



IT IS WRITTEN: "You will not let your Holy One see decay." (PSALMS 16:10)

LUTHERAN SENTINEL

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The following is a slightly excerpted (with permission) account of President Obenberger's address following our late President Moldstad's Christian funeral. May it encourage us to consider the outcome of sainted John's way of life and its imitation for our own.



Rev. John Arthur Moldstad Jr.
1954 - 2021

*Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.
Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.
Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings,
for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace...*
(Hebrews 13:7-9)



Dear Joslyn, children, grandchildren, father, brother, sister, and all who mourn John's soul passing on to the mansions above prepared for him and all of us by our Jesus:

Remember committing John 11:35 to memory, the shortest passage in the Bible: "Jesus wept."? Jesus wept outside Lazarus' tomb, surrounded by His people weeping. Jesus did love Lazarus to be sure, but Jesus loved all those who were mourning as well. Jesus loves you – this I know.

Joslyn, very likely as happens with any sudden death, the "if onlys" abound. Jesus wept, but after Martha and Mary had approached Him with their "if onlys" and in that sense questioning Jesus' will. He did not rebuke them, but resolved their "if onlys" with the words: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus' weeping gives you permission to weep, as most all of us have been doing since hearing the shockingly sad news last week. But what else we know is this: our weeping is often tainted with our sin: fear, doubt, anger, will-questioning, even self-pity. None of that was attached to Jesus' tears. The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all such sins in your weeping, and what is more, Jesus' weeping was done with righteous tears. His holy tears are now credited to you through faith in Him. Your weeping is acceptably heard and seen by Your Lord. Your tears are the sanctified tears of His cherished Bride.

This understanding of our blessed position before God by His grace in Christ was well understood and trusted by President Moldstad, taught and preached by him faithfully and consistently. For this especially, but also for his humble demeanor exhibited in his firm confession of Jesus' teachings in the face of false teaching and by his self-deprecating sense of humor, endeared him to us throughout the entire ELS. We came to expect his faithful leadership in good and evil days, but also

always at the ready in anticipation and in response to his next pun, which received its warranted groan.

I recall about two years ago I heard the story associated with an award from his college days at Northwestern, which I always thought was something foisted upon him unwillingly. But he told the story of how he competed for this "honor" by even dressing up as a bird and strutting about onstage. I laughed so hard as he told the story that tears were rolling down my cheeks. While our tears will be wiped away in heaven, tears of sorrow, I hope we still have times when tears of laughter will flow freely.

The devil no doubt thought (some) Fridays ago that another big confessional voice was silenced in our little synod, but by God's grace, as long as the little Norwegian Synod continues, we remain committed to that same bold confession of the Resurrection Gospel, which John eagerly and faithfully declared.

We will all miss John's presence among us, but we await the day when Jesus will return and unite us in the resurrection taking us to that place where all tears will be wiped from our eyes forevermore. We may be afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, struck down but not destroyed. So while death is at work among us, there is also life in us for Jesus' sake.

On behalf of your brothers and sisters in Christ of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, we express our deep and painful grief with you and want you to know we also share in your sure confidence: your husband, your father, your grandfather, your son, your brother will rise again for Jesus' sake!

Because Jesus lives, you too shall live. Amen

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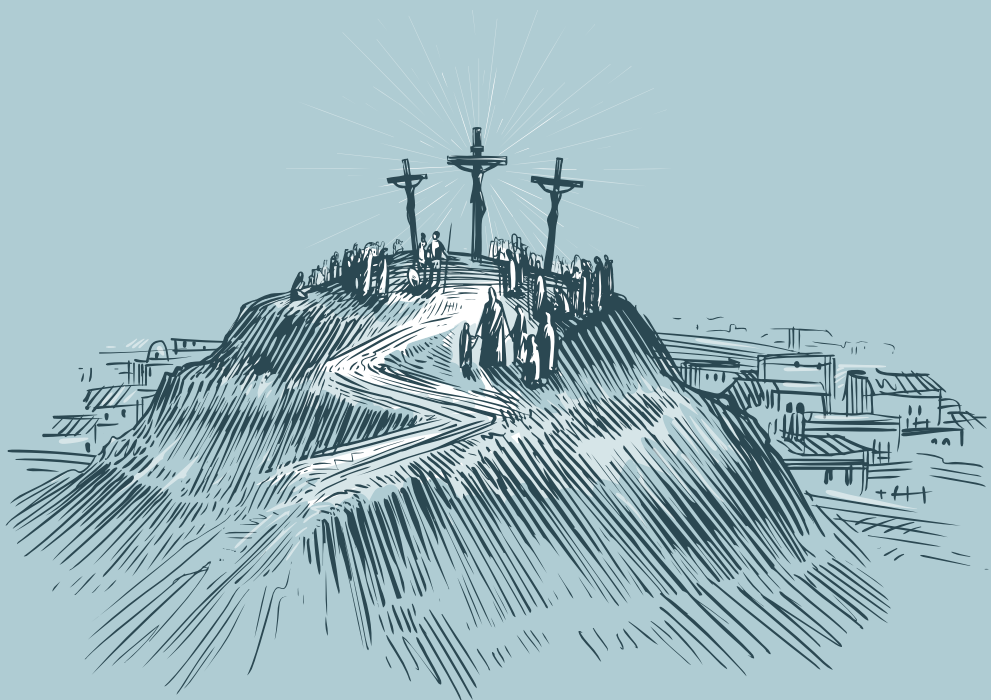
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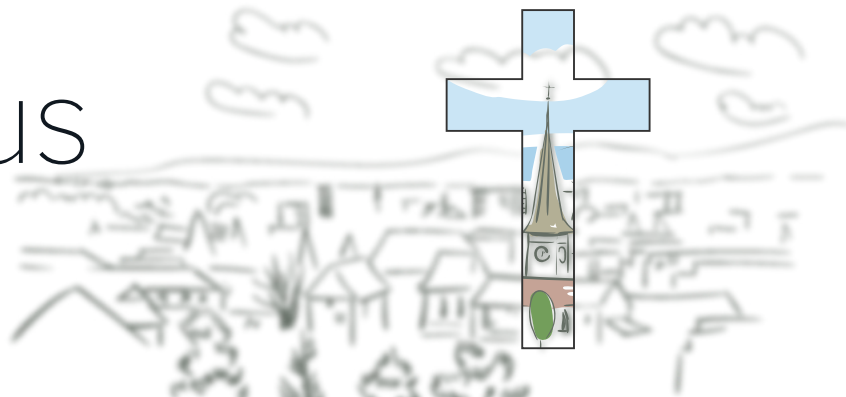
STAFF:

Rev. Kyle Madson	<i>Editor</i>
Rev. Paul Fries	<i>ELS Communication Director</i>
Rev. Piet Van Kampen	<i>Contributing Editor</i>
Denise Luehmann	<i>Subscription Manager</i>
Jessie Fries	<i>Proofreader</i>
Ryan Madson	<i>Layout & Design</i>

Cross Focus

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

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



I AM NOT GOING BACK TO CHURCH

The past year has been a roller coaster of dissenting opinions and changing recommendations. Everyone seems to have an opinion on how best to live during the time of the coronavirus pandemic. Most churches closed for in-person services last spring. Some reopened very quickly, some took much longer, and some are still closed. Those that have reopened may or may not allow the sanctuary to be full. And, unfortunately, differing opinions within congregations have caused rifts between members and between members and their pastor.

Throughout the past months, I have been pleased to hear many congregation members speak highly of the response of their pastor and congregational leaders. I have also been dismayed to hear others accuse their pastor or congregation of giving in to fear and staying closed too long or insisting on too many safeguards. Others feel their congregations opened too soon and did not care enough about the physical health of their members. And on all sides, some are so angry they have decided “I am not going back to church.”

As the virus seems to be slowing its spread, we can again begin to think ahead to a time, hopefully very soon, when our churches will be able to return to worship as we have in the past. Will you be there? God commands us, *Remember the Sabbath day by setting it apart as holy* (Exodus 20:8 EHV). Our catechism provides this explanation of the commandment: We should fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Personal anger toward other members or toward the pastor will only cause harm. It will harm you spiritually by keeping you away from the means of grace. It will harm others by weakening your congregation. Instead, we bring our sins before Jesus in repentance, asking for forgiveness and a change of heart. Jesus’ love for you led Him to the cross, where he died for your sins of anger and stubbornness. And it is at the foot of the cross that we must leave those sins and ask for strength to forgive others their sins. In Ephesians, we read, *Get rid of every kind of bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and slander, along with every kind of malice. Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us* (Ephesians 4:31-32 EHV).

As we have the opportunity to return to corporate worship, we must also have patience. There are members in our congregations who will not be able to attend immediately because of health concerns. Others may still be too fearful at first to come. *In faith and out of compassion, we will Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2 EHV).

Would God really allow people to contract a virus at church by giving fellow parishioners a hug or a handshake?

Answer:

Handshakes and hugs are certainly things that we have grown to miss during the COVID-19 global pandemic, especially with the familiar faces we like to see at church. It is just one more way that this disease has separated us from each other.

The plain and simple answer to the question is this: We don't know. God has not given specific promises about every circumstance we might face. Indeed, the Lord promises to watch over and protect His people in a general way. Psalm 91 offers a beautiful description of this promise:

*"He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge...
You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday..
For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways."*

(Psalm 91:4-6,11, NKJV)

Under the Lord's gracious care, we have nothing to fear! Yet that does not mean God will never permit evil to touch our lives. Take Job, for example. God's mercy and protection were there for Job, and yet God still permitted Job to suffer not only the loss of his family and property, but even his health! (See Job 1-2.)

So while we rely on the Lord's promise to care for us, we dare not take our safety for granted. Remember, Satan used the words of that very Psalm to try to tempt Jesus to jump from the highest point of the temple. Jesus' response to the devil still rings in our ears to this day: *"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God'"* (Matthew 4:7).

The Lord reminds us in Isaiah 55 that "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The Lord simply has not given us a specific promise about preventing the spread of a communicable disease like COVID, nor has He guaranteed that churches are safe. A simple internet search yields numerous news stories around the country where the virus has spread at churches through close physical contact, which includes, among other things, handshakes and hugs. So is it possible that God would keep His people safe from contracting a virus while worshiping in His house? Yes. Yet it's also

just as possible that God, for His own good and gracious reasons, might allow a virus to spread among those worshiping in His house.

Do not misunderstand. If people at church choose to share a handshake or a hug during the current pandemic, they are not "tempting God" or sinning in any way. Yet the threat of COVID gives us an opportunity to practice Christian love by bearing with each other's weaknesses and putting the needs of others ahead of our own. Many in our congregations are in "high risk" populations due to age or other underlying medical conditions. Some live with the terrible fear of what might happen if they get sick. So during this extraordinary season, we sacrifice our own desires for physical contact with other human beings for the sake of those we love.

Of course, Christian love may also be why we want to shake someone's hand or give a hug. When one of our fellow churchgoers has gone through a terrible tragedy or is mourning the sudden loss of a loved one, that person's need for a comforting hug might outweigh our own fears of getting sick. In that instance, putting ourselves "in harm's way" would be the God-pleasing, honorable thing to do.

Lord willing, the current pandemic will come to an end at some point, just as every other past pandemic has come to an end. At that time, everyone will go back to their old hand-shaking ways. In the end, though, whether we choose to shake hands and hug or not, we do not make that choice based on what is best for us. We do so valuing others more than ourselves, considering their needs as well as our own (Philippians 2:3-4), loving one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34).

At the cross, Christ Jesus willingly endured the ultimate separation from His Father in heaven to secure our eternal life with Him. With His help, we can endure a little separation to help secure our neighbor's time of grace here on earth.



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

- > **Send them via email:**
pastorspvk@christthekinggb.org
- > **Send them via "snail mail":**
1700 Cardinal Ln,
Green Bay, WI 54313



Dr. Martin Luther in

1521

The Diet of Worms, April 1521

by **REV. ERLING TEIGEN**, Professor Emeritus
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, Contributing Writer

Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scripture or evident reason (For I believe neither in the Pope nor councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me, Amen.

(Martin Luther at Worms)

The Diet of Worms of 1521 was a four-month-long assembly of the princes and other officials of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation to advise and consult with twenty-one-year-old Emperor Charles V.

In the sixteenth century, the diet was a civil assembly (Latin—*Dieta Imperii*; German—Reichstag) composed of three estates or colleges: 1) the princes who had a vote in electing the emperor (electors); 2) princes who did not have an electoral vote but ruled one of the German states and the ecclesiastical princes (archbishops); and 3) representatives of the imperial (free) cities. Questions or issues needing discussion or solutions would be presented to the diet and would be discussed by the three colleges meeting separately. The colleges would come to consensus and report their opinion to the emperor, who would make a decision. The diets only met when summoned by the emperor.

The diet held in Worms in 1521 was set to begin in late January and would last until late May. The “Luther affair” was not on the agenda of the meeting. Because of the controversy swirling around the Wittenberg professor’s writings on papal authority and other Roman Catholic doctrines, Elector Frederick the Wise, Prince of Saxony, had met with Emperor Charles

and had given him a copy of Luther's protest against *Exsurge Domine*. Frederick was given permission to bring Luther to the Diet in order to get a hearing. However, on February 10, the bull of excommunication, *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, arrived in Worms, as well as the report that Luther had defiantly burned the bull *Exsurge Domine*. Charles also had a copy of Luther's attack on the Roman doctrine of the sacraments in *Babylonian Captivity of The Church*. Charles would not entertain a heretic at the Diet, so he withdrew his invitation.

During the first weeks of the Diet, Aleander, the papal nuncio or envoy at Germany, tried to persuade the Diet to have Luther's books burned and to approve a mandate condemning Luther. Aleander had gone so far as to propose that Luther should be imprisoned until the Diet could decide what to do with him. However, the Holy Roman Empire had a constitution, or charter, with a provision that the emperor could not condemn any person of the German nations without first giving the person a hearing. At his coronation, the emperor had sworn to uphold the constitution.

Thus it was now necessary to bring Luther to Worms for some kind of a hearing, and after March 6, the emperor sent a summons to Wittenberg, which was not received until March 29. The summons stated that the emperor and Diet "wish to obtain information from you about your doctrines and books" and promised safe conduct to Worms and back. Luther was certainly justified in thinking that there would be a discussion, an opportunity to explain his views, and decided to accept.

Luther, Nicolaus Amsdorf, another professor, and a student traveling in a surrey-like carriage set off on April 2 and arrived in Worms on April 16 (about a five-hour trip today). On the way through Saxony and also in Worms, Luther was honored and cheered by townspeople.

The next morning, Luther was informed that he was to appear at the Diet at four p.m. Before entering, he was informed that he must not speak unless a question was asked of him. In the meeting room, there was a table with a pile of books on it. Luther was asked a double question: Was he ready to acknowledge his authorship of these books and was he ready to revoke the heresies they contained? One of Luther's colleagues suggested that the book titles should all be read. Luther readily acknowledged them to be his writings. However, since the other question had to do with faith, he asked for more time to think about it and was given until the next afternoon.

Late the next afternoon, Luther was again brought before the emperor. It was clear that he had carefully thought through his speech—speaking first in Latin and then in German. He

divided the books into three categories: 1) books he had written about faith and works; 2) books against the papacy and its human doctrines; 3) works he had written against individuals who supported the tyranny of Rome. In each case, Luther explained why he could not retract any of the books. In each case, he said, even *Exsurge Domine* acknowledged that there were some good things in the books. To revoke those good things would be to revoke the Gospel. But he acknowledged that in some cases he may have spoken too strongly and confessed that he was not a saint.

After Luther had spoken, he was asked for a simple answer. He then spoke the words with which we began: "My conscience has been taken captive by the word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant."

According to contemporary sources, when Luther had spoken, there was pandemonium in the room. E. G. Schwiebert writes: "The emperor, excited and angry, rose to his feet and exclaimed that he had had enough of such talk." Luther, after leaving the palace, "raised his arms like a victorious knight and shouted: 'I am through; I am through'" (505).

But he wasn't through. On the following day, Charles called together the electors and a few other princes to decide what to do next. He was urged to go slowly. Though he had developed some strong feelings against Luther, he recognized that he had to honor the safe-conduct guarantee he had given Luther, but there would be no more discussion. Some of the wiser heads present may have realized that Luther had not been given a hearing on the substantive matters, authority of the papacy and the authority of God's Word. Cardinal Albert of Mainz, with a select group, was to meet with Luther and discuss his views.

On April 22-24, there were three meetings with Luther, with the participants varying some. None of the discussions got to substantive issues. The primary interest seemed to be to persuade Luther that it was not possible for one individual to be right against the hundreds of years of the accumulated wisdom of the church.

After writing a gracious note to the Emperor, on the morning of April 26, Luther was back in the carriage, headed for Wittenberg. Little did he know that he would not get back to Wittenberg until March 1522 and in the meantime would be out of circulation.

Note: Detailed accounts of these events are found in E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and his Times*, and Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*.

The Bible's 'Prayer Book'

A Walk through the Psalms

by **REV. TONY PITTENGER**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Port Orchard, Wash.

Perhaps more than any other season of the Church year, Lent and Easter are a time of the psalms...

During Lent we confess: *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me* (Psalm 51:5).

On Palm Sunday we sing: *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!* (Psalm 118:26).

On Good Friday we hear: *Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD* (Psalm 130:1) and *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Psalm 22:1).

And on Easter Sunday, we rejoice, saying: *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption* (Psalm 16:10) and *This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it* (Psalm 118:24).

Leading up to Easter, the traditional Gospel lessons depict God's people in need of His help. There's a family plagued by demons and there are even accusations that our Jesus is actually working with those evil powers.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent addresses our physical needs, or daily bread. It does so by showing us "The Feeding of the 5,000" in John 6:1-15.

Five thousand men, plus women and children, have followed Jesus into the wilderness to hear Him teach and preach about the Kingdom of God, and in doing so, they have separated themselves from the basic necessities of food and sustenance.

But these people aren't forsaken by God. Out there, He has them right where He wants them. Now they can clearly see that "He richly and daily provides me with food and clothing, home and family..."

The people in the wilderness will not starve! Their shepherd is with them even there! The Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep, will feed them in both body and soul!

This Lenten and Easter season, you may feel like a flock scattered by the threat and precautions of COVID-19. Many churches are not yet "back to normal." Midweek and Holy Week services may not be what you are accustomed to.

The psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Psalm 125, assures all God's people that now, as back then and back there, our Savior provides.

Psalm 125 (NKJV)

A Song of Ascents. Those who trust in the Lord Are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.

Nothing in all Creation shall move, remove, or shake God's people. Not want, not hunger, not threats of violence, not quarantines or disease. Even when everything appears to be hopeless and lost and seems to work against you, He governs these things, even today's things. He promises to protect you from every side.

For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.

The scepter, the reign, the rule of wickedness shall not rest, shall not reside, take over, control, or govern God's people.

Persecutions of the faithful will not destroy God's people.

Pestilence will not destroy God's people.

Division and schism will not destroy God's people.

He has promised to protect you and He will! He will even protect you from temptation to sin.

Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, The Lord shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel!

Those who "are good" have been made that way by the Lord Himself. Providing for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness is how faith is created and strengthened. That gift of faith causes such a change of person that it even changes the heart. Faith makes your heart upright.

Your crooked lives become straight and level. Peace exists where it seems there should only be panic, sorrow, and fear.

In Christ, God is the one who provides for you. People in the spiritual wilderness of this world will not starve! Our shepherd is with us even here! The Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep, will feed you in both body and soul!

Those who trust in the Lord Are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

Safe in want or plenty, sickness or health, in war or peace. The Lord has compassion on you; you shall not be moved.

PRESENTING EVIDENCE

for the Truth of Christianity

by **PROF. RYAN MACPHERSON**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, Mankato, Minn.

The title of this article may surprise two very different groups of people.

First, the title may surprise unbelievers who have a “comfort zone” of thinking that Christianity has hardly anything to do with truth, as if there could never be evidence in favor of Christianity. Sometimes unbelievers will agree that Christianity can help people feel good and cope with the problems of this life, but to call Christian theology “true” rather than merely a “feel-good” religion—no, the unbeliever will have none of that.

Second, the title may surprise some believers who worry that appeals to evidence risk sidestepping the means of grace. Does “evidentialist apologetics” mean that the conversion of the sinner to saving faith could be accomplished by human reason weighing evidence rather than by the work of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament? If so, then “Christian apologetics” is not Christian at all, for it runs contrary to the Third Article!

But what if there is a way to relate evidence to Christianity? To the unbeliever, this article will show that the historic Christian faith is supported by evidence. To the believer, this article will show that emphasizing such evidence need not detract from, but rather points toward, implies, and confirms the Gospel.

Properly conducted, apologetics does not reduce faith to mere intellectual assent; properly understood, evangelism includes the presentation of evidence rather than avoiding evidence.

The Book of Acts records that whenever the apostles proclaimed the Gospel, they presented evidence in service to the Gospel. Evidence came in three forms: eyewitness accounts that Jesus

had risen from the grave, miraculous signs that confirmed the authenticity of their preaching, and textual evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures that pointed to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of messianic prophecies. All three kinds of evidence were components of, not alternatives to, the proclamation of the Gospel.

“You Shall Be Witnesses”

Shortly before His ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles, adding: “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Greek term translated “witnesses” really means “eyewitnesses,” referring to people who can testify in court on the basis of firsthand experience. The apostles saw Jesus live. They saw Him die. They saw Him alive again after the resurrection.

When the Eleven selected Matthias to replace Judas as a twelfth apostle, they did so because Matthias had personally seen every event in Christ’s ministry from the baptism of John until the ascension. Therefore, Matthias was qualified to “become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:22). Again, the Greek language emphasizes that Matthias had personally observed what he was about to proclaim.

The apostles emphasized the eyewitness caliber of their Gospel proclamation throughout the Book of Acts (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31). What was true of the Twelve also became true of Paul, to whom Christ personally appeared on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:15; 26:16). In the epistles, too, the apostles emphasized that they had personally seen and heard what they

preached and wrote about Christ’s life, death, and resurrection (1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16-19; 1 John 1:1-3).

“Confirming ... through Accompanying Signs”

Anyone can preach, but miracles serve as one way to distinguish true preachers from false preachers. In Egypt, God revealed that Moses was a true prophet and the magicians of pharaoh had a false message. Nine chapters (Exodus 4–12) enumerate the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron and demonstrate how feeble the magic of the Egyptians was by comparison. The point? The God of the Hebrews is the only true God.

If any doubt should remain, God performed the greatest miracle of the Old Testament—the parting of the sea (Exodus 14). Forty years later and 300 hundred miles away, Rahab of Jericho recounted this evidence and drew the correct conclusion: “*the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath*” (Joshua 2:11).

In the New Testament, Jesus confirmed His divinity by the evidence of His miracles. As Jesus said to John’s disciples when they asked whether He was the Messiah: “*Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised*” (Luke 7:22, fulfilling Isaiah 35:4–6). Similarly, after Christ ascended to heaven, the Apostles “went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20).



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“Reasoned ... from the Scriptures”

The evidence for Christianity that was provided by eyewitness testimony and miracles did not stand alone. Always the proclamation of the early church pointed back to the Hebrew Scriptures, which in turn pointed forward to Jesus.

Consider the first mission trip to Thessalonica: Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead (Acts 17:2–3; cf. 18:4, 19). Paul’s “custom” when evangelizing involved “reasoning” and “demonstrating” based on the Hebrew Scriptures.

To proclaim the Gospel is to make this argument: the Old Testament said the Messiah would live for you, die for you, and rise back from the grave for you to accomplish your salvation, and Jesus of Nazareth has fulfilled precisely those prophecies. Therefore, Jesus is your Savior! Logic and evidence, when embedded within the very Word of God, serve as the Holy Spirit’s own tools for creating and strengthening faith. Mysticism departs from facts, but saving faith orients the facts around trust in Christ.

Presenting Evidence Today

When our children memorize each Christmas that Jesus was born in the days of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), they are preserving the longstanding apostolic proclamation that Jesus is not make-believe, but historical. We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty (2 Peter 1:16). The risen Jesus “was seen by over five hundred

brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present” (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The Bible repeatedly points beyond itself to tangible historical realities. Archaeologists have identified inscriptions that refer by name to over fifty people mentioned in the Old Testament. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus mentioned by name over twenty-five persons found in the New Testament. The books of Luke and Acts include over eighty historically verifiable references to persons, places, and specific terminology that tether the text to the real world.

To be clear, evidence does not of itself create or strengthen faith, but it can expose the folly of unbelief and open up conversations leading back to the Scriptures. The Scriptures, in turn, point to Christ. The Red Sea crossing not only demonstrated that the Lord is the only real God, but also served as a prophecy by type of the coming Messiah. The 500-plus witnesses to the resurrection not only substantiated a fact of history, but also drew attention to the Gospel message that salvation comes through Christ’s death and resurrection. This very Gospel is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

Critical scholars may continue to seek ways to doubt the evidence, but for what other religion can we even have this kind of discussion? What other religion, first, claims to be so historical and, second, can point to so many items beyond its sacred text that align with its sacred text?

Christianity is unparalleled in the annals of history. Why else would this be so except for the most obvious reason? What Christianity proclaims about Jesus Christ is true.

Learn more...

about Presenting Evidence for the Truth of Christianity



Website:

Center for Apologetics and Worldview Studies: www.blc.edu/apologetics



Book / Allen Quist

The Reason I Believe: The Basics of Christian Apologetics (Concordia Publishing House, 2017)



Article / David Thompson

“A Confessional Lutheran Understanding of Christian Apologetics and Its Practice,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2020): 291-344

Coming up...

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Engaging Unbelievers in Conversation Leading toward the Gospel Proclamation of Forgiveness in Christ

Nov-Dec, 2021



The Good Math of Baptism

“You were baptized this morning?” asked the excited man of the seven-year-old girl – a family friend. And in response to her happy and affirming nod, the man genuinely replied, “I’m so proud of you.”

From a Christian perspective, a view that takes God at His Word, there are several very good elements in the above account. First and foremost, a young girl was baptized! Jesus gave the Christian Church baptism. Not surprisingly then, God’s Word throughout the New Testament speaks very highly of this gift of Jesus called baptism and its continuing use in the Church. The man’s excitement, then, over this Christian practice of baptism is also very good and appropriate. The absence of such joy and excitement over a baptism would be alarming. These two elements from the brief account are both sound and good. The resulting conclusion, however – “I’m so proud of YOU” – doesn’t add up. That’s bad math.

Allow me to illustrate. Let’s say a young man you knew – a family friend – was guilty of a major theft. He was arrested, put on trial, and convicted of a felony. He was sentenced by the judge to do five years of prison time. Then, unexpectedly, after just one week of time served, the judge called his case back before his court. In an unlikely turn of events, the judge wiped this thief’s record clean. He removed from your friend the remaining burden of time served. With the strike of his gavel and the stroke of his pen, the judge declared him innocent and free to go on his way. The family rejoices, and you rejoice with them. And then at the homecoming party, you hug the recently freed friend and say to him, “I’m so proud of you for getting out of your sentence.”

Can you see the bad math? A freedom has been gifted – granted to the thief apart from anything done or deserved.

Joy over this unlikely gift given is certainly appropriate. But pride in the freed one, the one who did nothing to deserve the gift, the one who passively benefitted from the gracious word of pardon from the judge? That’s bad math. That’s adding glory and praise to the gift-ed and subtracting it from the gift-er.

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
(I Corinthians 6:11)

In contrast to this, God’s Word has baptism flush with gifts – gifts from God to the convicted sinner. The name of the True God joined with water washes away sin’s record. The promise of God joined with water sets sinners apart from their guilt and its just penalties. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ connected with water declares the guilty one innocent for Jesus’ sake. The Bible, then, has baptism spilling over with gifts: God-to-Us gifts. And God’s Spirit is the gracious Deliverer of them all. Joy and praise are highly appropriate responses to such grace and mercy. This is God’s math on baptism. This math adds up to forgiveness, life, and salvation for convicts like that seven-year-old girl, convicts like you and me. Dear Christian, don’t go back to the blackboard for a recalculation. The math doesn’t get any better than this!

Baptism... now saves you.
(I Peter 3:21)

STUDY QUESTIONS:

"I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

(John 3:5)

"According to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of rebirth and a renewing of the Holy Spirit."

(Titus 3:5)

The Bible refers to the Sacrament of Baptism as our "second birth."

If baptism is our "(re)birth," what does that say about our role or responsibility in baptism?

1. Tommy threw the ball.
2. The ball was thrown at Tommy.

The nouns and the verb are all in common in the above two sentences.

The only thing that changes is the subject (the acting thing) and the object (the thing acted toward/upon).

Consider the following Bible passages about baptism. Ask a similar question with them.

What/Who is acting and what/who is being acted upon?

"Baptism also now saves you."

(1 Peter 3:21)

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins."

(Acts 2:38)

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."

(Mark 16:16)

If God the Spirit (through baptism) is the Actor and we are the acted upon, how certain does this make the results of baptism? (Discuss.)

*God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To be baptized invites a host;
Here He is present though unseen,
From all our sins He's washed us clean.*

*Since by this water and the Word
We're born again, we thank You Lord.
Through life and death Yours may we be,
Your children through eternity.*

(ELH 248 | v. 4 & 6)

YOUR GOOD GIFTS | YOUR GOOD WAYS

by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor
THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, Norseland, Minn.

It's true of human nature in the world and it's very apparent in our own nearer cultures—country, state, even in our smallest of sub-cultures, Christian congregation and family—we love things our way. One fast-food chain runs a slogan that knows us well: “Where you can have it your way.” When a wedding comes up or a baby is due to be born, friends and family get us gifts, but not without consulting our “registry” where we tell them exactly which gifts are the “right ones” to gift us.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for gifts to come to us, specifically the gifts of His Kingdom: **THY KINGDOM COME**. But when we unpack this little prayer given us by Jesus, we recognize that Jesus didn't ask us first to fill out our “registry”—where we would tell our Heavenly Father specifically which gifts are good for Him to gift us. Rather, Jesus teaches us to pray for Our Heavenly Father's “registry of gifts”—for His Kingdom to come. Our penchant for autonomy and individuality tells us this is risky business at best. But our flesh couldn't be more wrong!

When our Father causes His Kingdom to come, He gifts to us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the courier of the Father's grace—His undeserved love for us in Christ Jesus. And with this grace, the Spirit brings us to believe and keep us believing our Father's holy Word. As a result of this gifted grace, the Spirit leads us to live in love toward God and our neighbor. When we pray for God's Kingdom to come, it isn't our registry. It's a beg for God's good gifts to come to us.

And as long as our prayerful asks are cutting against our natural instincts, Jesus doubles down with a second “saying” that goes against every fiber of our self-sufficiency: **THY WILL BE DONE** on earth as it is in heaven. Right after teaching us to pray for our Father's gift registry and not our own, Jesus teaches us to pray for our Father's will (His ways) to be accomplished in our lives even if they fight against our own preferences.

Now this petition certainly doesn't get in the way of the Bible's instruction to bring any care or concern to our Father in prayer: *Cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you* (1 Peter 5:7). What this second against-the-flesh petition does is play both offense and defense! It prays for our Father to

flourish among us whatever daily bread (“on-earth”) gifts are good for us even while praying for God to hinder or foil whatever requests or desires we make that would serve the Devil, the ways of the world, or our own sinful flesh. It's hard to hear, but part of us being “children” of the Father is accepting that plenty of the wills and wishes of our hearts would be detrimental to faith, bodily well-being, or both. With this petition, Jesus causes us to hedge our prayers in such a way that they will always serve the good: the Father's will be done! If my requests prove to be in keeping with God's will, God be praised. But if God denies your specific request—grants the opposite—thanks be to God for preserving me even from myself.

Jesus gives us great comfort in keeping with this petition: *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will Your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit (good gifts) to those who ask Him!”* (Luke 11:13).

Lord, teach us to pray for Your Good Gifts, Your Good Ways.

THY KINGDOM COME

The kingdom of God certainly comes of itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come?

The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.

THY WILL BE DONE

What does this mean?

The good and gracious will of God is certainly done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done also among us.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow His name nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world and our own flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith until our end. This is His good and gracious will.

THE ANNUAL CONVENTION FOR

**The Evangelical
Lutheran
Synod**

**Bethany
Lutheran
College**

**The Lutheran
Schools of
America, Inc.**

SUNDAY, JUNE 20 – THURSDAY, JUNE 24

BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE
MANKATO, MINNESOTA

ELS HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

“The Ministry Marches On”

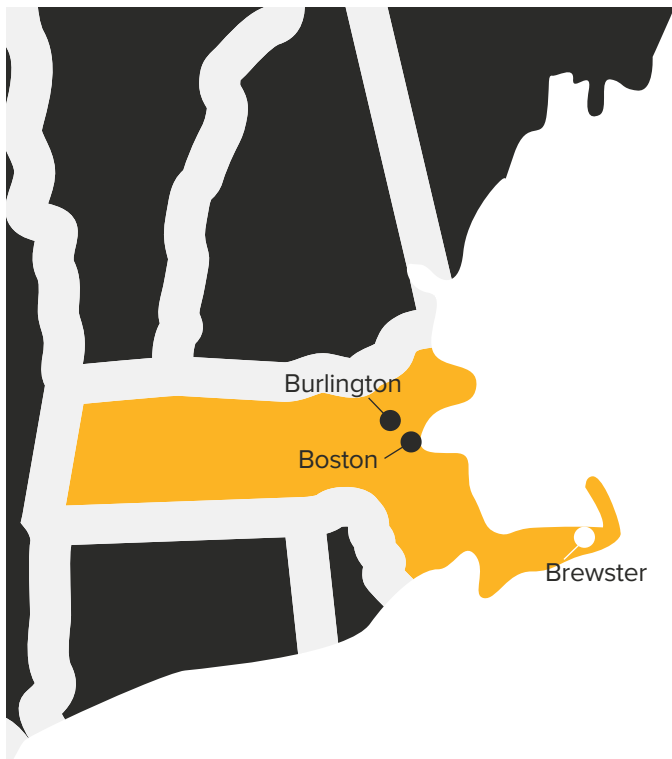
Sunday, June 20, 2021 | 2:30pm

Sigurd Lee Theater | Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center
Bethany Lutheran College

God willing, the ELS Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on Sunday, June 20, 2021, at 2:30 p.m. in the Sigurd Lee Theater of the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center on the Bethany Lutheran College campus. The featured presentation will be “The Ministry Marches On.” This subject was specifically chosen to complement the observance of the 75th anniversary of the ELS Seminary at the convention. An interview panel of three pastors will represent the time frames of early, mid-century, and today while answering the moderator’s questions about various aspects of the public ministry. A brief business meeting will follow the program.

Everyone interested is welcome and encouraged to attend.

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:



Trinity Lutheran Church Brewster, Massachusetts

by **REV. JAMES BRAUN**, Contributing Writer
TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Brewster, Mass.

The very beginnings of what became Trinity Lutheran Church go back to 1945, when Mrs. Christian Moldstad purchased the Captain Knowles home in Brewster, Massachusetts. It was bought with the thought that it would provide Pastor and Mrs. Moldstad a place to live as well as income from taking on boarders. When Pastor Moldstad retired from teaching at Bethany Lutheran College, he arrived “on Cape” and soon began having Sunday morning services in the sunroom of the house that was now known as “The Manse.” This group quickly grew with attendance in the summer sometimes reaching 70.

With the deaths of Pastor and Mrs. Moldstad, a smaller group met in a home down the street called the “Little Manse” and other locations in Brewster. It was decided that a permanent home for the Brewster Lutheran Mission needed to be built. With a donation from the Hope Davis (née Moldstad) family, a New England-style church was constructed on Main Street in 1975 and dedicated to the glory of God and the preaching of His Word.

The mission was incorporated as Trinity Lutheran Church in 1975. Though relatively small, through the years the membership of TLC has continued to gather around the Means of Grace and to live their vocations with each other as the body of Christ as well as in the Cape Cod community.