



LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

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Who's in control?

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



Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

At the time of this writing, the coronavirus is spreading rapidly and casting a pall of deadly fear over the globe. People want to hear from government officials. Mostly, they want to hear from the medical experts and the vaccine researchers. The public wants to be assured and reassured that the ones in-the-know are – to their best ability – working to bring the disease and panic under control.

The 2020 political year raises a parallel question. Who's going to be in control of the White House for the next four years? When economic volatility appears, the question again surfaces. Does the Fed have things under its control? On a far more personal and everyday level, you may wonder: "Is anyone really in control as I have to deal with ____ (fill in the blank)___? It's devastating my life and that of my family!"

Friends, this year's May 21 stands as an overarching reminder: Our Lord God is firmly in control of all things in heaven and on earth! The day marking the Ascension of our Lord should not be overlooked for the amazing comfort it provides. You see, the One who is "sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty" is the very One who has defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell for us all. He is not confined to some remote location within the halls of heaven, but is in reality with us every day as our Savior-God and is ruling over every aspect of our lives for the good of His church – that is, for the benefit of each and every believer.

It is noteworthy that the event of Christ's ascension takes place at the Mount of Olives, right outside Jerusalem on the way toward Bethany. Nearby, the Lord only weeks earlier had prayed fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane and was there betrayed. It is within sight of the city that ridiculed and mocked Him, within sight of the place called Golgotha and the empty tomb, where the risen Jesus ascends in triumph. He who was derided as the King of the Jews at one spot nearby was now being crowned – with two angels present – as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords while He was elevated heavenward at another spot just a short glance away.

What does this tell us? The One who died on the old rugged cross and rose at the new tomb so completely sealed our eternal redemption that He now ascends as our living and loving Lord of the whole universe! He is supremely in control and uses His power of providential rule – and most vitally His power of spiritual rule by means of Word and Sacrament – to turn even the challenging ordeals of life into blessings for His faithful followers. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Corinthians 4:17).

God, our beloved Savior, is in control! He is filled with love and He is almighty. I find the words of David in Psalm 62 applicable to what we glean from the account of Christ's ascension. Two things give us tremendous comfort. David says it this way: *"One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving."*



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CORRECTION: In the March/April issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*, the article "The Heritage of Hyderabad" was improperly attributed due to an editor oversight. The author of the article was **Pastor Simeon Mamidi** of the Lutheran Mission of Salvation-Hyderabad. We regret the error.



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Where do our offerings come from?

by REV. KYLE MADSON, Editor
THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, Norsesland, Minn.

A few months back, I had a few of my kids at a high school basketball game. They like basketball. They also like concession stands. A couple of my uncles (their great-uncles) were in attendance as well. When halftime rolled around, one of the uncles asked me, “May I give them some money for the concession stand?”

We’d eaten shortly before we arrived at the game and I’d even done my part to avoid the concessions by giving them a granola bar for the car ride. Had the kind uncle asked, “Do I need to give them some money for concessions?”, the answer would have been a different one. But his request wasn’t born out of requirement – exacted of him by the starving boys’ unmet need. It was being born out by God’s abundance in his possession and a desire to share of it.

In properly appreciating the “fruit of faith” the Bible calls our “offerings,” especially of the financial kind, this same consideration is of the essence: a “must” vs. a “may?”

The Old Testament offerings were of the “must” variety. They were very specifically demanded by God. They were “drawn” out of God’s people by the very specific ceremonial requirements the Lord gave (see Leviticus 6-7 for a good overview). And these ongoing offerings, in addition to supplying for the priests’ work on the people’s behalf, were teaching God’s people. The offerings’ need to be repeated over centuries was teaching God’s people of a need that would never be satisfied by them. These offerings were also teaching God’s people to look for One offering that would fully satisfy: “**Jesus) sacrificed for sins once for all, when He offered Himself**” (Hebrews 7:27).

And this Perfect Offering changes the stakes of all succeeding offerings. Jesus offered once for all means whatever offerings come forth now are no longer from the demand – no longer a function of “must I?” As a fruit of faith, the Christian’s offerings now always come as a function of “may I?” As in, “Lord may I thank you for Your undeserved love for me with a portion of that which You undeservedly give me?” The Offering has been offered and its fruit is yours and mine in full! Our offerings aren’t drawn out of us from a void of financial resources. They grow from the fullness of that once-for-all Gift.

This is how St. Paul teaches the Christian congregations in the New Testament. He expends many words (chapters as

we have them) assuring the soul of the Perfected Offering – Jesus – and then lets their offerings grow as a “fruit” of the grace already in hand:

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to set something aside in keeping with whatever he gains (his income)” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

“Each one should give as he has determined in his heart, not reluctantly or under pressure, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Following the Perfect Offering, there is no specific command about what to give, no threshold of demand to meet. As St. Paul so refreshingly says of faith’s fruit, **“against such things there is no law”** (Galatians 5:23). The Christian simply surveys the Perfected Offering often, takes inventory of the allusions to that Offering in the undeserved daily bread gifts our abundant God supplies us, and then asks, “What may I set aside that is a fitting reflection of God’s giving to me?”

The circumstances of the last few months have been trying on us in countless ways. For many, finances or “income” are certainly among these strains, and they may be for months to come. Gift-driven, as opposed to law-drawn, offerings will account for this. The need for financial resources to proclaim the Gospel of Christ for sinners in our congregations and through our synodical efforts is certainly no less now than it was five months ago. But God, in his wisdom, may have lessened your income. Your “may I” offerings are free to be “in keeping with” that lessened income. Others might have been spared such a strain. The “how may I” freedom of the Perfect Offering and of God’s attending daily gifts may enable and incline that one to settle on an increased gift as recognition of God’s mercy through hardship.

Dear Christians, we are the living offspring of Christ and His Perfect Offering: the fruit of His crucifixion in our place, of His resurrection from death and the grave. Our offerings, whatever they are, grow out of this bountiful Gift. They are not “need-driven” attempts to make quotas or even “meet budgets.” Far better, these offerings are, by faith, the product of undeserved gifts from God which give birth to “thanksgiving,” fruit that reflects God’s gifts and which might support the Gospel proclaimed in service to our neighbor. **Against such fruit, there is no law.**

Occasionally, the church receives into membership recovering alcoholics who are nervous about receiving wine at Communion for fear of leading them back into their alcohol addiction. What is the best way for a church to handle this situation?

Answer:

These days, many of us use the phrase “trigger warning” in jest. However, for a recovering alcoholic, a “trigger warning” is a serious thing. According to the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, recovering alcoholics associate certain people, places, emotions, and things with drinking or using drugs. Because the association is so strong, encountering these people, places, feelings, and things can actually trigger thoughts about drinking. The concern for the alcoholic is that these triggered thoughts will lead to alcohol cravings, which in turn will lead to relapse.

These triggers can be either internal or external. Even certain sights, sounds, smells, or tastes can trigger thoughts about and cravings for alcohol. For those of us who have never been addicted to a mind-altering drug (other than, say, the caffeine in our coffee), the comparison might be eating one of your child’s French fries at your favorite fast food restaurant. As the fry enters your mouth, the familiar aroma of fried potato and vegetable oil hits your nose, followed by the satisfying crispy texture and salty taste on your tongue. The pleasurable smell and taste have such an effect on you that, no sooner than you’ve finished the fry, your fingers almost automatically go to grab another one. (Maybe you’re looking for a French fry right now!) Especially in the early stages of recovery, an alcoholic can have a hard time managing these emotional and sensory triggers, and addiction counselors will tell them to avoid them altogether.

This is what puts some believers into a conundrum. On the one hand, Christians want to receive the sacrament of the altar, recognizing that Christ’s body and blood are truly present under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of their sins and the strengthening of their faith. Yet on the other hand, if the taste of alcohol has been a trigger in the past, they fear that the taste of Communion wine will trigger cravings for alcohol when they get home from church.

The best way for the church to deal with this is on an individual, case by case basis, reflecting the love of Christ. In these cases, the church must continue to uphold Christ’s command in the sacrament. When Jesus took the cup,

blessed it, and gave it to His disciples to drink, it was “the fruit of the vine”—wine fermented from grapes (Luke 22:18). Historically, Christians have recognized this and have only made allowances for unfermented grape juice in times of necessity (in other words, only when there was no possibility for wine to be had because of extreme poverty or emergency). In these days when wine is plentiful, barring truly unique circumstances, can the church justify replacing fermented wine in the sacrament with something else?

Yet Christ’s command still leaves room for churches to be accommodating. Here is one answer that I have seen put into effective practice. A congregation that uses individual cups can save one or two cups for a diluted mixture of wine and water (mostly water with a drop or two of wine). Then the pastor and elders can let it quietly be known that those cups are reserved for those who struggle with alcohol addiction.

Offering diluted wine is beneficial for two reasons. It removes the taste trigger for the alcoholic. At the same time, it maintains the use of what Christ instituted for the Sacrament.

A recovering alcoholic may need to receive the Supper in this manner for a time while learning other coping strategies for dealing with various triggers. Hopefully, during this time, the believer wrestling with their alcohol addiction will seek out further instruction, learning to see Holy Communion more and more with the eyes of faith, looking past the bread and wine to better perceive and discern Christ’s body and blood along with all the blessings that the Savior freely gives in the Sacrament. So instead of triggering anxiety over sinful cravings, eventually the mention of the Supper will only trigger thoughts of grace, peace, forgiveness, and strength in Christ.



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

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The Miracle of Chile

by **REV. THOMAS HEYN**, ELS Board for World Outreach Administrator
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I had never heard of “The Miracle of Chile.” Perhaps it was an apparition of the Virgin Mary or some miracle performed by a priest. However, this “miracle” had nothing to do with supernatural things. It was about an important change in the economy of Chile.

You will hear differing viewpoints of the players in this “miracle.” It relates to the time that **Salvador Allende**, a socialist, was president of the country. Some look favorably on his time in office, but in 1973, he was removed in a coup d’état and replaced by **Augusto Pinochet**.

Pinochet brought about a reorientation of the Chilean economy in the 1980s when he implemented new economic policies recommended by the “**Chicago Boys**,” a group of Chilean economists who studied at the University of Chicago. The “Miracle of Chile” refers to the immense change in Chile’s economy under these policies.

There was prosperity. Chile became one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America. Some criticized the reforms, claiming they only benefited the wealthy. The poor were left behind. Nonetheless, a somewhat large middle class developed.

When the ELS began mission work in Chile, it was at a time when Chile looked like a stable place to begin mission work.

The “Miracle” could only provide prosperity for a while. Ultimately, worldly wealth slips through a country’s fingers just as it can slip through the hands of an individual. This past year, demonstrators claimed that Chile’s government had failed to provide more economic equality and protests broke out.

Recently, the coronavirus has come into play to further disrupt the country.

In the midst of this turmoil, true riches are to be shared—the riches of Christ’s gospel. These are riches that are for everyone, and they are riches that last forever. This is the true “Miracle of Chile” that is taking place through the efforts of the five men providing spiritual leadership to the people in the communities where they live. They haven’t been trained by Ph.D.’s at the University of Chicago. Rather, they have been trained in God’s Word through the efforts of missionaries, especially missionary **Timothy Erickson**, and through other online instruction, especially through our **Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary**.

Gospel ministry is currently taking place in the capital city of **Santiago** and in another city about three and a half hours south, **Linares**. In Santiago, three congregations south of the city center have been organized. **Vicar Victor Henriquez** serves a congregation that meets in a house in **San Bernardo**. A congregation in **Puente Alto**, a little further from the downtown of Santiago, is served by **Vicar Guillermo Ruz**. The largest of the three congregations and closest to the city center, **Familia de Dios** (Family of God) in **La Cisterna** gathers in a renovated pool hall under the leadership of **Pastor Mario Gálvez**. The chapel is roomy and provides a worship sanctuary, a small apartment, and plenty of room for classes. Pastor Galvéz was planning community outreach with English classes and martial arts classes just as the recent turmoil broke out. He thought things were settling down from the protests when the coronavirus restrictions went into effect. And Chile, once again, is facing the same kind of economic turmoil from closed businesses and unemployment as many other nations are experiencing. We pray to the Lord that he will provide another “Miracle of Chile” to restore the nation and open doors and hearts to receive the true riches of the Gospel.

The Men of Chile



Ariel



Guillermo



Victor



Mario



Jon

In **Linares**, the congregation, **Unidos por la Fe** (United by Faith), meets in a chapel constructed several years ago by members of the congregation with help from Builders for Christ. They have been without a pastor for a number of years. Two men of the congregation, **Ariel Arriagada** and **Jon Gross**, provide spiritual leadership. Ariel is the longtime president of the congregation and is studying classes through **Academia Cristo** and other online courses. Jon Gross is studying online at Bethany Lutheran Seminary. In several years, we hope that Unidos por la Fe has its own pastor. Other men in both cities have shown interest in studying with the possibility of becoming pastors one day.

It should be noted that all of the men leading their congregations do so entirely at their own expense. They support themselves with secular work and then dedicate their “spare” time (workdays can be long in Chile) to doing the ministerial and pastoral work in their congregations. That has become especially challenging in these recent times.

This is “The Miracle of Chile” in which we rejoice. It takes place not by the “Chicago Boys,” but by the “Men of Chile” bringing true riches to this field. Please pray for these spiritual leaders and their congregations. Consider a gift to help them in their outreach efforts.



If you have questions, please contact us:

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els.org/our-work-together/world-outreach/

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God at Work: Divine Care Through Many Callings



motherhood

"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"

The vocation that fills my days is not one for which I studied or trained. I didn't seek it in the way that one seeks a career, and yet it has shaped my life more dramatically than any career could. I am a mother. I received the vocation of motherhood, simply and profoundly, with the gift of my first child. In this vocation, the neighbors I serve most directly are the five children God has, so far, granted to my and my husband's care here on earth. I feed, clothe, and educate them. I teach them to know their Savior. I seek to meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. In the carrying out of my vocation, I also serve my husband, my work complementing his vocation of fatherhood. As these children that I raise grow to make their way in the world, my work will also serve their future families, communities, and congregations as they, in turn, serve in whatever vocations God may grant them.

Motherhood has filled my life with joys: the deep peace of a contented newborn sleeping on my chest; contagious baby belly laughs; the excitement and feelings of accomplishment bursting from a child who is taking first steps. I hope that I never forget riotous games of tag with a preschooler; the tenderness of sibling love; lisping expressions of faith that bring tears to my eyes. Board games, birthday cakes, fresh bouquets of dandelions, and family devotions punctuate our days, and I have the special delight of introducing my kids to the books, movies, and music that I have loved. We are enchanted, inspired, and transported together, and my enjoyment is so deepened in the sharing. I have a front row seat as my children master skills, as their minds stretch, abilities develop, and doctrinal discernment grows before my eyes.

In addition to joys, this vocation of motherhood comes with challenges. It seems there is never enough of me to be equal to the pressing needs in my home. And yet, through messages both subtle and direct, the world around me tells me that what I do is unimportant and of little value, that I am wasting my time and potential on work I ought to despise. Indeed, my days are filled with tasks that are often menial, repetitive, unrecognized, and undone as quickly as I complete them. Too often I find myself viewing aspects of my vocation with contempt. As if he is speaking directly to me, Martin Luther writes in *The Estate of Marriage*, "when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child...God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith." And also, "What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties

in the Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels." What blessed words to this mother's heart, and what needed correction: that even the most distasteful of tasks done for my children is so esteemed by God!

The physical and emotional challenges of motherhood quickly become spiritual ones. No other vocation of mine so clearly shows me my own sin. As I endeavor to meet the needs of my children, frustrations inevitably arise and I find my anger, my pride, my selfishness on full display. These dear little ones show me how easily my own wants become idols, and I see how utterly unfit I am to raise these souls God has entrusted to my care. I am driven to the cross in repentance, and here is grace on grace: the sins that demonstrate my total unworthiness of my vocation lead me to the very place where I must lead my children. As I repent of my sins to my children and receive forgiveness, I model for them the heart of the Christian life. They learn that they too can repent and receive the absolution they need. I know of no more important role in my vocation as a mother.

Through the challenges and the many blessings multiplied, I believe the raising of my children to be my life's greatest work, work with which I am blessed to be tasked. I praise God for the gift of my children, for the gift of this vocation of motherhood.

*"Therefore I urge you, brothers,
by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice
—holy and pleasing to God—
which is your appropriate worship."
(Romans 12:1)*

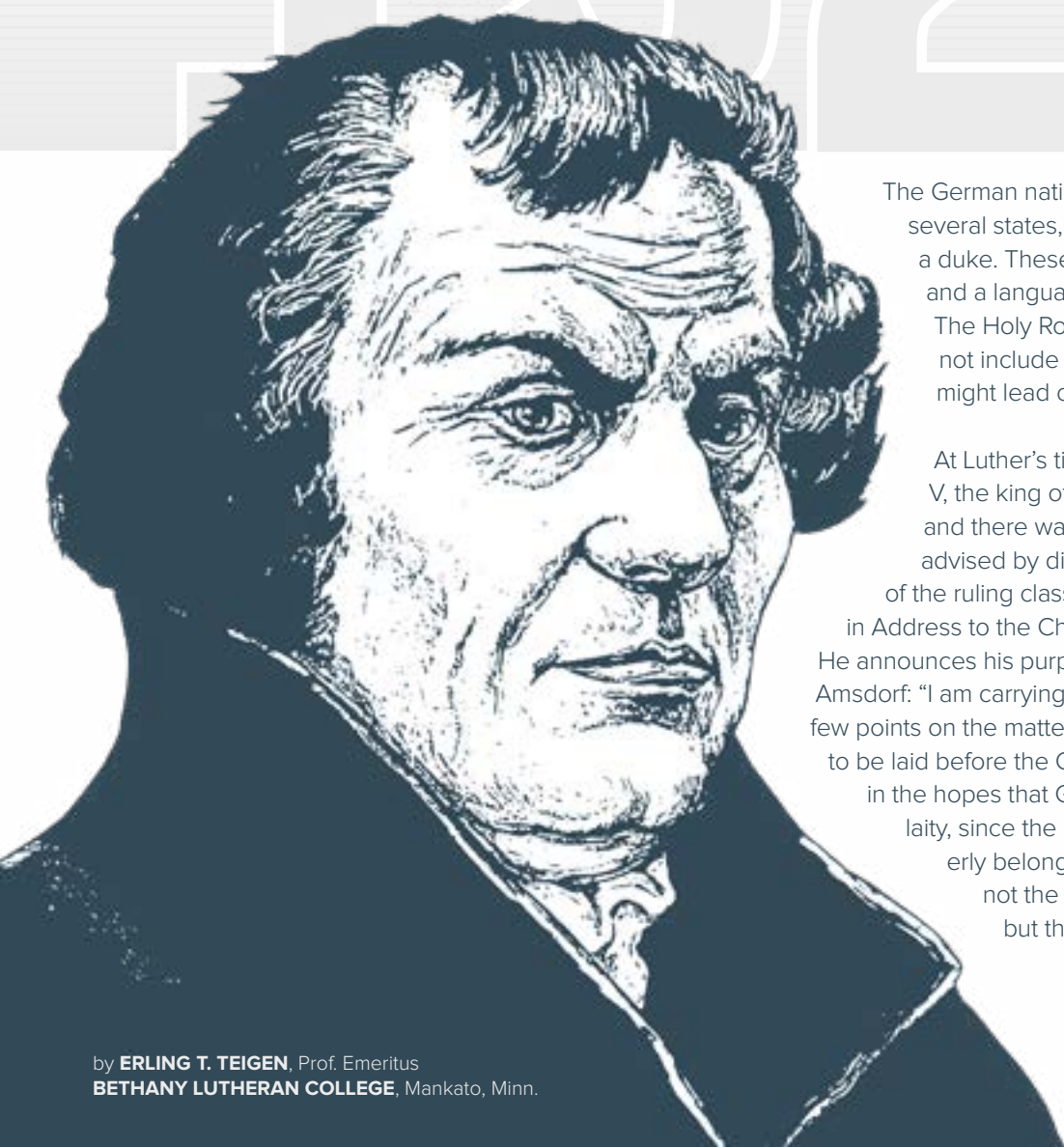
*"Hear us, cheer us By Thy teaching;
Let our preaching and our labor
Praise Thee God and bless our neighbor."
ELH 27; v.3*

Martin Luther's Busy Year

Letter to the Christian Nobility

*The **Treatise on Good Works** surveyed in the previous issue was addressed to the common Christian. By contrast, the audience for this treatise is the Christian nobility of Germany. So it might appear that Luther is appealing to the state or the civil realm to reform the church. But that is not the case.*

1520



The German nation of Luther's day was a collection of several states, each with a sovereign—a prince or a duke. These areas had some common interests and a language which was understood by most.

The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation did not include Rome or Italy as "Holy Roman Empire" might lead one to think.

At Luther's time, the empire was ruled by Charles V, the king of Spain. The emperor was a monarch, and there was no legislature or parliament. He was advised by diets or assemblies of representatives of the ruling class, the nobility. This is Luther's audience in *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. He announces his purpose in the "cover letter" to Nicholas Amsdorf: "I am carrying out our intention to put together a few points on the matter of the reform of the Christian estate, to be laid before the Christian nobility of the German nation in the hopes that God may help his church through the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown quite indifferent." It was not the state that would reform the church, but the Christians of the ruling class.

Neither would reformation of the Christian estate be by force: “We must tackle this job by renouncing trust in physical force and trusting humbly in God.... The more force we use, the greater our disaster if we do not act humbly and in the fear of God.”

In this treatise, Luther deals critically with the papacy and corruption in the Roman Church. He had raised some questions about the papacy before 1520. In the Leipzig debate, he said that for 1,100 years, there was no claim of supreme authority for the Bishop of Rome (pope). In June of 1520, Luther wrote a refutation of a monk (Alveld) from Leipzig who claimed that when Jesus gave the power of the keys (Matthew 16), he gave them to Peter alone and that the power of the keys was thus given to the popes as the power to rule the church. By contrast, Luther taught that the power of the keys was given to all Christians and that it had to do with the forgiveness of sins and the Gospel, not with the exercise of temporal power.

Part I of *Letter to the Christian Nobility* consists of Luther’s memorable three-walls-argument: they “have cleverly built three walls around themselves” so that “no one has been able to reform them.”

The first wall is that “when pressed by the temporal powers they have made decrees and declared that the temporal power had no jurisdiction over them, but that, on the contrary, the spiritual power is above the temporal.” Luther calls it a “pure invention” and “a piece of deceit and hypocrisy” because “all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate.”

The second wall is that when refuted by Scripture, “they raise the objection that only the pope may interpret Scripture,” a claim based on the assertion that Jesus gave the keys to Peter alone. But Luther responds that “the keys were not given to Peter alone but to the whole community” (the Christians) and refers to Peter’s own statement about “the royal priesthood” in 1 Peter 2:9.

Finally, the third wall is “that no one can summon a council but the pope.” Luther cites biblical history in refutation: in Acts 15, “it was not St. Peter who called the Apostolic Council [of Jerusalem] but the apostles and elders.” He also refers to Matthew 18:15-17: “When the Pope acts contrary to the Scriptures it is our duty to stand by the Scripture and reprove him, according to the word of Christ.” More specifically, “When the pope is an offense to Christendom, the first man who is able should, as a true member of the whole body, do what he can to bring a truly free council,” and he adds, “No one can do this so well as the temporal authorities, especially since they are also fellow-Christians.”

In **part II**, Luther takes up “the matters which ought to be properly dealt with in councils, matters with which popes,

cardinals, bishops and all scholars would be occupied if they really loved Christ and his church.”

Chief on the list: “It is horrible and shocking to see the head of Christendom who boasts that he is the vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter, going about in such a worldly and ostentatious style....The pope is bound for his own salvation to set it aside.” The broader subject of Luther’s attack is the way various offices and positions were supported, which he could only describe as “avarice and robbery.”

In this section, it becomes clear that Luther was not deaf to a concern that would have been felt by many in the Christian nobility—the economic disaster of maintaining the extensive church hierarchy with all of the revenue needed to keep it going. So, Luther writes, “No Turk could have devastated Italy and suppressed the worship of God so effectively! Now that Italy is sucked dry, the Romanists are coming into Germany.” Part II deals almost exclusively with the greed that had infected Rome and the various levels of clergy in the management of church property. In the face of this “devilish rule ... it is our duty to exercise all diligence to protect Christendom from such misery and destruction.”

Part III consists of twenty-seven specific proposals to rein in the corruption in the church and to weaken Roman control of the church in Germany, including forbidding the payment of money to Rome for various offices and disrupting papal control over the emperor. The last proposal focuses on German moral failures, including the expensive and extravagant dress, gluttony, and the toleration of brothels.

Of course, the council Luther envisioned with the Lutherans present was never held. Instead, a council was held at Tridentium (Council of Trent, 1545 to 1563) that did take some steps to control some of the worst abuses, but also severely condemned Luther. In some parts of Germany, mostly northern, the nobility—dukes, princes, mayors, businessmen, and clergy—did heed Luther’s call, so ten years later in 1530, it was the Lutheran princes and dukes (but not the emperor) who stood up for the reading of the Augsburg Confession and signed their names to it. Luther was not there, but when the events at Augsburg were reported to him, one can easily suppose that his heart was warmed and that he thought, “How far we have come in these ten years.” But the battle was hardly over.

(The Letter to the Christian Nobility is found in Luther’s Works, American edition, Vol. 44, 123–217.)

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



POSTPONED
DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

OUT OF
ZION



LYA 2020

July 23-26, 2020 | Zion National Park, Utah

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” **Genesis 3:17–19 (ESV).**

by **REV. TONY PITTENGER**, Contributing Writer,
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL, Port Orchard, WA

With those words, God told Adam and Eve what some of the consequences of sin would be, and in those words, we find the reason for postponing LYA 2020. The world we've inherited from them is full of thorns, thistles, and viruses. Your Board for Youth Outreach has been praying that this decision and announcement would not have to be made, but it has.

God willing, we'll do it next year. We'll gather in the southwest corner of Utah, see the park, swim in the desert, dance on the rooftop, and hear what God's Word has to say to and for Zion...

Zion is New Jerusalem. Zion is Heaven.

Right now, we feel very much "out of Zion." Most of us are under stay-at-home orders. We avoid people like... well... like the plague. All of this feels very much "out of Zion."

But Christ has died and Christ has risen! Satan's dominion of thorns and thistles, dust and ashes, even viruses -- it's broken and crumbling! Already we have been delivered from it by faith through grace. Even though we still dwell here, we are divine escapees, freed from Satan's control. And a day is coming when even our bodies will be delivered from the curse of sin.

We pray it will be soon, before next summer's LYA. God grant it!

If not, if Christ does not return before July of 2021, we'll plan again to meet in Utah.

Friends, take care of yourselves and of each other! Do the social distance thing. Wash your hands. And keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of the faith!

- **Professor Bloedel, Professor Faugstad, Pastor Tweit, Pastor Madson, Pastor Hendrix, and Next LYA Co-Directors Mr. Hoffman & Pastor Pittenger**

(P.S.) Most of you have only read Luther's explanations of the Small Catechism. Below is a portion of his response when asked if Christians should flee from a plague. We're including it partly because it's good stuff and partly because his thoughts helped us reach our decision to postpone LYA 2020.)

"Others sin on the right hand. They are much too rash and reckless, tempting God and disregarding everything which

might counteract death and the plague. They disdain the use of medicines; they do not avoid places and persons infected by the plague, but lightheartedly make sport of it and wish to prove how independent they are. They say that it is God's punishment; if he wants to protect them he can do so without medicines or our carefulness. This is not trusting God but tempting him. God has created medicines and provided us with intelligence to guard and take good care of the body so that we can live in good health.

If one makes no use of intelligence or medicine when he could do so without detriment to his neighbor, such a person injures his body and must beware lest he become a suicide in God's eyes. By the same reasoning a person might forego eating and drinking, clothing and shelter, and boldly proclaim his faith that if God wanted to preserve him from starvation and cold, he could do so without food and clothing. Actually that would be suicide. It is even more shameful for a person to pay no heed to his own body and to fail to protect it against the plague the best he is able, and then to infect and poison others who might have remained alive if he had taken care of his body as he should have. He is thus responsible before God for his neighbor's death and is a murderer many times over. Indeed, such people behave as though a house were burning in the city and nobody were trying to put the fire out. Instead they give leeway to the flames so that the whole city is consumed, saying that if God so willed, he could save the city without water to quench the fire.

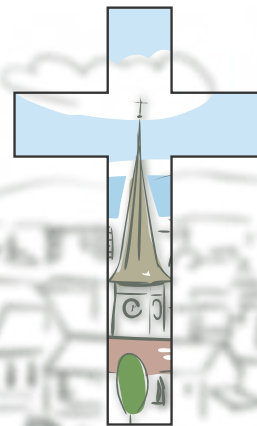
No, my dear friends, that is no good. Use medicine; take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard, and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbor does not need your presence or has recovered, and act like a man who wants to help put out the burning city. What else is the epidemic but a fire which instead of consuming wood and straw devours life and body? You ought to think this way: "Very well, by God's decree the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

Martin Luther, vol. 43, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 43 : Devotional Writings II, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, c1968), 43:113.

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.



MEMORIZING THE FAITH FOR TIMES OF CRISIS

I'll admit it. When my pastor asked us to memorize parts of the Catechism and Bible passages, I would think to myself how boring and useless it was. I did my best (I told myself) and took the quizzes and passed. I had to memorize the six chief parts of the Catechism again in a college religion class and again in the seminary.

I finally began to understand the importance of memorizing sometime in high school when I learned more of my family history. One side of my family was Russian German. They had left Germany in the 1700s for a new life colonizing an unsettled part of Russia at the invitation of Catherine the Great. They, among thousands of others, had successfully built villages, farmed the land, and started businesses. Then came World War I. My grandmother's husband was killed fighting for the Russian Imperial Army against the Axis powers. Then came the Bolshevik Revolution. Many of the German settlers fled, knowing that communism would destroy their lives. My grandmother and her young son walked, along with many others, from western Russia all the way to Germany. Eventually, they emigrated to the United States.

They had lost everything: land the family had owned for nearly two hundred years, a large herd of horses, their home, and all their belongings. The farm, like all the others, was collectivized. The Lutheran church of her son's Baptism was burned. The gravestones of my ancestors were removed and used as foundations and road bases. There was no returning.

My grandmother wasn't able to take much with her. But she took the most important thing she had: her faith. She taught her young son the faith from memory. The passages, hymns, and Catechism she had memorized helped her through some very trying times.

As we now sit in our homes during a worldwide pandemic participating in online services, that memorization suddenly becomes vital. When the internet feed stutters during the creed, we keep speaking. When the streaming fails during the Lord's Prayer, we keep praying. When we start to be overwhelmed by everything happening, comforting passages spring into our minds.

The time of the pandemic will eventually pass, and we will again be able to worship in our churches. The memorizing will probably seem less important again. Students will roll their eyes and maybe sigh as their pastors and teachers assign memory work. As the memory of isolation fades, we need to remember that memorizing is one of the ways our faith was sustained.

We pray that our country remains strong and that our religious freedoms are never tested to the extent that they have been in other nations. But while we are free to do so, we should never neglect the opportunities to worship, even imperfectly from our homes. And, while we have the time and opportunity, we can continue to study and learn and yes, even memorize.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16 EHV)



POSTPONED
DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

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.**

JUNE 21-24, 2020
MANKATO, MINNESOTA

the ELS Historical Society Annual Meeting:

When the Christian is Called to Arms

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



Lee Theater of the
Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center



Redeemer - Scottsdale, Ariz., Debt Free

A special service of thanksgiving was held on Sunday, January 19, at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, to mark the congregation's blessing from God in now being debt-free and having the title to its property. Pictured is the ceremony that was held immediately after the service in which **Mr. Jim Bonnell**, a member of the ELS Planning and Coordinating Committee and representing the synod, formally presented the deed to the church as represented by the children and youth of the congregation. The special service was followed by a presentation on the history of the Redeemer property and by a catered lunch. This event was touted as a reunion/homecoming event, and many former members of the congregation were present for this special occasion. Also present as honored guests were **Dr. William and Lynne Kessel**. Pastor Kessel was the first ELS home missionary in the Phoenix/Scottsdale area in 1985-86.

THE BJARNE WOLLAN TEIGEN

Reformation Lectures 2020

OCTOBER 29 – 30, 2020

“We Confess Jesus Christ”

1. *Early Church Christology*
Dr. Joel Elowsky
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri
2. *Early Modern Lutheran Christology*
Dr. Carl Beckwith
Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama
3. *Modern Lutheran*
Dr. Jack Kilcrease
Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

S. C. Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center
Bethany Lutheran College

Mankato, Minnesota

October 29 at 10:30 a.m.

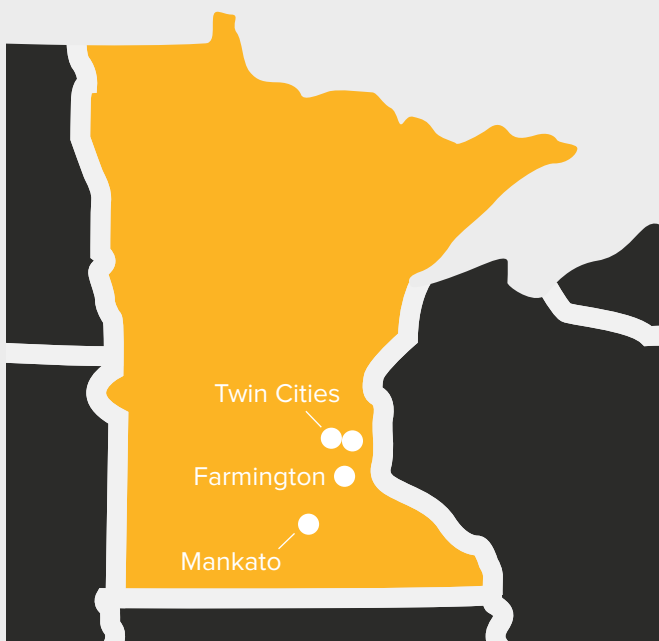
Registration available online:

blc.edu/reformation-lectures

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

Hope Lutheran Church Farmington, Minnesota

by **REV. DAN OBERER**, Contributing Writer
HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Farmington, Minn.



Do you have a Biblical hero? Of course, all worship and praise go to the Hero of all heroes, Jesus Christ. But is there someone in the Bible you find yourself appreciating more than others? Maybe it's Noah, or maybe it's King David, or perhaps one of Jesus' disciples. What about your church? Does your church seem to follow the influence of a Biblical character? At Hope we, as individuals, all have our favorite Biblical hero, but the church as a whole follows the call of one of the great Old Testament heroes, the man named Job.

Job, of course, was the one who went through joys and tragedies, like all of us. But it was Job's constant confession that he clung to, the fact that he knew that "his Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth." Hope always focuses, like Job, on the timeless truths found in Scripture that Jesus is our Redeemer, whose work for all of us is complete and whose victory has been gifted in grace as our victory. But at Hope, we also look for any way possible, like Job, to get that word out. Job wished he could get the work of his Redeemer out using the technology of the day: words on a scroll, inscriptions on lead, or hopeful engravings in a rock. In the same way, we at Hope look for any way possible to get God's timeless truths out using the technology of our day: video, live streaming, multiple social media platforms. These are a few of the many ways God has given us to proclaim the one thing needful.

Hope gives thanks to God for the work of the Triune God, which is given to all of us, but we also give thanks for the technology to get those truths out to help meet people where they are with the Gospel.