

*The*  
*Concordia*  *Lutheran*

“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.


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“He  
is  
risen!”

—Mark 16:6

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## “A Bone of Him Shall Not Be Broken”

*“When they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs... that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘A bone of Him shall not be broken.’” — John 19:33 and 36*

How significant this precious text of God’s Word should be to us Christians as we meditate upon the great passion of our Savior and His *vicarious atonement* for the sins of the world! And yet, many who read in the Gospels the passion history of Jesus’ suffering and death tend to gloss over the pertinent event recorded in our text as a mere “detail” of something that “just happened” and thus miss its striking importance. Indeed, though St. John *alone* reports it in his Gospel by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he states precisely *why* he does so, namely, “*that ye might believe.*” In this case, what the soldiers *did NOT do* is just as significant as what they *did*.

We note in the context (v. 31) that the Jews, in their fastidious effort to observe the *outward ceremonies* of the Law (while flagrantly transgressing its *substance*), demanded of Pilate that the victims of crucifixion on Calvary’s hill be **unceremoniously** “dispatched” so that their bodies could be removed from sight before the onset of the Sabbath. Not only was the Sabbath itself “*an high day*” for the Jews, but the Sabbath *at the time of Passover* was **especially** important to them. No matter that they had **murdered** the very Son of God, the promised *Messiah*, by their hatred of Him, by their evil plotting, their false witness, their blasphemy, their envious bloodthirst, and their screaming cries for His crucifixion — they were *more* concerned that the mere presence of

dead bodies (and particularly the corpses of executed criminals) would *defile* them and make them *unworthy* to eat the Passover (Deuteronomy 21:23), even though there was a clear-cut exception made by God Himself in Numbers 9:6-9! And, while the Romans generally preferred to let the victims hang on their crosses for even days at a time to die a slow and torturous death and, at the same time, to serve as a deterrent example to the people passing by, the Jews' request to hurry the process was often granted as a political gesture of good will. Thus the soldiers assigned to the execution detail would, on special orders, take clubs and literally *beat the victims to death*, deliberately breaking their legs and other bones to inflict fatal trauma and hasten their end. Upon Pilate's authorization, the grizzly task was carried out as the soldiers on duty began with the "malefactors" crucified with Jesus, both of whom were apparently still alive on their crosses as the shadows began to lengthen on Good Friday afternoon.

*"But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead **already**, they brake not His legs."* The fact that they "*saw*" that Jesus was dead is of no small importance, for these men were experienced executioners who recognized *by sight* the difference between a living person and a cadaver. And, even if, as scoffers claim, their "trained eyes" had somehow deceived them, their commander, the centurion, was *present* when Jesus died (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47), *witnessed* how He expired, and spoke of Him in the *past tense*! Add to that the sure punishment of death for dereliction of duty that all of them would have faced if Jesus' body had been released *alive* to Joseph of Arimathea!! They had absolutely *no vested interest* in neglecting the battering of Jesus' body, if indeed He *had* been alive. But they dispensed with the breaking of His legs *because* He "*was **dead already***" (v.33). And just to make sure, "*one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side*" — whether with a shallow probing "prick" to check for any reaction (as some surmise), or whether with a deep plunge into Jesus' body (as Thomas' post-Easter examination of the wound seems to indicate, John 20:25 and 27), the result was the same — "*forthwith came there out **blood and water***," forensic evidence that true death had occurred. They saw it; their commander assured Pilate of it (Mark 15:44-45); John knew it and testified to the fact by inspiration of God. And, instead of rushing Him off for medical treatment, Jesus' friends **buried** Him! There was no need to "*break His legs*." The objective evidence of Jesus' *real death* — *factual, forensic and circumstantial* — is overwhelming!

But that is not the only reason why the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs.

John says that “*these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled.*” From the first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, where Gabriel announced to Joseph the Savior’s conception by the Holy Ghost in his virgin wife (v. 22), to Jesus’ rebuke of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection (Luke 24:25-27), the holy, inspired record of Jesus’ brief visible sojourn here on earth stresses throughout His perfect fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the promised Messiah. And even those prophecies which spoke of events, circumstances and deeds played out by *others* were fulfilled to the letter (from the journey of the Wise Men and Herod’s slaughter of Bethlehem’s babies to the piercing of Jesus’ hands, feet and side, and His burial in the tomb of wealthy Joseph of Arimathea). How foolishly, yea, how brazenly and wickedly, the critics of the Holy Scriptures scoff at their inerrancy and authority when, time and time again with perfect consistency, “*the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (I Corinthians 2:13) vindicate *themselves* against any and every challenge! To any objective examiner, the critics indeed take on the appearance and character of clowns, jugglers and contortionists for all the “mental gymnastics” to which they resort and all the “off-the-wall” assumptions they make to discredit the verbally inspired Word of God! What proud know-nothings they are, “*men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth*” as St. Paul describes them in I Timothy 6:3-5!

Nevertheless, all of these things impact upon the **chief reason** why not a bone of the Lord Jesus was broken, and why the evangelist John reports this “detail” in his Gospel account, namely, “*that ye might believe.*” Believe *what* in particular? John expands on this reason in chapter 20, verse 31, saying “*that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.*” For the **key** to the importance of Jesus’ bones not having been broken, we go back to Exodus chapter 12, where the Lord through Moses instructed the Children of Israel concerning the **Passover**, particularly concerning the Passover **lamb** that was to be sacrificed, prepared, and eaten by the people — the lamb whose **blood**, painted on the doorframes of their houses, would save them from the Angel of Death. Do you remember the *description* of that lamb? — “*Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ...and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it. ...And when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.*”

Not only is the promised Messiah described in specific prophecies of the Old Testament as “*a lamb*” (in Isaiah 53 for example), but in the New Testament, in John 1:29, Jesus is called “*the Lamb of God*” by John the Baptist; and thereafter this precious imagery is repeated, not in a vague sentimental manner but with specific reference to the Old Testament Passover as a *type of Christ*, who was the *true* sacrificial Lamb slain vicariously to deliver sinners from death. Take, for example, I Peter 1:18-19, where the Apostle says, “*Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*” And the Apostle Paul clearly identifies the Passover Lamb as a *type of Christ* in His *vicarious atonement*, leaving nothing to inference or to our deduction, saying in I Corinthians 5:7, “*For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.*” Why? The writer to the Hebrews answers, “*That through death He might...deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,*” that is, to deliver from slavery to sin, death and the devil poor sinners who, through fear of “*the wages of sin*” because of their iniquities, were in perpetual spiritual bondage and had nothing to look forward to but everlasting death in hell!

The seemingly insignificant fact that *not a bone of the Lord Jesus was broken* seals to us the assurance that He is without doubt “*the Christ, the Son of God,*” (John 20:31), the **true** Passover Lamb slain for sinners, and that, as such, His blood “*cleanseth us from all sin*” (I John 1:7). Witness this, first of all, in the description of **how** the Passover lamb was to be **handled** according to the Lord’s directive in Exodus 12:46 — “*In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*” And in Numbers 9:12 we read the same — “*They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it.*” Moreover, as we noted before, even *these statements* were prophetic of “*Christ, our Passover*” as David writes of Him in Psalm 34:20 — “*He keepeth all His bones: not one of them is broken.*” And even Pilate’s heathen soldiers, who knew nothing of these prophecies in the Old Testament, were compelled to comply with them *in spite of their orders*, “*that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘A bone of Him shall not be broken.’*”

What a wonderful, iron-clad testimony to the authority and reliability of God’s Word! And what a reassuring and comforting evidence for our faith in the all-sufficient *vicarious atonement* of our Savior, **the Lamb of God**, for whose sake God reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (II Corinthians 5:19)! “*They brake not*

*His legs,” John reminds us, “that the Scripture should be fulfilled” (v. 36) AND “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name” (20:31).*

Here we have a firm foundation,  
here the refuge of the lost:  
Christ’s the Rock of our salvation,  
His the Name of which we boast:  
LAMB OF GOD, for sinners wounded,  
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!  
None shall ever be confounded  
who on Him their hope have built!

*T.L.H. 153, 4*

— **D. T. M.**



The Fourfold  
Comfort and  
Assurance  
We Have  
in the  
Message  
of the  
Easter Angel



*“And he saith unto them: ‘Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee, as He said unto you.’” —Mark 16:6-7*

On Easter Sunday we Christians marked once again, as we do each and every year, the most **significant**, the most **essential**, the most **glorious**, and to be sure the most **comforting** festival on our church calendar: The Festival of the ***Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, from the Dead.*** Indeed, the event we commemorate on Easter Day is **absolutely central** to our entire Christian faith, as central as the hub is to a wheel; for virtually every fundamental doctrine of Holy Scripture is inseparably linked to the *fact* of Christ’s resurrection — either pointing **to** it, stemming **from** it, or depending **upon** it! In fact, Jesus’ life here on earth, His entire public ministry, and His death on the cross for the sins of the world — all would be **for NOTHING** if He had not truly risen from His grave on Easter morning! For Jesus of Nazareth would have been the greatest fool, fraud, and “flim-flam” con-artist the world had ever seen, a liar and deceiver without equal in the annals of history! And **WE**, His disciples, would be fools as well to have fallen for His “line” and placed our confidence in Him!



The devil, of course, would have us and all men for that matter believe precisely that very thing about the Savior and His mighty resurrection; for Satan deeply **resents** that final and ultimate victory which Jesus won over him when He rose from the dead on the third day! And so the Foe's **adherents** have, from that very moment, sought to discredit, disprove, and even poke fun at the resurrection account in hopes of destroying our most holy faith and leading us to everlasting destruction! But these enemies of Christ and His Word are **doomed to failure** from the outset, for they fly in the face of the TRUTH, of established FACT, of incontrovertible EVIDENCE and eye-witness TESTIMONY. For *Jesus of Nazareth did in fact rise from His grave* on Easter Sunday morning after having *died* the previous Friday afternoon! His **true death** was certified by *objective medical evidence* and by *professional evaluation*, and His **true life** after His resurrection was amply demonstrated "*by many infallible proofs*" (Acts 1:3). Consequently, the claims of unbelieving scoffers notwithstanding, the **FACT** of the Lord's resurrection **speaks for itself!**

Therefore, what we want to examine in this present article is not so much the FACT but the **RESULT** of Jesus' resurrection, namely, what it **accomplished** and why it is of such **importance** to us Christians. We note that the Easter angel's message to the women at the empty sepulchre brings us a **fourfold comfort and assurance** from the Savior's resurrection — the fourfold importance and comfort that we confess also in our *Catechism* (CPH, 1943, pp. 117-118).

The first of these is that, by rising from the dead, *Jesus of Nazareth proved Himself to be the very Son of God*. The words of the angel were plain enough: "*He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him.*" The fact of Jesus' resurrection was clear for anyone to see who cared to look at the evidence. "**Behold!**" said the angel; "**LOOK** at the place where you yourselves saw Him laid out on Good Friday afternoon, unmistakably dead, the blood solids already separated from the lymph, as the Roman centurion also saw and testified. **Look NOW** at the empty slab before you, the linen burial windings lying empty and the napkin from Jesus' face neatly folded and laid aside as no hurried grave robber would have bothered to do. **See** for yourselves!" And this word "*behold*" points not only those women but also **US**, who have the additional Gospel accounts and their evidence, as well as the eyewitness testimony of literally hundreds who saw the Savior alive during the forty days following, yes,

that word directs **US** to recognize *without doubt* the **FACT** of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

But the words "**He is risen!**" give us much more than a mere report of this **fact**. They convey to us the **assurance** that, in this mighty act, **Jesus proved Himself to be the very Son of God!** For who but **God alone** has the ability to raise Himself from the dead?? Who but the **almighty Lord of heaven and earth** could have exercised such superior might that, concerning His very own life, He could declare in advance: "**I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again**"?? Thus the Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 4, **confirms** this first assurance of the Easter angel, saying: "**He was declared to be the SON OF GOD with POWER...by the resurrection from the dead.**"

And, lest anyone dare claim that Jesus' words and promises were mere empty boasts and vain prophecies, the angel brings us his second Easter comfort and assurance, saying: "**Be not affrighted**" — don't be so **amazed** and **astonished**, as if this were an unexpected development — for, by His mighty resurrection from the dead, **Jesus of Nazareth has shown His Word to be the truth!** "**He is risen; He is not here...But He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.**" Jesus had not only promised to rise again on the third day, but He had told His disciples that they would see Him face-to-face thereafter in Galilee. And Matthew's record shows that the angel's words, "**as He said unto you,**" refer not only to Jesus' appearance in Galilee but to the **resurrection itself**; for Matthew quotes the angel as saying: "**He is risen, as He said!**" And St. Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, adds striking detail, quoting **TWO** angels at the grave giving the women this assurance of the truth of Jesus' Word: "**Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spake unto you...saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'**" And they remembered His words."

Why, even Jesus' enemies knew well His words concerning His resurrection from the dead. Oh, they **pretended** at first not to have understood them, when at His trial before Caiaphas they introduced false witnesses to make it seem as if He had threatened to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem and to rebuild it in three days. But they **gave themselves away** when, after His death, they went to Pilate for a seal on the grave, saying: "**Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.'**" Pilate should have marked

well and believed those words, for Jesus had told him in advance, “*Everyone that is of the **truth** heareth **My voice**.*” Yea, **ALL** of Jesus’ Word — not just the red print highlighted in modern-day Bibles, but **ALL** of the Holy Scriptures, which He identified as **His precious Word** — is the **TRUTH**, absolutely reliable in every detail; for He assures us: “*If ye continue in **My Word**, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the **TRUTH**, and the truth shall make you **free***” (John 8:31-32).

And it is this very freedom to which the angel refers in the third assurance we have in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, namely, that **His heavenly Father accepted His vicarious sacrifice as payment-in-full for the sins of the world.** “*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified,*” said the Easter angel. The very purpose of Jesus’ crucifixion, yea, of all His suffering, was to provide, **in our place** and **on our behalf**, a ransom-price of sufficient value that God in heaven would accept its payment as complete satisfaction of divine justice. Thus Isaiah had prophesied concerning Jesus in his 53rd chapter: “*The Lord hath laid on **Him** the iniquity of us all.*” Yes, “*Christ suffered for us,*” Peter writes in his first epistle, chapter 2, “*who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,*” — “*Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.*”

The very purpose of Jesus’ crucifixion, yea, of all His suffering, was to provide, **in our place** and **on our behalf**, a ransom-price of sufficient value that God in heaven would accept its payment as complete satisfaction of divine justice.

And yet, if Jesus had suffered all that anguish, including the very pains of hell itself (Matthew 27:46, etc.) in our place, but then had **remained in the grave**, helplessly bound in the chains of death, His entire sacrifice would have been **for nothing!** For He would have been “shown up” to be a mere man, just another human being, “*none of [whom] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is **precious!***” (Psalm 49:7-8). Then indeed we would be fools for trusting in Him as our Redeemer; for St. Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:17, “*If Christ be **not** raised, your faith is **vain**; ye are yet in your sins!*” We would still be lost and condemned, headed for hell!

But thanks be to God, beloved fellow-sinners, that Jesus of Nazareth

did **NOT** remain in His grave but **rose victoriously** on Easter morning as the **Mighty Conqueror** of sin, death, and Satan — **not** just a mere man whose sacrifice of Himself would otherwise have been an empty gesture and completely in vain, but as the **certified Redeemer** of lost mankind! For the Bible tells us, Romans 4:25, “*Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification,*” as the sure sign that His payment **made good** our debt to God! That was God the Father’s *seal of approval*, so to speak, “*which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead*” (Ephesians 1:20).

What a wonderful assurance and comfort to us Christians is this glorious fact of God’s own Word, that the Father in heaven raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead as **ironclad testimony** that **He fully accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world** unto Himself, and has, because of what Jesus paid on our behalf, forgiven the sins of the whole world and declared all sinners righteous in His sight. This free gift of **OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION** He has published to all men in the Gospel, earnestly desiring “*all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4), “*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16). Thus, as His adopted children and heirs of salvation by faith in His Son, we rejoice to praise Him with the Apostle Peter, saying: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for YOU!*” (I Peter 1:3-4)

And the promise of that blessed inheritance brings us now to the fourth and final assurance and comfort we have in the message of the Easter angel, namely, that ***we too shall see our Savior face-to-face at our own resurrection on the Last Day.*** For the angel instructed the women to tell Jesus’ disciples that He would go before them into Galilee; “*there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.*” We can well imagine the JOY that these words brought to the disciples with the prospect of seeing their Savior alive, face-to-face, just as He had promised them! But the angel’s words should fill also **OUR HEARTS** with the very same **joy of anticipation!** For the Lord’s promise to **US** is **just as sure** as His promise to the disciples! Yes, the **FRUIT of Jesus’ resurrection** will be **our own resurrection**, for He Himself links them together, saying: “*Because I live, ye shall live also.*” (John 14:19) “*I go to prepare a place for you,*” He tells us, “*and I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:2-3).

In Christ, our risen and everliving Savior, we have the very **prototype** of **our own** resurrection from **our own** graves on the Last Day; for as St. Paul assures us in I Corinthians 15, “*If in **this life only** we have hope in Christ, we are of all men **most miserable!** But now **IS** Christ risen from the dead and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept...but every man in his own order: Christ, the **firstfruits**” [that is, the *prototype*] “*afterward **they that are Christ’s** at His coming.*” Even Job in the Old Testament was confident of his bodily resurrection to eternal life as an heir of God through faith in Christ his Savior; for he declared: “*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet **in my flesh shall I see God**, whom I shall see **for myself**; and **mine eyes** shall behold, and **not another**, though my reins be consumed within me!*” (Job 19:25-27).*

O what sweet joy and gladness is ours this holy Easter season — joy not merely in the **FACT** of Jesus’ mighty resurrection from the dead, but, **even better**, joy in the **blessed RESULT** of this miracle-of-miracles, yea, His own **assurance** to **quell our fears** and His own **comfort** to **dry our tears!** For Christ’s resurrection **proves** without a doubt that He is truly the almighty **Son of God**. It **establishes** beyond any question the **truth** and **absolute reliability** of **His Word**. It **testifies** that God the Father was **completely satisfied with Jesus’ sacrifice** for the reconciliation of the world. And it **assures** every believer, according to Jesus’ own promise, of **resurrection in like manner** to everlasting glory on Judgment Day.

May the words of the Easter angel ever remind us of all these blessed assurances and strengthen our confidence in them day-by-day, until by God’s matchless grace in Christ, our crucified and risen Redeemer, we enter the mansions He has prepared for us in His heavenly home and glorious kingdom!

***He lives! All glory to His Name!  
He lives, my Jesus still the same!  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:  
“I KNOW that my Redeemer LIVES!”***

(T.L.H., 200, 8)

— D. T. M.

# Jesus' Visible Appearance to Doubting Thomas

*“Be not faithless, but believing” —John 20:27c*

From the first Easter morning until His ascension into heaven, a period of forty days (Acts 1:3), Jesus showed Himself alive to His followers eleven recorded times in the Scriptures (Mark 16:9-11; Matthew 28:9-10; I Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19-25; John 20:26-29; John 21:1-14; Matthew 28:16-20; I Corinthians 15:6; I Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:1-11). These appearances not only reassured the believers that their only Savior was most certainly alive, but these appearances were also used by Jesus to counsel His followers (Acts 1:3), preparing them for the time when He would no longer be visibly present with them.

Jesus' unselfish and sacrificial love for His followers was so evident during those forty days, just as it was so evident again and again during the thirty-three years of His visible presence in this world, especially during the days and hours right before His death on the cross. The forty days of genuine care and concern by Jesus for His believers, including the never-changing legacy of instruction written down and left for us in the Holy Scriptures, are a powerful proof of His love and devotion for us, as well as for all His other sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17).

It is this unselfish and sacrificial love of our Savior which we are to share with our fellow believers, as well as with all unbelievers. The Savior Himself says to us: *“Love one another, as I have loved you”* (John 13:34). The Apostle John wrote in his First Epistle: *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”* (4:9-11).

One of the purposes for which God has given us His written Word is for reproof (II Timothy 3:16), for rebuke (Luke 17:3), for bringing us to see our sins (Romans 3:20), for warning us. What prompted Jesus to warn Thomas: “*Be not faithless*”? Eight days earlier, on the evening of the first Easter day, Jesus had showed Himself alive to ten of the apostles (John 20:19-23). Thomas was absent (v. 24). When the ten told Thomas, “*We have seen the Lord*” (v. 25), Thomas replied: “*Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe*” (v. 25). Thomas made it very clear that he would not believe that Jesus was actually alive unless he could see and touch Him. So, when Thomas was present at the time when Jesus appeared in person to the eleven, the Savior could not be silent, but instructed and warned him when He said to him: “*Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless*” (v. 27).

As Jesus said to Thomas, so He also says to each of us: “*Be not faithless.*” He warns us not to doubt His words in the Holy Scriptures; He warns us not to think that we are wiser than He, that our knowledge and understanding are greater than His, that He really doesn’t know what He’s talking about in the Scriptures. The seriousness of doubting God’s words is powerfully illustrated for us in Luke 1, where the Angel Gabriel delivered this marvelous, unexpected message of God to Zacharias: “*Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth*” (vv. 13-14). How did Zacharias respond to this wonderful message from God? He said to the angel: “*Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years*” (v. 18). The angel replied to him: “*I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season*” (vv. 19-20). Because of his doubt and unbelief, Zacharias was not able to speak for approximately nine months, until the birth of his son, John (Luke 1:57, 62-64, 67ff.).

When we are told in Proverbs 3, “*In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths*” (v. 6), we are not even to think that these words are too good to be true; we are not to doubt God’s command and His promise; we are warned by Jesus: “*Be not faithless.*”

When Hebrews 10 announces to us, *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (vv. 23-26), we are not to dismiss these words as if they do not apply to us; we are not to harden our hearts to these words of God; we are warned by Jesus: *“Be not faithless.”*

When we hear the words of II Corinthians 5, *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation, ...for He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (vv. 19, 21), we are not to live in the past, as if we have to “work off” our sins, thinking that the work of the sinless God-Man, Christ Jesus, did not establish real, lasting peace and full, free forgiveness between God and all sinners; we are warned by Jesus: *“Be not faithless.”*

When Jesus made His appearance to the eleven, including Thomas, He came when the doors were shut. He said to the eleven: *“Peace be unto you”* (John 20:26). After He said to Thomas, *“Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing”* (v. 27), Thomas said to Him: *“My Lord and my God”* (v. 28). Jesus then said: *“Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”* (v. 29). What encouraging words from our Savior! Saving faith is and will always remain *“the substance [the reality, the conviction, the confidence] of things hoped for, the evidence [the proof] of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Have you ever seen and touched Jesus? Do you still believe in Him? Why? Because of what the Gospel has worked in your heart and soul. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17). The Apostle Peter wrote to his fellow believers concerning Jesus: *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls”* (I Peter 1:8-9).



It is an enormous comfort to us, as God's children, that His Word alone is enough for us; we do not have to have anything else to bring us to saving faith or to keep us in the saving faith. When the rich man in hell (Luke 16:22-23) requested that believing Lazarus travel from heaven back to earth to testify to the rich man's five brothers so that they would not also end up in hell, believing Abraham said to him: "*They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ...If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*" (vv. 29, 31).

*"Be not faithless, but believing"* all that is written in the Scriptures; let those Scriptures be our daily light and lamp (Psalm 119:105); let us not rely on our own wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Let us use "*It is written*" (Matthew 4) to be convicted again and again of our inherited sinfulness (Psalm 51:5) and of our many actual sins (Matthew 5:48; James 2:10; etc.); let us use "*It is written*" to be comforted again and again of the changeless truth that "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). Let us use "*It is written*" to be sure that we are properly showing our love for Him who first loved us (I John 4:19; John 14:23).

*"Be not faithless, but believing. ...Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."* May our confession to our Savior and our prayer to Him be that of the father in Mark 9: "*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief*" (v. 24).

— R. J. L.



## *The Pernicious Inroads of False Doctrine and Practice*

*“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.” — Acts 20:30*

In 1871 Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, a highly respected and prominent professor of theology in the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary, wrote a book (840 pages) entitled *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology*. Here he goes back into the history of the church and shows how various false teachings made their appearance and eventually succeeded in being adopted. He very clearly shows *how* this was accomplished. Read his own words on this subject:

When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking *toleration*. Its friends say to the majority: “You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The Church has her standards of doctrine; of course we shall never interfere with them; we only ask for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions.” Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. “Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is *ipso facto* non-essential. Anybody who makes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the church. Truth and error are two co-ordinate powers, and the great secret of church-statesmanship is to preserve the balance between them.” From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert *supremacy*. Truth started with *tolerating*; it comes to be merely tolerated, and that only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. It puts men into positions, not as at first in spite of their departure from the Church’s faith, but in consequence of it. Their recommendation is that they repudiate that faith, and position is given them to teach others to repudiate it, and to make them skillful in combating it. (*Fortress Press* reprint, 1963, pp. 195-196)

Look where you will and you will find that Dr. Krauth's evaluation is 100% correct! Not too many years ago homosexuality and same-sex marriage were looked upon as disgusting and revolting forms of sexual perversion. Today the vociferous proponents of such a lifestyle (Romans 1:32b) — not only the manifestly immoral and amoral of this world but many who, in the name of “love,” occupy pews in visible Christian churches — are climbing the ladder of success in introducing error into the churches using the three steps spoken of by Dr. Krauth!

In a similar manner we observe the same procedure with those who introduce another false teaching in the church which is “*contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*” (Romans 16:17). For almost two thousand years, following the crystal-clear words of the Apostle Paul, Christian churches recognized as contrary to God's will the incumbency of women in the pastoral office or in any leadership position in the church of authority over the men. Even in the first half of the Twentieth Century, after the so-called political “emancipation of women” in western society, women pastors were the rare exception, while now they are commonly accepted in many churches and church bodies. The introduction of women serving in the pastoral office followed the same procedure of which Dr. Krauth writes and soon became the norm in many denominations. Even the so-called Lutheran churches such as the E.L.C.A. succumbed by first tolerating, then granting equal status to women as to their “*authority*” in the churches, and finally came their supremacy “*over the man*” (I Timothy 2:12). The Missouri Synod is not far behind. Women are now permitted to be in and to cast their vote in the Voters' Assembly, as well as to hold various offices in the church. According to a survey taken by an official L.C.M.S. group back in 1996, some 1,000 L.C.M.S. pastors are in favor of having women serve as pastors.

The Apostle writes that “*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Galatians 5:9). If we are to have God's blessings, then we must use “*the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17) to oppose the *introduction* and *toleration* of all false teaching. The devil's own agenda continues to work confusion in the churches whenever his malicious question, “*Yea, hath God said...?*” rears its ugly head to cast doubt upon the judgment of Holy Scripture as to whether something is or is not sinful in and of itself. What was formerly identified on the basis of clear Scripture texts as “sinful” by our orthodox fathers is now often reduced to a mere “danger” in the evaluation of many erring Christian consciences or to a “potential” for sin —

an activity in which a consistent Christian may participate with a clear conscience as long as he is “truly sanctified.” God says through His Prophet Isaiah: “*Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*” (5:20). And such “retrograde theology” is nowadays actively championed even by formerly orthodox pastors who have since become such as tickle the ears of hearers who will no longer tolerate sound doctrine (II Timothy 4:3ff.).

Dr. C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887) stated it so well: “The Church has no choice but to be at war. It is *ecclesia militans*, the Church Militant, and will remain such until the blessed end. Wherever a Church is seen to be, not *ecclesia militans*, but *ecclesia quiescens*, a Church at ease, that — you may rely on it! — is a false Church” (*Law and Gospel*, p. 266). The “*great falling away*” from the truth in the latter times has not only made its appearance in the church and in the teachings of the Roman Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:3ff.); it has also made its inroads into “conservative” and “confessional” Lutheranism and is now already in full swing! May God graciously preserve us from falling prey to the “*good words and fair speeches*” of belly-serving false prophets who seek to “*deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18)!

— M. L. N.

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## ***On False Prophets—***

“No matter what the motives may be that induce men to depart from Holy Scripture and to cause divisions and offenses contrary to the truth of God’s Word, they must all be condemned as carnal and sinful. There are no “noble” motives for causing divisions within the Church; they are all equally reprehensible and ungodly. Holy Scripture describes them as follows: *belly service*, Rom. 16:18; *pride*, 1 Tim. 6:4; *the inordinate desire for honor*, John 5:44; *unwillingness to suffer for Christ’s sake*, Gal. 6:12; *envy*, Matt. 27:18; *perversity*, 1 Tim. 6:4; John 16:3; 1 Tim. 1:13; *the personal vanity and viciousness of theologians*, 2 Tim. 3:1–9; etc. “Many heresies have arisen in the Church only from the *hatred of the teachers.*” (*Apology*, III, 121.)”

John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 36.

## *On False Interpretation of Holy Scripture—*

“4. It is not our business to sit in judgment on what we have learned to be the plain sense of the Bible text, accepting what agrees, and rejecting what does not agree with our personal views and rationalizations. This *judicial* or *critical* use of human reason is absolutely out of place with respect to divine truths. Where God has spoken, the right of private judgment ceases. ‘Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 10:5). **We must take the words of the Scriptures in the sense and meaning they convey**; we may not add thereto nor take away anything from it (Deuteronomy 4:2), nor corrupt the Word of God by putting our own meaning into the text (2 Corinthians 2:17). We must, therefore, not ‘correct’ the Scriptures according to our ideas and logical deductions, but we must correct our thoughts and ideas according to the Scriptures.

“5. To interpret the Scriptures means that in our own words we explain and restate what the texts of the Bible actually mean and teach. ‘*Sensus literalis unus est.*’ A Scripture text can have but **one** divinely intended sense and meaning; **two contradictory interpretations of the same text cannot both be correct.** A true interpretation of the Bible, therefore, consists in finding, setting forth, and reaffirming the divinely intended meaning of the statements of the Scriptures, **taking the words as they read, in their proper and plain sense, as determined by the context, and ruling out whatever conflicts with the ‘analogy of faith,’ that is, with other clear passages of the Bible, which teach that particular doctrine.** There are doctrines in the Bible which do not agree with **our** way of thinking; there are others which **we** cannot harmonize with each other; but there are none that contradict each other. ‘*Thy Word is truth*’ (John 17:17). It is, therefore, not our purpose to **prove** the teachings of the Bible true to the **satisfaction of human reason**, but merely to show that **we teach in agreement with the Bible.**”

E. W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 1-2.



# *Concern for our Nigerian Brethren*



*“As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” — Galatians 6:10*

Recent news reports from Nigeria “paint” a picture of continuing chaos, even before, during, and after the recent April national elections. Of our six sister congregations in Nigeria, St. Paul’s, Kula (Rivers State), has been “hit the hardest.” **First of all**, earlier this year, there was a “mini-war” between opposing factions in the community, making it necessary for many of the members of St. Paul’s, **Kula**, including Pastor Wariboko and his family, to flee the village temporarily because of the grave danger. Some in the community (but none of St. Paul’s members) were actually killed in that outbreak of violence, preventing many from going, for a period of time, to their regular jobs in the area. **Secondly**, a fire recently swept through parts of Kula in the middle of the night, destroying forty homes, three of which were homes of St. Paul’s members, who escaped the fire with only the clothes which they were wearing at the time.

For Trinity, Oak Park’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Worship Service on Sunday afternoon, April 22, the entire thank-offering was designated for St. Paul’s, Kula, and other urgent needs in our five other sister congregations in Nigeria. During the first days of May, plans are to send these free-will offerings to Nigeria via Western Union.

We, here in the United States, would very much desire to have more up-to-date information concerning our Nigerian brethren, but communication is, at best, “hit-and-miss.” Regular air-mail correspondence takes from 3 to 7 weeks. If we are able to contact someone who has a mobile phone in that far-away country, we may “get through” to that person in a single day, or it may be days. And, if there is a connection

via a mobile phone, the transmission may be very poor (as far as discerning the words spoken) and it may be “cut off,” ended without any notice. That is why one of our priorities on “this end” is to keep investigating the possibility of an e-mail “hook-up” with these Nigerian brethren (ideally with each congregation), even if it has to be via a “Cyber Café.” We will, at our upcoming June Convention, talk about and, hopefully, decide on some course of action to improve the mode and the cost of communicating with our brethren in this foreign land.

During these weeks before our June 22-24 Annual Convention, which will be convened at Peace, Oak Forest, we urgently appeal to those readers of this periodical who are computer “experts,” computer-wise, and specially skilled in the use of this marvelous “machine,” to think of and actually “explore” ways to vastly improve the “talking” with our Nigerian brethren, possibly even getting close to the proficiency of our “talking” with each other here in the United States, and be able to do so at a reasonable, not an outrageous, cost. Bring any and all practical ideas and suggestions to the convention in person, or pass them on to Pastor Worley, our Conference president, ahead of the convention.

In our on-going concern for our Nigerian brethren, especially as they face great physical and bodily danger each day, let us remember them in our prayers, guided and encouraged by the words of absolute, never-changing truth in Hebrew 4: *“For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (vv. 15-16). In our concern for and service to our spiritual brothers and sisters in Nigeria, let us also continue to focus on and be instructed by the timeless words of our Savior: *“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:27-28).

—R. J. L.

Anyone wishing to contribute toward the relief of our Nigerian brethren should make checks payable to:

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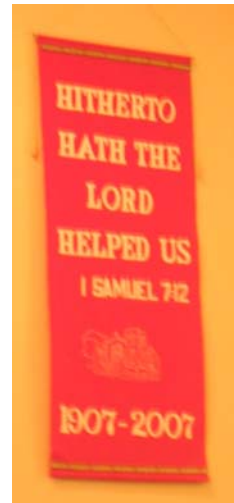
and address them to the church at 320 Erie Street, Oak Park, IL 60302. Thank you!



## *One Hundred Years, by God's Grace!*

*"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."  
— I Samuel 7:12*

The above verse was **one of the two verses** chosen by the voters of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oak Park, Illinois, as a "theme" for the 100<sup>th</sup> year (1907-2007) of its existence as a Christian congregation. This verse is summarized in one word: "*Ebenezer*" [Stone of Help]. When the Philistines threatened the Israelites, "*the children of Israel said to Samuel, 'Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.'* ...*And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. ...Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'"* (I Samuel 7:8, 9, 12). That stone was a continued reminder to the Israelites of how marvelously the Lord had helped them in their great need. Trinity's 100<sup>th</sup> year is a striking reminder of how the one, true, Triune, and gracious God for Jesus' sake has provided His help during these ten decades, especially His divine, merciful help in preserving the pure doctrine and practice of His Word for His little flock. That is why **the second verse** (chosen by Trinity's voters as a "theme" for its centennial year), Psalm 115, verse 1, is so fitting: "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake.*" Who deserves **all the credit, glory, and praise** for bringing Trinity to this point in its history? It is the Lord God, the God of our salvation (Psalm 25:5), the God who has "*justified [us] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24), the God of "*grace*" (I Corinthians 15:10) and "*mercy*" (Psalm 136).



It is a rare thing today, in these "*last days*" (II Timothy 3:1), to find a church body or a local congregation which has retained its orthodoxy for 100 years, or, if it lost its orthodoxy along the way, returned to it with



joy, appreciation, and delight, declaring with the psalmist: “*Thy testimonies are ...[our] delight and [our] counselors*” (Psalm 119:24). Why is this such a rare thing? This is so unusual because of the seductive influences of the devil, the ungodly world, and the flesh, which “pull-out-every-stop” to lead the church body or the local congregation to get “sick and tired” of the same old Scriptural “*sound doctrine*” (II Timothy 4:3a), and instead, “*after their own lusts [to lead the church body or the congregation to] ...heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (vv.3b-4). Therefore, it is solely and only the result of God’s goodness and mercy in Christ Jesus which are responsible for Trinity, at the end of 100 years, being an orthodox congregation and, furthermore, being a member congregation of an orthodox church body, the Concordia Lutheran Conference. Can this century-old congregation do otherwise than to declare with the psalmist: “*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth forever*” (Psalm 118:1)?

On Sunday, April 22, at 4:00 p.m., Trinity had a special Vespers Worship Service to thank and praise the Triune and compassionate



(Lamentations 3:22-23) God for His century of grace. Trinity’s precious sister congregations, St. Mark’s, Sauk Village, and Peace, Oak Forest, plus other guests, were present to join the members of Trinity on this happy occasion. Psalm 145 and II Timothy 3 were the chosen Scripture readings, and the choir from Peace sang the

“*Hallelujah, Amen*” from Händel’s *Judas Maccabaeus*. Pastor Lietz preached on Psalm 130, verses 3-4, focusing on “Necessary Reminders after 100 Years — I. Concerning sin; II. Concerning forgiveness, and III. Concerning respect.” The anniversary thankoffering, in its entirety, went for the urgent needs of our sister congregation, St. Paul’s, Kula, Rivers State, Nigeria, and other needs of our Nigerian brethren in the other five congregations. Following the Worship Service, there was an evening meal, served by the ladies of Trinity, and wonderful opportunities for visiting and Christian fellowship. “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133:1).

— R. J. L.

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Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 10:00 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 11:00 a.m.  
The Rev. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor  
483 Tangent Street  
Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941  
E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

**ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

5350 South Fountain Street  
Seattle, WA 98178 Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 9:00 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South  
Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service ..... 7:00 p.m.  
Adult Bible Class ..... 4:30 p.m.  
Adult Catechism Class ..... 8:30 p.m.

**ST. MARK'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH**

22012 S. Torrence Avenue  
Sauk Village, IL 60411 Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 8:45 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

22012 S. Torrence Avenue  
Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

E-mail: revbloedel@yahoo.com

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

300 North Ridgeland Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60302 Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 9:00 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@yahoo.com



**56<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**  
**of the**  
**Concordia Lutheran Conference**  
**Friday, Saturday and Sunday**  
**June 22, 23 and 24, 2007**  
**at**  
**Peace Ev. Lutheran Church,**  
Oak Forest, Illinois

The **Doctrinal Essay** will be delivered by  
Pastor Paul E. Bloedel  
*“The Active Obedience of Christ —  
His Righteousness for Our Justification”*  
Romans 5:18b

The Friday sermon will be preached by  
President Edward J. Worley

The Sunday sermon will be preached by  
Pastor David T. Mensing

**Pastoral Conference on June 19-20**  
**Board of Directors meeting on June 21**

