the clear words of the Bible.

When the Syrian army commander Naaman was directed to seek help for his leprosy from the prophet Elisha, he was expecting something magnificent to happen. Instead, the prophet Elisha simply told him to go wash in the Jordan River seven times (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman’s reason and experience told him that there was nothing special about the waters of the Jordan River. It was not the special waters of the Jordan River that brought about Naaman’s healing, but rather God’s word and promise attached to those waters. Likewise, it is the word and promise of God attached to the waters of Holy Baptism that make it a healing washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:25-26).

In Holy Baptism, God works for the benefit of sinners. In Baptism, God washes away and cleanses us of the leprosy of our sin. The Bible says that we were all born spiritually dead in our sins and trespasses and that unless we are born again from above, we cannot see the kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:1; Psalm 51:5; John 3:3). How does God bring about this spiritual rebirth which brings us into His kingdom? Through the Gospel in the Word and Baptism (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; John 3:5). St. Paul writes, “*But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (Titus 3:4-7).

The fact that Baptism is God’s work is evident in the blessings that He has attached to it. The Bible says that Baptism bestows the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11). It says that in Baptism we are clothed with Christ and His righteousness and made sons of God (Galatians 3:26-27). Baptism joins us to Christ and His saving death and glorious resurrection (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:11-14). Because Baptism joins us to Christ, it saves us and gives a good conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is a means by which we are made disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus said, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mark 16:15-16). When we see the universal problem of sin and the need for the great blessings that God has attached to Holy Baptism, we begin to understand why Jesus has given His church the instruction to baptize “all nations” (Matthew 28:19). “All nations” includes men, women, children, the elderly, and babies. We all need the new birth, forgiveness, life, and salvation which Baptism brings and seals to us. This is why Peter preached, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off” (Acts 2:39), and this is why the book of Acts records that entire households were baptized (Acts 16:15, 33).

In his Large Catechism, Luther writes, “Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of saving people from death or, even though they died, could restore them quickly to life so that they would afterward live forever. Oh, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the throng of the rich! But here in Baptism there is freely brought to everyone’s door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive” (LC IV:43).

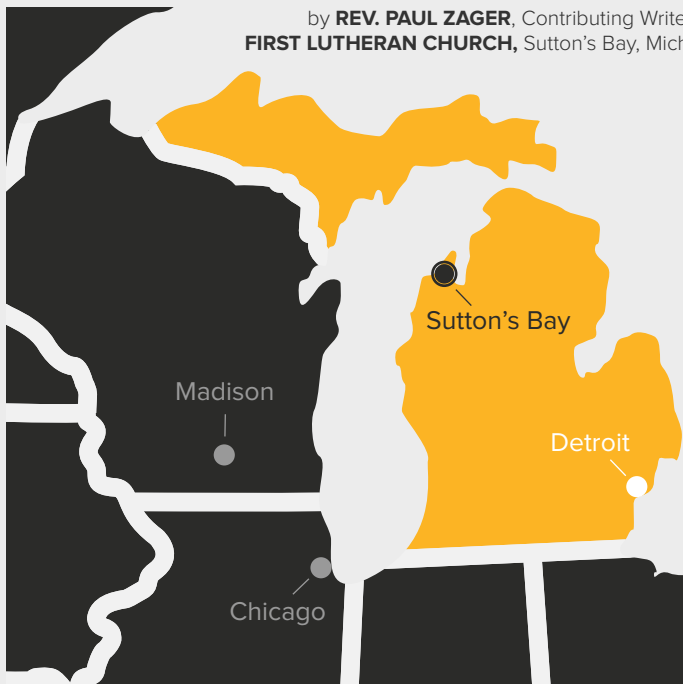
*Sins, disturb my soul no longer;  
I am baptized into Christ.  
I have comfort even stronger: Jesus’ cleansing sacrifice.  
Should a guilty conscience seize me  
Since my Baptism did release me  
In a dear forgiving flood,  
Sprinkling me with Jesus’ blood?  
(ELH #246, verse 2)*

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

## FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sutton's Bay, Michigan

by **REV. PAUL ZAGER**, Contributing Writer  
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Calling a congregation “First” implies there must be a “second” as well. Such is the case for First Lutheran in Suttons Bay, MI. The congregation began at an organizational meeting on August 24, 1874, in a home in Suttons Bay, at which a number of Norwegian immigrants had gathered to find a solution for the lack of pastoral care in their midst. The early founders of the congregation determined at that meeting to join the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Conference, which was operating in that area of Michigan. It wasn’t until the congregation first called a pastor to serve its needs four times per year that they heard of the [old] Norwegian synod. Finding it to be more faithful to God’s Word than the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Conference, they joined the Norwegian synod. But with a pastoral vacancy during the momentous times of 1917, First Lutheran joined the merger church at first, not coming back to what is now the ELS until 1922. At that time, the congregation split, and a “second” Lutheran church was formed in Suttons Bay, known as Immanuel, which is an ELCA congregation today.

With its beautiful scenery, the bay on one side and Lake Michigan only eight miles away to the west, Suttons Bay is becoming more and more of a tourist and resort area, which brings with it increased attendance at worship in the late spring and summer months.