

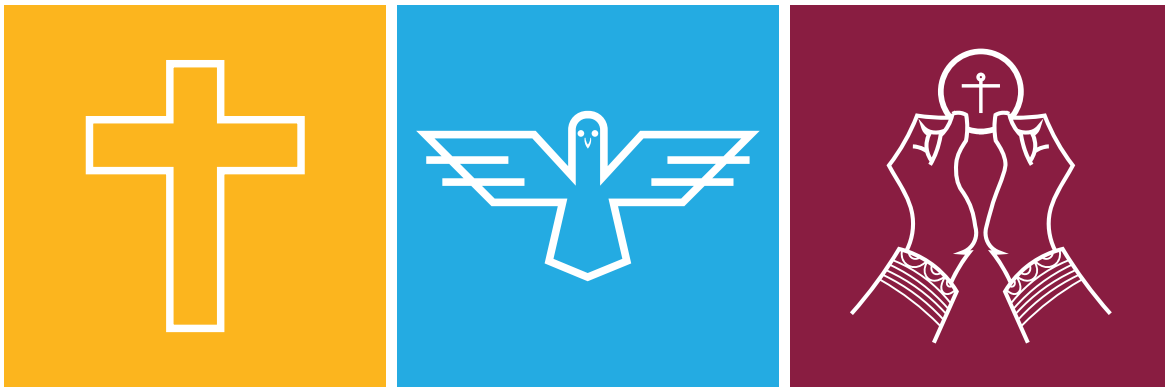


LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

THE HERITAGE OF HYDERABAD

pg. 6



One Sacrifice and Two Sacraments

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

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

The Nazarene hanging there at Golgotha did not look like much. No one would have thought of Him as a high priest. He was not dressed in fancy garb as many pastors wear today. He was not even adorned in the garments God directed the Levites to wear in Old Testament times. Isaiah had prophesied, “*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him*” (Isaiah 53:2). Yet this crucified one truly was the highest Priest of all, for as the writer of Hebrews states: *He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption* (Hebrews 9:12).

The bloody sacrifice at Calvary’s cross was one of a kind. This was the blood of God’s own Son. The power in that blood being shed reaped enormous benefits. Far greater blessings than any money could buy! *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect* (1 Peter 1:18, 19). What’s more, the effect of the sacrifice was global! Just as Isaiah had predicted and the Baptizer had verified: Here, in this Jesus, was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The Lamb, you see, is the victorious Lion. Death could not hold Him down. His rising to life and ascending to the throne above shows, without any doubt, that He is our living and eternal God. This means you and me and all who hear the

message do indeed have the forgiveness of all sins! God has proven His pardoning declaration for every sinner by way of Christ’s empty tomb! That is why all believers one day will join in praising the uniquely sacrificial but living Lamb. “*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!*” (Revelation 5:12).

The one sacrifice is made deeply personal for each of us in God’s instituted Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Through hearing the Gospel message proclaimed and by means of having the “visible Gospel” brought to us in the two Sacraments is how Christ’s forgiveness of sins – which each of us desperately needs – is conveyed to our hearts. There is for our souls no other connection to Christ’s cross than through Word and Sacrament. God the Holy Spirit works faith through these channels.

We find this statement in our Lutheran Confessions: “Just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same...” (Ap, Art. XIII, 4).

May our thoughts in this holy season of Lent and Easter be directed to the **One Sacrifice** that carries benefits to our souls through **Two Sacraments**. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are by no means set up in opposition to the preached Gospel, but are “visible ways” the same Gospel of our Lord is applied. Blessings to all as we gather for worship!

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CRUCIFIED FOR US

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Which is better: to display an empty cross or to display Christ on the cross? Some say an empty cross is better because “Jesus isn’t on the cross anymore. He has risen!” Others respond that an empty cross isn’t directly about the resurrection—“it doesn’t show Jesus was even there in the first place!”

So which is better? One can argue that both depictions are bad. The cross was developed as a torture device prior to Roman times, and the Romans adopted its use. It was seen as so terrible and dehumanizing that Roman citizens were exempt from it. The cross put a criminal on full display in order to make an example of him.

Long before this, the law of the Old Testament also outlined the disgrace of being hung on a tree: *And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God* (Deuteronomy 21:22-23, ESV).

The Israelites did not know at the time that this law pointed to the way the Messiah would die. Who would have imagined it? The Savior would never commit “a crime punishable by death,” would He? Why would He ever be “cursed by God?”

*O, dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken
That such sharp sentence should on Thee
be spoken?*

*Of what great crime has Thou to make
confession,
What dark transgression?*

ELH 292; v.1

It is true that Jesus did not commit a crime like this. He was perfect. But because He freely offered Himself in our place, He was punished for our crimes. He suffered for every single sin committed by every single person in human history. 1 Peter 2:24 says, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.* Galatians 3:13 points back to that Old Testament law: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”*

Our sins sent an innocent man to an anguished death on a cross. That is not good. But if Jesus had not gone to the cross, if He had not suffered and died in our place, the curse of the Law would still rest on us. Since the curse was leveled against Him, we are redeemed. This is the message the Apostles took to the people in the territories around Judea.

Writing to the Galatian Christians, the Apostle Paul reminded them how vividly he illustrated and applied the crucifixion of Jesus (Galatians 3:1). He wrote in another letter that he didn’t set out to impress people with miraculous signs or human wisdom. His whole focus was to preach the death of Jesus for sin: *I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Whether or not we display a crucifix in our churches or homes, we must not ignore the fact that God came in the flesh to die in this way. He willingly went to the cross because of my sin. He suffered that anguish and torment for me.

By His death on the cross, Jesus won salvation for you and me. He turned an instrument of suffering and death into an instrument of forgiveness and life.

*On my heart imprint Thine image,
Blessed Jesus, King of Grace.
That life’s riches, cares, and pleasures
Have no pow’r Thee to efface.
This the superscription be:
“Jesus - crucified for me
Is my life, my hope’s foundation
And my glory and salvation.”*

ELH 593

Jesus is both God and man. Man can die; God cannot die. When Jesus died on the cross, Jesus the Man died, but what happened to the part of Jesus that is God?

Answer:

“*O sorrow dread! Our God is dead!*” (ELH 332:2). Thus begins the second stanza of the hymn *O Darkest Woe*. Those words contain one of the great mysteries of Good Friday: How can we say that the immortal and eternal God died? It doesn’t make rational sense. And while the answer to this question takes us past the limits of human understanding, it also gives God’s people the greatest possible comfort.

First of all, let’s remember who Jesus is. The person of Christ consists of two natures: one divine, the other human. The divine nature of Jesus is fully God, all-powerful, eternal, and holy. The human nature of Jesus is a complete human being with body and soul, human needs, and human emotions.

Yet the two natures are not two separate parts of Christ’s being. The divine and human natures in Christ commune with each other in a unique way, united in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result, Christ’s two natures do not operate apart from each other. Jesus is fully divine and fully man all the time. *For in Him [that is, in Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily* (Colossians 2:9, NKJV). So when Jesus carries out His saving work, He does so according to both His divine and human natures. This is why we can say that as Jesus suffers and dies on the cross, He does so as the God-man.

The Bible itself speaks this way about the death of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, the apostle Paul states that had the rulers of this age truly known who Jesus was, they would not have “crucified the Lord of glory.” In Romans 5:10, “we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.” It isn’t just the human nature of Christ that lays down His life at Calvary; it’s the whole person of Jesus Christ. Even when Jesus dies, when His soul is separated from His body, He doesn’t stop being the God-man!

This is where we need to be careful, however, not to speculate beyond Scripture. As the person of Christ carries out His saving work, each nature does what is proper to it. So while the whole person of Christ suffers and dies, the divine nature in itself does not suffer. The person of Christ feels the wrath

of God for the sins of the world—but He does so according to His human nature. God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, dies on the cross—according to His human nature. Yet that doesn’t mean the divine nature has gone away! The divine nature remains united with the human nature, even in death, giving infinite value to Jesus’ suffering.

That’s why we needed Jesus to die as the God-man. If a sinless Jesus suffered and died only as a man, the only person He could have saved was Himself. Dr. Luther once remarked, “For if I believe this, that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is to me a poor Savior, yes, then He Himself needs a Savior” (Trig. 1029). Jesus needed to be true God so that His suffering and death would pay for the sins of the world. As true man and true God, Jesus by His death redeemed the whole world from sin, death, and hell! You and I have the greatest possible comfort knowing that the blood of Jesus has washed away every sin because it is precisely the blood of God’s own Son!

Some take offense and recoil at the idea that God would suffer; others don’t like the idea that anything can exist beyond human understanding. As a result, they try to pull the two natures of Jesus apart to the point that only the human nature of Jesus went to the cross on Good Friday. Sadly, in doing so, they deprive themselves of the assurance of God’s forgiveness.

How can a dead and buried human nature remain united to the divine nature in the person of Jesus Christ? Who can say? Yet in the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ, we can rest knowing that “*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7).



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

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1700 Cardinal Ln,
Green Bay, WI 54313

The Golconda Fort,
Hyderabad, India



THE HERITAGE OF HYDERABAD

by **REV. THOMAS HEYN**, ELS Board for World Outreach Administrator
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“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” These are the words of John testifying about Jesus, the Redeemer and the Savior. Twenty-five years ago, among the chants of “Allah hu Akbar Allah” (Allah is the greatest) and several other false teachings, the **Lutheran Mission of Salvation-Hyderabad (LMSH)** became that voice crying out, testifying of Christ our Redeemer who saved us by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Hyderabad is the capital of the Indian state of **Telangana**. With an estimated population of 8.7 million, it is the fourth largest city in India. Among its inhabitants are found Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. However, the city’s name indicates its Muslim history and heritage.

Founded in the year **1591** by **Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah**, the fifth of a line of Qutub Shahis, the city has a history of nearly 400 years under Islamic rule. This capital city, originally named Bhagyanagar after Bhagyamati, the love of Quli Qutub Shah, was renamed Hyderabad after his beloved became his wife and changed her name to Hyder Mahal. So the name of Hyderabad indicates how deep the Islamic roots are of this city. Seven descendants of the shah continued to rule the city. All were patrons of learning, great builders, and all contributed to the development of Indo-Persian and Indo-Islamic literature and culture in Hyderabad.

During the Qutub Shahi reign, **Golconda**, a fortress area five miles to the west of Hyderabad, became one of the leading markets in the world for diamonds, pearls, printed fabric, and steel for arms. However, the glory of the Golconda kingdom ended in 1687, less than 100 years after its founding, when Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal ruler, captured Golconda. He succeeded in expanding the Mughal Empire to cover the entire subcontinent of India. However, after his death in 1707, the empire rapidly declined. Today, you still can visit the archaeological site of Golconda Fort, (*pictured above*) an important part of Hyderabad’s heritage.

Although the rulers declined, their Islamic law remained influential, still leading people to the mosques, where they beg Allah for mercy, where they still are harsh to themselves and suffer under the law to try to earn the mercy of God. While Hyderabad boasts about its heritage, about its famous biryani and its royal rulers, it fails to realize it, too, will decline, just as the Golconda rulers came to their end.

Why this story? Jesus said, *“For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:32-33). In a culture where people talk about the biryani and not the eternal bread, where people talk about

what they do for God, not what God has done for them, where people find their happiness and pride in earthly things, LMSH is proclaiming to these people the love of God and the amazing grace that we have in Jesus.

In this culture, where women are covered in burqas (which means they do not exist to anyone nor anyone to them), LMSH is providing education to women to become nurses. In this city, where children cannot vouch for what they want, LMSH is taking care of many orphans and telling them they are important, have great worth, and are heirs of the Kingdom of God.

It all started under a tree through **Rev. Solomon Mamidi**, the President of LMSH and a pastor in Hyderabad. For the last 25 years, the Gospel has been preached among people who had never heard of a Lutheran church or seen a pastor wearing a cassock. Among these nonbelieving people, LMSH is planting churches, training pastors and Gospel workers, and proclaiming the Gospel in small villages, where electricity is only available part of the day and where there is no basic transportation. With 10,700 members today, LMSH is proclaiming the good news and serving the people in the districts of Hyderabad and five districts surrounding Hyderabad.

After 25 years, a headquarters for LMSH is under construction in Hyderabad at **St. Peter's Lutheran Church**, where Rev. Solomon Mamidi serves as its pastor. With your prayers and kind support, we were able to start the construction. The place where the church is being constructed will soon come under the municipal corporation of Hyderabad, which will likely cause problems for us if we do not complete the next phase of construction—the completion of the exterior walls and roof. Therefore, before that happens, we need your continued prayers and support to complete this next stage. It will cost approximately \$75,000. When completed, the headquarters of LMSH will have a seminary, an orphanage, accommodations for pastors, a library, and a sanctuary all under one roof.

This headquarters will be a fort better than Golconda. Golconda declined because it always boasted in itself and its heritage. This new headquarters of LMSH will boast of the King of Kings and glorify Him alone.

Here is an opportunity for you to glorify Him along with your brothers in the faith through your prayers, kind support, and your valuable donations.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Philippians 4:8



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God at Work: Divine Care Through Many Callings



Providence Through Human Hands

by **SEAN SCHEELE**, Contributing Writer,
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church & School Custodian,
Bethany Seminary Student
MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Mankato, Minn.

My name is Sean Scheele, and I am a custodian at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, MN. I have the privilege of working for the school and the church, which broadens the scope of all the people I have the opportunity to serve. Teachers work many hours preparing their lessons and activities so they can serve the ‘little neighbors’ in their vocation well. Students are there to learn with as few distractions as possible. My job is to keep the school clean so that teachers and students can focus on their vocations.

Likewise, no one likes to go into a dirty and disorganized church because it makes for a negative first impression. So it is also my job to make sure the church stays clean and organized so the pastors can focus on visiting with people as they arrive and on leading the Divine Service.

Just like any job, the daily tasks can seem unimportant or meaningless, but when I view it and the people I serve as my service of God, it all becomes essential and full of meaning. Having this neighbor-focused view makes me want to work hard so I can honor the Lord through the people I’m called serve. Having this correct understanding, however, does not mean I do not make mistakes. Luther’s clear-eyed view of vocation encourages me to get up and continue to work hard because I am ultimately working to serve the Lord, and He is pleased with my work.

I did not always have this vocational view of work as Luther teaches. I became familiar with the quote while I was attending a Baptist college. However, I did not understand it until I became a Lutheran. The culture I grew up in always told me that I needed to do something great and be a world-changer for Christ. What did this mean? It was pressed upon me to fulfill this view by becoming a missionary because only a missionary could serve the Lord on an unparalleled level.

This mindset hurt the way I viewed the jobs that I had at the time. I wasn’t working in retail or customer service because I thought it was not pleasing to God or somehow less pleasing to God than doing missionary work. How ironic! I was so concerned with pleasing God with my work that I was ultimately failing to recognize the work that already was pleasing to Him.

Every job has challenging and rewarding times. The challenge of being a custodian is doing a job that seems to go unnoticed unless it was not done well enough. However, the rewards outweigh the challenges, especially when students come up to me and thank me for keeping the classrooms clean. The Apostle Paul says, “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord*” (Colossians 3:23). When a first or second grader comes up to you and gives thanks to you, it is pretty special because it is in those moments you know you are serving the Lord.

In each vocation, we have the opportunity to serve the Lord by serving our neighbor—whatever that vocation might be. In my vocation as custodian, the Lord has allowed me to serve others with order and cleanliness and in this way give glory and honor to him. As Paul says in Romans 12:1, “*Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and acceptable to God—which is your appropriate worship.*”

“A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated ...every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.”

Martin Luther - "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility"

Martin Luther's Busy Year

Luther's Treatise on Good Works

*In the first article in this series, we set the stage for studying **four theses written by Martin Luther in 1520**. In June, Pope Leo X threatened to excommunicate Luther if he did not recant certain writings. When Luther failed to do so by the December 10th deadline set by the pope, he was excommunicated.*

1520



The treatise *On Good Works* came out in June before the threat of excommunication was officially received. Unlike the later three treatises, which were specific rejections of Roman Catholic teaching, *On Good Works* was not a direct attack on the Roman church, but fulfilled a promise Luther had made to write a sermon on good works. By the time it was finished, however, it was a book.

Luther writes that in “the question of good works, ... immeasurably more trickery and deception is practiced than anywhere else.” The question about good works was not a new issue in 1520. It was an issue when St. Paul wrote epistles to the early churches. Later, in 418, the Roman church rejected the teaching of a British monk, Pelagius, who taught that man comes to faith by his own free will and is able to do good works by his own power. Pelagius’ doctrine was

condemned, but by the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of the Roman church was that the Holy Spirit infuses the grace of Christ into a person, and by that grace, the Christian is empowered to do good works. The good works are thus really works of Christ done by the individual, who is thereby saved and comes to faith. In the Apology of the Augsburg confession, Philipp Melancthon rejected that doctrine as contrary to Scripture, but instead of calling the Roman doctrine of good works “Pelagian,” he called it “half (semi)-Pelagian.”

Luther’s objection to the Roman doctrine of good works and the views held by common Christians was that good works were viewed by many as the cause of salvation. Luther’s first point was that “there are no good works except those works God has commanded,” and he turns to the Ten Commandments. The first, “You shall have no other gods,” means that we are “to place all our confidence, trust and faith in God alone,” later expressed in the Small Catechism in the memorable words, “We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.” Luther holds that those words define faith. Thus the first “good work” commanded is to believe God’s promises, and that is not accomplished by man’s efforts, but is worked by God the Holy Spirit.

Some of Luther’s opponents accused him of being opposed to good works. Luther objects that he has “always praised faith and rejected all works which are done without such faith.” For Luther, however, the relationship between faith and works is that “without such faith no work at all can satisfy this commandment.” The First Commandment is “the highest and the best” and is the one “from which all others proceed” and “in which they exist.” So the First Commandment is about faith.

When he takes up the Second Commandment, Luther does not focus on what is forbidden, but on the good that is commanded— “to honor, call upon, praise, preach, and glorify his name.” But this is nothing other than honoring, trusting, and believing God. Likewise, the Third Commandment: “The first works of this commandment are plain We generally call them divine service, such as hearing mass [the liturgy and Supper], praying, and hearing a sermon on holy days.” He also sees this commandment as an extension of the first: “This commandment...should be nothing other than a doing and a keeping of the first commandment, that is, of faith.” Preaching belongs to the Third Commandment and “should induce sinners to grieve over their sins and should kindle within them a longing for the treasure [of the gospel].”

One of the good works Luther finds in the Third Commandment is prayer: It “is a special exercise of faith, and faith makes the prayer so acceptable that either it will surely be granted or something better than what we ask will be given in its stead.”

The first part of his explanation is about prayer for personal needs, but “the prayer which really belongs to this commandment and is called a work of the holy day is far better and greater. This prayer is to be made for all of Christendom, for all the

needs of all men, foe and friend alike, for all those who live in the parish [congregation] or diocese [we can think “synod” here].”

When Luther begins a study of the second table of the Law, the Fourth through Tenth Commandments, we may be surprised to find ourselves two-thirds of the way through his treatise. The first three commandments deal with the believer’s relationship to God while the others deal with good works toward the neighbor. The Second and Third Commandments are the exercise of the faith commanded in the First Commandment. There are no good works apart from faith, so with the first three commandments, the foundation for understanding good works has been laid.

In discussing the second table of the Law, Luther reiterates his thesis— there are no good works devised by mankind. The only good works are those prescribed by God Himself. They follow faith—they do not precede faith. Nothing is a good work in God’s sight that does not in fact follow faith—“fear, love, and trust in God.” For example, in his discussion of the Eighth Commandment, Luther repeats what he has said before: “All works are entirely comprised in faith” —in other words, in the First Commandment. In each commandment of the second table, he observes that in spite of the negative form “Thou shalt not...” each command “has a work which includes very many good works,” so what need is there of devising so many more works than those God has established? In regard to the commandments about our neighbor, Luther follows the same pattern he did in the catechisms, pointing out the good works in each commandment, not drawing a detailed map of evil deeds and punishments.

Luther’s purpose was to define for pious Christians what a good work really is. But he does not set aside St. Paul’s “by the law is the knowledge of sin” and “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 3:20 and 7:19). The law reveals and condemns sin. At the same time, “each one has a work which includes many good works while opposing many vices.” But what is central for Luther here is that all of the other commandments flow from the first, to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things” —that is, from faith.

Faith to the cross of Christ doth cling
And rests in Him securely,
And forth from it good works must spring
As fruits and tokens surely;
Still faith doth justify alone,
Works serve thy neighbor and make known
The faith that lives within thee.

(ELH 227; v.10)

In the following issues, we will continue to examine these writings as foundational documents of the Lutheran Reformation.

by **REV. PAUL WEBBER**, Contributing Writer
HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH, West Jordan, Utah

INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS ZION?

There are many words, names, and locations in Scripture that can feel strange and out of place. We might begin to develop a familiarity with them as we read them, sing them in hymns, or pray them, but their meaning still remains much of a mystery. Zion is one of these words.

Zion is mentioned 164 times in Scripture (no small number considering that a more familiar place to us, Bethlehem, is used only 54 times). Many of our hymns also sing about Zion. So what is Zion?

We recognize Zion today as a place – Zion National Park, the location of our 2020 Lutheran Youth Association Convention. But Zion the park is named after an ancient Hebrew word in Scripture that means “fortress” or “refuge” and was a specific location in Scripture. Geographically, the two Zions share similar features.

Search Google images for comparison.

Mt. Zion was the name of a hill and walled settlement that King David captured. It was a small walled fortress atop steep canyons with a water shaft reaching an underground well. It was the perfect defensible city. It was so hard to defeat that David’s enemies taunted him by saying he couldn’t take the city even if it were only defended by the blind and lame (2 Samuel 5:6). With God’s promise that this city would belong to God’s people, David conquered the fortress. David had his nephew and captain of his army, Joab, sneak up through the water shaft and launch a surprise attack from the inside. This apparently developed into an inside joke among the Israelites: “*Therefore the saying came about, ‘The blind and the lame will not come into the house’*” (2 Samuel 5:8b). We might say something along the lines of “they didn’t see that coming.”



ZION
 WHERE GOD DEFENDS US

Zion National Park at sunrise.
 Utah, USA

STUDY: GOD DEFENDS ZION

What does the fact that God allowed David to capture the uncapturable city say about God's power?

Read Psalm 14. This Psalm, written by David, flips the situation. God's people are now surrounded and under siege by evildoers, people who are hostile to the Christian faith and say, "There is no god" (14:1).

**Think about times in your life when you felt surrounded and "under attack."
Did you run to someone or some place for help?**

**Are there times today when the Christian faith seems attacked?
What are some arguments against Christianity that you've heard?
How did you feel when these things were said?**

David was afraid many times; his Psalms are full of fear. Yet God's promise to preserve him sustained his faith. Ironically, in Psalm 14:5 David says that the people attacking Zion are the ones who actually are afraid, even if they might not look like it.

**How might this be true today?
What might those who attack Christianity be afraid of?
Who really are they relying on for their strength?**

Who do we rely on (see again 14:5-7)?

The fact that Zion is a name God calls his Church lets us know that this is a place where God wants us to run when we feel surrounded and attacked.

**Imagine you could build the perfect defensible city like Zion.
What might it be like?
What would make it undefeatable?**

God has constructed Zion, His Church, to be a fortress for His people. Read Psalm 125. Note that the defensive elements of Mt. Zion here in this description are metaphors for God's greater defense of His Church.

On what/whom does God's Church stand (see Matthew 7:24)?

**God surrounds us at all times.
When and how are we especially surrounded and comforted?
(See Hebrews 12:1 and make reference to the communion of saints.)**

CLOSING – HYMN 214 vv. 1, 2

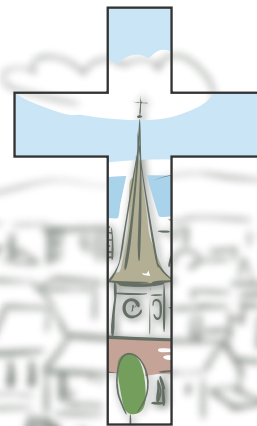
Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for His own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst t'assuage--
Grace, which, like the Lord, the Giver,
Never fails from age to age?

Cross Focus

Focusing on the world around us through the lens of the cross.

by **REV. PAUL FRIES**, Communication Director
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD, Mankato, Minn.



CORONAVIRUS AND FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

Every so often, a new disease pops up in the world (or reappears) and sets off a media firestorm. The fear of contracting this new disease can cause panic and fear, even among people who have very little chance of exposure, much less actually contracting the disease. Why do we fear something like this new coronavirus (now called COVID-19)? The obvious reasons are that we don't want to get sick or die, and we don't want this for our family and friends, either. But it's a fear of the unknown. We don't know if we will ever be exposed to this virus. If we are exposed, we don't know if we will contract it. If we contract it, we don't know the end result. It's certainly wise to follow guidelines from doctors and to avoid needless exposure to a disease. But fear of the unknown is unnecessary for Christians. We know the ending of our story.

The story of every Christian ends the same—with eternal life in Heaven. Whether we live a long, healthy life or contract a disease and die much earlier than anticipated, our future is guaranteed by our Savior, Jesus Christ. With everything happening in our world, it is very easy to give in to the temptation to fear for our futures. When you are afraid, look to God and His Word. There are many words of comfort to calm your fears, such as, *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me* (Psalm 23:4 EHV).

ASSAULTS ON MARRIAGE CONTINUE

The latest battle against marriage as it was instituted by God may come as a bit of a surprise. In recent years, we've seen same-sex "marriage," a legalization and normalization of behavior condemned by God, become much more accepted. Predictions have been made that perhaps pedophilia or incest would be the next sins to gain acceptance in a society rapidly losing its morals. Instead, polygamy has quickly risen to the top of sins against God's design for marriage. At the time of this writing, the state of Utah is considering changing the crime of polygamy from a felony to a much lesser infraction.

As Christians, we do not follow new ideas and trends when it comes to morality and God's design for marriage. Marriage is designed by God to be between one man and one woman. Any other "marriage," whether legal or not, is an "adultery" of God's good gift of marriage.



**"SERVED BY GOD'S
MINISTERING SPIRITS"**

**JUNE 21-24, 2020
MANKATO, MINNESOTA**

A N N O U N C I N G

The **103rd Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod**

The **64th Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.**

The **5th Annual Meeting of the Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.**

SYNOD SUNDAY / JUNE 21

4:00 Synod Sunday Service

5:30 Dinner (free will donation)

MONDAY / JUNE 22

9:00 Opening Convention Service

TUESDAY / JUNE 23

1:30 Convention Essay

4:45 Communion Service

WEDNESDAY / JUNE 24

1:30 Convention Essay

ANNOUNCING
the ELS Historical Society Annual Meeting

When the Christian is Called to Arms:

*A Brief History of How the ELS Has Prepared and Supported
Her Members in Military Service*



Sunday, June 21, 2020 **7p.**

Lee Theater of the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center

*A brief business meeting and refreshments will follow the program.
Everyone is welcome to attend.*

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

River Heights Lutheran Church

East Grand Forks, Minnesota

by **REV. NOAH THOMPSON**, Contributing Writer
RIVER HEIGHTS LUTHERAN CHURCH, East Grand Forks, Minn.



The group that would later form River Heights Lutheran Church of East Grand Forks, Minnesota, came to be when the Lutheran Church Merger took place in 1917. Out of concern for doctrinal purity based on the Word of God, several families believed they could not in good conscience go along with this merger. Instead, they broke away from their church to form anew. For a number of years, these families met together for worship, oftentimes in their own homes. During this time, they were served by various confessional Lutheran pastors in the area.

In 1927, a number of members took it upon themselves to build a church on the farm property of one their members just outside of Fisher, Minnesota. This small and faithful church body continued to be served by various pastors in the area until they were able to issue a call to Rev. Bjarne Teigen, who was installed in 1937. The church body then entered into the reorganized Norwegian Synod (now the ELS) on December 18, 1938. River Heights has been served by various notable pastors of the ELS, including Bjarne and Erling Teigen, Robert Preus, and John Moldstad, Sr.

After some years and by God's grace, the church moved to East Grand Forks and named themselves River Heights Lutheran Church in 1957. In 1980, River Heights sold their church building and broke ground on a new church site. The new church was dedicated in April of 1981.

To God alone be the glory.