

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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“God will have
all men
to be saved.”

— 1 Timothy 2:4a



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To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

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To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

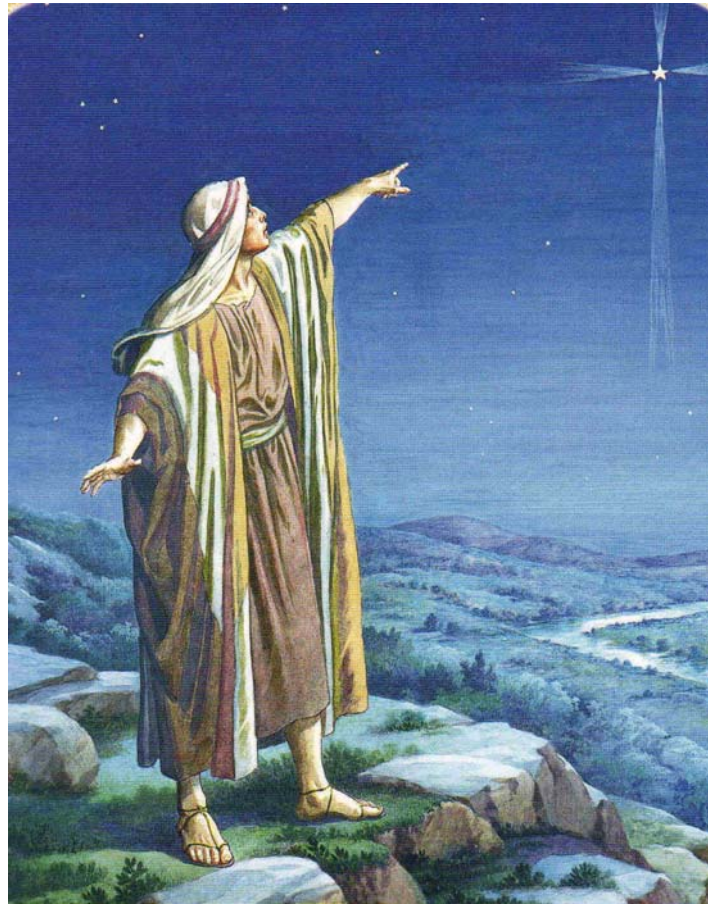
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To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

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“As With Gladness Men of Old”

This hymn, #127 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, is a moving petition to Christ Jesus, our precious Savior and our heavenly King. The writer of this edifying hymn was Mr. William C. Dix, a layman, who lived in Bristol, England. During the 19th Century, when most of the British hymnwriters were clergymen, Mr. Dix, a business man, was an unusual exception. In 1860, on the 6th day of January, which was (and still is) the set day in the Christian Church Year for the festival of *The Epiphany of Our Lord*, Mr. Dix was sick in bed. He read the Gospel Lesson for this festival, Matthew 2:1-12, the account of the wise men coming to worship the newborn Messiah; and these verses moved him to write the five stanzas of “As with Gladness Men of Old.”

In 1861, Mr. Dix **privately** published this hymn in his very own *Hymns of Love and Joy*; and during that same year, it was included in the first **public** printing of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Its lyrics were set to the melody composed by Edward Kocher in 1838.

Let us examine the opening verse of this well-known hymn:

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led by Thee!

Matthew, in his Gospel account, records that “*when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying: ‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him.’*” (2:1-2). This question startled King Herod; for as far as *he* knew, *he* was King of the Jews in Jerusalem and hadn’t heard of any upstart being born to replace him. In fact, Herod and the whole city were “*troubled*” (v. 3) by the prospect of the Messiah’s arrival, the people no doubt fearing the repercussions that would follow. Herod sprang into action, demanding of the chief priests and the scribes “*where Christ should be born*” (v. 4); and he received the correct answer from the Holy Scriptures, Micah 5:2, when he was told: “*In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, ‘And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule My people Israel’*” (vv. 5-6). The king then sent the wise men off to Bethlehem with this order: “*Go and search diligently for the young Child; and, when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also*” (v. 8). Not knowing of the wicked king’s plan to destroy the Christchild, the wise men gladly received this additional information and resumed their quest. “*They departed [from Jerusalem]; and, lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young Child was*” (v. 9)

What was the wise men’s reaction when they saw the special star reappear once again? Matthew reported that “*when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy*” (v. 10). This verse prompted Dix to pen the introductory words: “As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold; as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright.”

The timely **application** of the message of the beginning lines of this first stanza is evidenced by the petition following, directed to the Lord Jesus Himself: “So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led by Thee.” As we sing this stanza and ponder its words, we respond with a resounding “Amen,” addressing this same petition to our changeless Savior: “So, most gracious Lord, may **we** evermore be led by Thee,” not with a special star, not with any other miraculous manifestation or extra-Biblical means, but with the infallible, all-truthful, and ever trustworthy “*light*” and “*lamp*” (Psalm 119:105) of “*the Holy Scriptures*” (II Timothy 3:15). The Psalmist David also prayed for such divine leadership (and may we follow in his footsteps) in the 25th Psalm: “*Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths; lead me in Thy truth and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day*” (vv. 4-5).

Come with me now as we travel to the second stanza:

As with joyful steps they sped,
Savior, to Thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before
Thee whom heav’n and earth adore,
so may we with willing feet
ever seek Thy mercy-seat!

Mr. Dix, in the first two lines of this stanza, echoes the opening words of Matthew 2, verse 11: “*And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.*” In the original wording of this stanza, the initial line was “as with joyful steps they sped, to that lowly manger bed.” The writer subsequently approved of this slight revision, directing his words again to the Christchild, who was at that time no longer “*lying in a manger*” (Luke 2:16) in Bethlehem’s stable but in a house (Matthew 2::11).

Worship, adoration, and submission to the Savior (and not to Mary) are an evidence of gratitude and thanks to Him for all that He has done in being the heavenly Father’s appointed, willing and “*righteous Servant*” (Isaiah 53:11b) in behalf of “*the world*” (John 3:16a) of sinners. What has He accomplished or “*finished*” (John 19:30) for all sinners of all time? He perfectly obeyed the Law of God as their Substitute before God. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 5, verse 19, points to this substitutionary obedience to God by His Son in these instructive and comforting words: “*As by one man’s disobedience [the] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall [the] many be made righteous.*” As the disobedience of Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6) re-

sulted in all of his offspring being sinners, so the obedience of Christ resulted in all of Adam's offspring being declared righteous! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Furthermore, God the Father most certainly laid on His Son, Christ Jesus, as "*the Lamb of God*" (John 1:29), "*the iniquity of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6b), doing so already in eternity, as the Apostle John, in Revelation 13, spoke of "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (v. 8b). What are the far-reaching consequences of this vicarious atonement by Christ Jesus to God in the stead of all mankind? Drink in these marvelous consequences for every single sinner (without exception) as you read and digest the words of the Apostle Paul in 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 [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [in Christ]*" (vv. 19 and 21). St. John wrote: "*He that believeth on Him [Christ Jesus] is not condemned [for his sins], but he that believeth not is condemned already [for his sins] because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:18). The wise men revealed their faith in the Savior, adoring and worshiping Him when they found Him in Bethlehem.

Now in our daily lives as God's "*sheep*" and "*lambs*" (John 21:15-17), having been made through "*the Holy Scriptures ... wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (II Timothy 3:15), and having seen, with our eyes of faith focused on the pages of God's Word, the wise men falling down and worshiping "*Him [Jesus]*" (Matthew 2:11), "*so may we with willing feet ever seek Thy mercy-seat.*" Let us imitate these wise men in their willing and grateful worship of our gracious God and Savior, ever remembering the instruction and the motivation set forth by the Psalmist in the 100th Psalm: "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him and bless His name; for the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations*" (vv. 4-5). The wise men traveled many miles to worship, adore, and gratefully serve Jesus, the "*King of the Jews*" and their own gracious King, though yet a "*young child,*" in a house, in the charge of Mary, His mother (Matthew 2:11). Although God's "*chosen*" people (I Peter 2:9a; John 15:16a) are to worship, adore, and willingly submit to Jesus and His Word wherever they are (at home, at school, at work, taking a walk, going for a visit, at an appointment with their doctor, being on vacation, etc.), yet gathering in God's House, where He is honored by the faithful preaching and teaching of His Word, is not to be neglected (Hebrews 10:25), but is to be

cherished and looked upon with delight, as was the case with the Psalmist when he confessed in Psalm 26: “*Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honor dwelleth*” (v. 8).

Let us now consider stanza 3:

As they offered gifts most rare
at Thy cradle, rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin’s alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heav’nly King!

The initial wording of this stanza is built squarely on the last part of verse 11 in Matthew 2, where the following is said of the wise men: “*When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts – gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*” Mr. Dix, in his first rendering of the first two lines, had this wording: “As they offered gifts most rare, at Thy manger, crude and bare.” The minor revision of this original wording, as also of the original wording of the previous stanza, reflects the fact that Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus were by this time no longer in the temporary, emergency shelter of a stable where the newborn Savior had been laid “*in a manger*” (Luke 2:7, 12, 16), but were residing in a “house” (Matthew 2:11) under more normal circumstances.

The offering of gifts by the wise men to the young Savior — gifts specifically named in sacred prophecy (Isaiah 63:6) — was part of their worship of Him, part of the expression of their loving gratitude to Him who came into this world for them, to “*save*” (I Timothy 1:15b) them and the whole “*world*” (John 3:17) from what they justly deserved as “*the wages*” of their sins, which is everlasting “*death*” (Romans 6:23a), “*everlasting punishment*” (Matthew 25:46a) in “*hell*” (Luke 16:23). With their gifts, the wise men gave evidence of their “*faith*” (James 2:18b) in the promised Messiah, their trust in the promised “*Seed*” of the woman (Genesis 3:15), and their confidence in Him who “*was wounded for [their] transgressions, ...was bruised for [their] iniquities, ...and with His stripes [they] are healed*” (Isaiah 53:5), even if they had not yet been exposed to this and other Messianic prophecies.

“So may **we** [like the wise men] with holy joy,” “*not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (II Corinthians 9:7b), as part of our worship of Christ, our heavenly, gracious, and merciful King, bring **our** “gifts,” “*the first fruits of all [our] increase*” (Proverbs 3:9b), **our** “costliest treasures,” “*to prove the sincerity of [our] love*” (II Co-

inthians 8:8b) for Him who “*first loved us*” (I John 4:19b) and “*gave Himself for [us]*” (Galatians 2:20b) to redeem “*us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree’*” (3:13).

Let us now ponder the intercessions to our Good Shepherd in stanza 4:

Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds Thy glory hide.

The sheep of Jesus petition Him, who is “holy,” “*without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15b), to “keep” (I Peter 1:5) them, through His living, powerful means of grace, which are the Gospel (Romans 1:16) and the Sacraments (Galatians 3:27; I Corinthians 11:26), in the “narrow way” (Matthew 7:14), the “*Way*” or “*road*” of Christ Himself (John 14:6), the “way” of His vicarious (substitutionary) atonement, and the “way” of His active and passive obedience (which we have the privilege of reviewing as we read through the Passion History during this Lenten season); it is this Savior alone, and none other, who is “*THE Way*” (John 14:6), the ONLY Road to everlasting life in heaven. The Apostle Peter, in Acts 4, confirmed this changeless truth when he declared: “*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (v. 12).

God’s “*people*” (I Peter 2:10) confidently know and trust that, at the time of their death or on the day of Jesus’ second visible advent, whichever comes first, “when earthly things are past,” their Savior will safely “bring [their] ransomed souls at last” to paradise, to their heavenly and everlasting home; for it is most certainly true that whosoever “*believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*” (John 3:36a). Their preservation in the saving faith “*unto the end*” (Matthew 24:13) is assured as they, His sheep, “*hear His voice ...and they follow [Him]*” (10:27). And Christ Himself says of these sheep who hear His voice and follow Him: “*I give unto them eternal life [as a priceless gift of grace], and they shall never perish, neither shall any man [lit., anyone] pluck them out of My hand*” (v. 28).

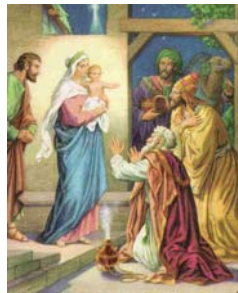
Now for the final stanza of this endearing hymn:

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
Thou its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
Thou its Sun which goes not down.
There forever may we sing
alleluias to our King!

In heaven there is no need for God's great "created light," the sun (Genesis 1:16). Why not? Christ is not only "*the light of the world*" (John 8:12a), of this present world and of all its inhabitants, but He is also the light of **heaven** and of all who dwell **therein**, as the Apostle John testifies in Revelation 21: "*The city [the city of God, another name for heaven] had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; ...for there shall be no night there*" (vv. 23-24a, 25b).

To be with the only Savior in heaven brings "*fullness of joy*" (Psalm 16:11b) forever and ever; He is the everlastingly-shining "*Sun of Righteousness*" (Malachi 4:2a), "*the Lord our Righteousness*" (Jeremiah 23:6b). Oh, how immensely blessed we are to be "*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26) and to have promised to us and waiting for us "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]*" (I Peter 1:4), the precious "*Crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10b). While we are still in this world, having by faith the sure victory over sin, the devil, death, and the grave "*through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" let us, out of God-wrought gratitude for our creation, redemption, justification, sanctification and preservation in the true faith, be "*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as [we] know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 15:57-58). Then, when we have "*finished [our] course*" (II Timothy 4:7) here in this world, we will be privileged to sing, "in the heavenly country bright," perfect "alleluias to our King" for His name's sake.

— R. J. L.





Christ's Epiphany in His Transfiguration

“And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” — Luke 9:30-31

When we Christians speak of the **Epiphany** of our Lord, we are using a word of Greek origin meaning “appearance” or “manifestation;” and we refer initially to the appearance of Jesus in His infancy already to the **Magi**, the Wise Men from the East. In fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 60:1-6), the Baby Jesus, at an age of no greater than two years — “according to the time which [Herod] had diligently inquired of the wise men” (Matthew 2:16) — “appeared” or “manifested Himself” to those strangers from afar as the “*Light to lighten the Gentiles*” (cf. Luke 2:32), the Savior of ALL mankind, not just the “*King of the Jews*” (Matthew 2:2). Thus we Christians celebrate that appearance on **January 6th** each year with special rejoicing because of its particular significance for us **Gentiles**, us non-Jews according to our descendancy from barbarian and heathen tribes in Europe and elsewhere. And, while most people take down their Christmas decorations and packed them away as early as a day or two after Christmas, many Christians deliberately keep the celebration going through **January 6th**, the “*Gentiles’ Christmas*,” or the nearest Sunday to it, in grateful recognition of Jesus’ “*Epiphany*” as the Savior of “*ALL people*” (Luke 2:10), including us Gentiles.

But the Epiphany of our Lord also has a wider significance, as we consider, for example, His **appearance** or **manifestation** to men in His public ministry, that is, when, at the age of thirty years (Luke 3:23), He first appeared on the scene to be **publicly recognized** as the long-promised Messiah and Savior of the world. He appeared first of all

“unto **His own**” (John 1:11), to the people of Israel according to the flesh. It was that Epiphany which the Messiah’s “messenger” (Malachi 3:1), John the Baptist, had proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea, as he preached repentance and baptized the people in Jordan, and where the Savior was specially manifested at His own baptism by the voice of God the Father and by the appearance of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16-17); and John the Baptist personally pointed Him out to his own disciples, saying: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Shortly thereafter, Jesus “**manifested forth His glory**” (John 2:11) in His first miracle at Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine; and subsequently, throughout the course of His public ministry, He **manifested** Himself as “*the Christ, the Son of God*” and the Savior of the world by His preaching and by His many miracles (John 20:30-31).

But one of the most striking **manifestations** of the Savior’s glory — and a poignant glimpse ahead of His vicarious suffering and death for the sins of the world — occurred on a high mountain, witnessed only by three of His disciples; and we celebrate that event on the last Sunday after Epiphany each year. What a privileged few were those three disciples, Peter, James, and John to have **witnessed** the magnificent **transfiguration** of the Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew 17:1-9, in Mark 9:2-9, and in Luke 9:28-36 from which our title-text is taken! Peter himself refers to their eye- and earwitness of that occasion in his second epistle, chapter one, verses 16 to 18.

Had the other disciples seen that vision — yea, had the many thousands to whom Jesus had preached during His public ministry here on earth seen that vision (including the scribes and Pharisees, who were always looking for “*a sign*” from Him, Matthew 16:1) — would perhaps the coming passion and death of Jesus have taken a *different turn*?? Would God’s chosen people have *deliberately* crucified the “*Lord of Glory*” and cursed themselves and their children with the guilt of His blood?? Our poor, fleshly minds may sometimes entertain such thoughts and speculations; but we should know that it is Satan’s aim and pleasure so to trouble our minds and to lead us to doubt God’s “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge*” (Acts 2:23) according to which He ordained in eternity that His Son suffer and die for the sins of the world. Even a miraculous vision such as this would not have changed the minds of Jesus’ adversaries, would not have prevented Christ’s great Passion, and would not have blocked His *vicarious atonement*. The **Means of Grace** IS and always HAS BEEN the precious **Gospel of Salvation**, proclaimed to all men in the

Word, NOT miracles, manifestations, and visions specially given by God to confirm the Word. For Jesus Himself says that if men “hear not *Moses and the prophets* (the **Holy Scriptures**), *neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*” And that is HIS OWN omniscient evaluation to put any speculation on our part to rest! Indeed, the Apostle Peter downplays his eyewitness of the transfiguration in favor of the witness of Holy Scripture, saying: “*We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*” (II Peter 1:19).

Indeed, we have no reason to be at all envious of Peter, James and John, as to what they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration as privileged witnesses of the Savior’s glory; for in the Holy Scriptures of our God, in which “*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (v. 21), we too are eyewitnesses of Christ’s majesty! For, in the Holy Scriptures, **we see**, as surely as did His three disciples on that mountain-top, the brightness of His glory, the surety of His atonement, and the authority of His Word.

We read in Matthew’s account that “*after six days*” (17:1a) or about a week after Jesus had announced to His disciples the fact that He would soon have to suffer at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and would be killed, and would be raised again the third day (16:21), “*Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was **transfigured before them***” (17:1b-2a). He underwent a kind of transformation or change of appearance, not merely in the *minds* of the disciples, not in their *imagination*s or in their *dreams*, as many claim, but a real **metamorphosis** which they *witnessed* with their very own eyes, being fully awake (as Luke tells us in his parallel account).

“*And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light*” (Matthew 17:2). This was a rare and exceptional **epiphany** or **manifestation** of Jesus’ glory; for, although in His personal union as “*God... manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:16), Jesus’ divine attributes were fully communicated to or shared by His human nature, He did not always and fully USE them in His *State of Humiliation*. For He didn’t want to attract emotional and hysterical attention to Himself by means of spectacular display; but rather He appealed to the people by the preaching of His Word, confirming the Word with His miracles. And yet, as John reports in the prologue to his Gospel, in this instance “*we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace*”

and truth” (John 1:14). And the Apostle Peter, as noted before, says essentially the same thing: “*We were **eyewitnesses** of His **majesty**...when we were with Him in the holy mount*” (II Peter 1:16b and 18b).

As much as you and I might wish to have been included in that “*eyewitness*” opportunity, let us not at all feel sorry for ourselves, as if we were somehow left out! For we too are eyewitnesses of His majesty and of the brightness of His glory in the external, objective testimony of His **precious Word**, where these things “*are written*” for our eyes to see for themselves, John tells us at the end of his 20th chapter, “*that [we] might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, [we] might have life through His Name*” (v. 31). Indeed, the brilliance of the verbally-inspired Gospels is the radiance of His Word, “*a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path*” (Psalm 119:105) to guide our souls to heaven.

Moreover, we are eyewitnesses of Christ’s majesty and of the brightness of His glory by the operation of the Holy Spirit WITHIN US by means of the Word, St. Paul tells us, who “*hath shined in our **hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6b) as we by faith bask in the radiance of His gracious countenance, in the brightness of our *Beautiful Savior*, ...*Son of God and Son of Man* (TLH 657, 1)!

But now we note in the narratives of the transfiguration that something else happened there on that mountain-top which impressed the disciples as eyewitnesses of Christ’s majesty, which impressed them with the surety of His *vicarious atonement* for the sins of the world. We recall that Jesus had, just six days before this transfiguration, informed the disciples about His impending **suffering, death and resurrection** (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22) —a prospect that none of the disciples wanted to consider, especially Peter! “*Surely Jesus wouldn’t have to go through anything like THAT!*”—the view that Satan himself had planted in their minds, the view that Satan had gotten Peter to express out loud, and the view that Jesus condemned in no uncertain terms (Matthew 16:23)!

“*And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias*” (Luke 9:30). These two great Old Testament prophets, both of whom had suffered unmercifully for Jesus’ sake at the hands of God’s own chosen people, **Moses** and **Elijah** suddenly appeared with Jesus and held a conversation with Him, who Himself was about to suffer at

the hands of His people in order to save them from their sins. This was no idle chat that they were having, for Luke tells us that they “*spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (v. 31). How timely this was for the disciples, though they were sleepy and not completely attentive to the conversation, as Luke describes them, how timely to **confirm** what Jesus had told them, yea, to **show them** that these two prophets of the Lord knew and understood full well the **plan of salvation** and the necessity of the Messiah’s **vicarious suffering and death** for the sins of the world. For after His resurrection, Jesus Himself would remind the disciples of this, saying, “*These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.*’ Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” And here, even in before the fact, Peter, James, and John were “*eyewitnesses*,” as they **saw** Moses and Elijah “*talking with Him*” (Matthew 17:3) about the **surety** of the Messiah’s **atoning sacrifice** for the reconciliation of the world.

Such surety is also OURS, as “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” with Peter, James and John; for **WE** too have seen “*Moses and Elias talking with Him*” in these very God-inspired texts, in this “*more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto (we) do well that (we) take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*” (II Peter 1:19). Moreover, when we embarked anew upon the holy Lenten season on Ash Wednesday and now have the glorious opportunity to hear and study again the *Passion History of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*, we are again retrospective “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” in His suffering and death, and see for ourselves how this majestic vicarious atonement of our Savior was fulfilled to the letter, that “*Christ was delivered [because of] OUR offenses*” (Romans 4:25), that “*Christ died for OUR sins according to the Scriptures*” (I Corinthians 15:3). And then, when the Lenten season comes to a close after Good Friday, with the supreme advantage that the disciples of Jesus didn’t have at this point in time, we shall also review and celebrate with the assurance of hindsight the **resurrection** of the Savior—for which these three witnesses had to wait before they could even report this wonderful vision of Jesus’ transfiguration (Matthew 17:9)! Thus again, as “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*,” we shall see in the Holy Record “*many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3) that, after having atoned for the sins of the world on Calvary’s cross, in “*His decease*” which He “*accomplished*,” as Moses and Elijah discussed it with Him, “*Christ was raised again [because of] OUR justification*,” because His

vicarious atonement won for us reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of our sins, and the only righteousness that avails before His demanding justice.

But now yet, high on that mountain-top, we witness with Jesus' disciples one other event which *manifests* and confirms to us **the authority of His Word as that of our Divine Prophet**. As Peter was considering how this precious moment might be prolonged with the erection of some temporary shelters for Jesus and the heavenly visitors (Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33), "*behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him'*" (Matthew 17:5). Who but a Father can say, "*This is my beloved Son*"? Jesus' own heavenly Father appeared on the scene to certify the Savior's *person and deity*, to certify His *office*, and to certify *the authority of His Word*. Peter says in retrospect: "*For He received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory... and this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount*" (II Peter 1:17a-18). Moses had declared the same in prophecy about 1,500 years before, when he said of the coming Messiah, the Divine Prophet, "*Unto Him ye shall hearken!*" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Now the Father Himself says of Jesus, "*Hear ye Him!*" And **WE** hear that voice with our very own ears in the narratives of the transfiguration.

Moreover, Jesus time and again reminds us and all who would know the truth: "*Continue in My Word!*" (John 8:31); "*Hear My voice!*" (John 10:27a); "*Hearken unto Me, every one of you!*" (Mark 7:14b). Listen up everyone: "*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63b) —And we are eyewitnesses of His MAJESTY and of His AUTHORITY as our Divine Prophet *manifested* in these precious Gospel accounts, as well as in the other passages where He testifies about His preaching and about the importance of gladly hearing and learning His Word of life.

Furthermore, as Peter writes concerning this incident and of **the voice of authority** which he and the others heard: "*We have also a MORE SURE Word of prophecy,*" more sure even than earwitness testimony, namely, the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, which are **Jesus'** Word every bit as much as the verses printed in red type in most Bibles nowadays! "*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of MAN; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" says

Peter (II Peter 1:21). And you and I have **advantages** right here and right now as **eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty** that His own disciples didn't have in spite of their day-in and day-out intimate contact with Him: We have His Word —Old and New Testaments, complete— in their truth and purity, the full, clear, authoritative, inerrant, infallible, and all-sufficient Word, “*which is able to save [our] souls!*” (James 1:21b). Hear the preaching of **His Word!** Hear your Savior! “Hear ye **Him!**” Then, indeed, “*ye shall know the **truth**; and the truth shall make you **free***” (John 8:32) — free from **error**, free from “*cunningly devised **fables***” (II Peter 1:16a) or **myths**, free from those who “*by good words and fair speeches **deceive** the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18).

May God grant to each and every one of us, as the holy Epiphany season draws to a close, that we **hold fast** in humble, childlike faith to our dear Savior, **manifested** and “mirrored” to us in His Holy Word as “*the Light of the world*” (John 8:12a), the “*Redeemer of Israel*” (Isaiah 49:7a, the “*Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14b), whose perfect earned righteousness and vicarious atonement — all rendered to God in our place and in our stead — won forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for every sinner —yea, for **you** and for **me**. And let us never forget that His precious Word is the very means, the powerful, efficacious, and authoritative means, whereby His Holy Spirit creates, strengthens, and preserves in us the **saving faith** which lays hold on, confides in, and takes comfort in God's objective justification of the world in eternity and His personal justification of US here in time by creating the light of faith in our sin-darkened, perverse hearts, —all for **Jesus'** our Savior's sake!

*...And may Thy Word, that Light Divine,
shine on in splendor holy,
that we repentance show, in faith ever grow!
The power of sin destroy, and all that doth annoy!
Oh, make us faithful Christians!*
(TLH, 477, 3)

— D. T. M.

God's Universal Will of Grace

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.
—Titus 2:11

During the season of Epiphany, one of the commonly focused upon church-themes is the manifestation of God's grace to the world in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The saving grace of God is, indeed, for *all men*, because Christ purchased the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation for all people by His substitutionary life of holiness, suffering, and death (Romans 5:18–19; II Corinthians 5:15, 19). This comforting doctrine is beautifully expressed in the above quoted passage (Titus 2:11), which can be more accurately translated from the original Greek as: “*The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.*” (The Greek word translated as “*appeared*” in this verse is “*epiphaino*,” from which we get the word “Epiphany.”)

Though the Calvinists say that God's grace is seriously intended only for a select few (the *elect*), the Scriptures very clearly teach that the Lord God, in Christ, loves *all people* and desires to save them all. This doctrine of *God's universal will of grace* can be observed in so many different Bible passages. Consider, for example, these that describe Christ's purpose for coming into the world: “*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*” (John 3:16–17); “*I am the Light of the world*” (John 8:12; 9:5); and “*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). Consider also the passages that speak of how many were redeemed by His suffering and death: “[*Christ Jesus*] gave Himself a ransom for *all*” (I Timothy 2:6); “[*Christ*] died for *all*” (II Corinthians 5:15); and “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). This includes even those who *deny Him* and are eternally *damned* (II Peter 2:1). That Christ's substitutionary active and passive obedience (His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death) appeased God's wrath against the sins of the *world* and were accepted for the reconciliation and forgiveness of *all mankind* is shown in such passages as I John 2:1–2, II Corinthians 5:19, and Romans 5:18–19. And because the saving faith that receives God's gracious forgiveness is worked through the Gospel (Romans 1:16; 10:14–17), Jesus commissioned His disciples to carry the Gospel to all people,

saying: “*Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8); and “*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). Finally, consider the passages in which the Lord our God unequivocally states that He does not want anyone to remain in unbelief and be damned but desires to bring *all* to repentance and faith for their eternal salvation: “*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*” (Ezekiel 33:11); “*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (II Peter 3:9); “*God our Savior...will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:3–4). Indeed, the Scriptures leave no doubt about God’s universal will of grace!

Sadly, however, even though the Lord sincerely desires to save every human being, the vast majority of people are *not* saved, but are eternally damned. Jesus says: “*Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and **many** there be which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and **few** there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:13–14). Now the fact that most people are not saved is taken by the Calvinists to be proof that God does not want to save all. Of course, the many passages cited in the previous paragraph are sufficient to refute that false claim. Arguing against all the Scriptural proof for the doctrine of God’s universal will of grace, the Calvinists employ three basic tactics: 1) They assert that some Bible passages show that God never wanted to save certain people; 2) they claim that the “hidden will of God” (what He has *not* revealed in the Scriptures) is the opposite of what He *has* revealed about His will in this matter; and 3) they appeal to “logical” deductions.

So, what Bible passages could the Calvinists possibly cite that would argue against God’s universal will of grace? It should be understood that no passages of Scripture actually do argue against, or contradict, any other passages of Scripture. A contradiction in His Word is an impossibility because “[*God’s*] Word is truth” (John 17:17); and a contradiction would imply an error. But false prophets twist the Scriptures (II Peter 3:16), put their own private interpretations upon the Bible (II Peter 1:20), and thereby seek to set Scripture against Scripture. One way that the Calvinists do this is by attacking God’s universal will of grace using passages that set forth God’s *secondary* (or *consequent*) will to punish those who reject His grace in Christ—even punishing them in

their earthly lives by increasing their opposition to the Gospel. “*God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (II Thessalonians 2:11–12). Such passages do not, however, argue against the fact that God wants to save all people by faith in Christ Jesus; they simply set forth the consequences of *rejecting* God’s grace in Christ (II Thessalonians 2:10), namely, they “*bring upon themselves*” God’s wrath and punishment (II Peter 2:1b). Take, for example, how God says of the Israelites who rebelled against Him: “*I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust; and they walked in their own counsels*” (Psalm 81:12). Now that verse might be taken by a Calvinist as proof that God never wanted to save those people and had even predestinated them to damnation, *since He gave them up unto their sinful ways*. But that opinion is quickly disproved by what God says in the very next verse: “*Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways!*” Thus He clearly expresses His desire that they would have followed Him instead of going their own way. Again, a Calvinist might think he has proof that God never wanted to save those who go to hell when he reads in Isaiah 63:10 that the Lord actually “*fought against*” the rebellious Israelites as their Enemy. But reading that verse in context shows the great *love* that the Triune God had for them (according to His *primary will*), but that His *secondary will* to punish them came as a result of their rejection of His love. “*He was their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their Enemy, and He fought against them*” (Isaiah 63:8–10).

But even if the Calvinists concede that the Scriptures *do* teach **God’s universal will of grace**, that does not mean that they actually accept it to be true. This is because they regard the true, *hidden will* of the Lord to be *different* than (even the exact *opposite* of) what is revealed in the Gospel about God’s desire to save all people. Commenting on II Peter 3:9, which states that “*the Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,*” Calvin writes: “No mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His will as made known to us in the Gospel” (*Calvin’s Commentaries*, II Peter 3:9). Such an opinion is quite blasphemous for two basic reasons: 1) Calvin dares to presume to know something about God’s “hidden purpose”; and 2) What Calvin claims to be “the hidden purpose of God” is a contradic-

tion of “His will as made known to us in the Gospel”—thus making Him a liar. Yes, those who argue against what the Lord has plainly declared in His Word are calling Him a liar (I John 1:10; 5:10)!

Now on other occasions, Calvin warned against speculating in the matter of God’s hidden will—“when puny man endeavors to penetrate to the hidden recesses of the divine wisdom” (*Institutes*, Book 3, chapter 24, §4). And yet Calvin still felt justified in ascribing the cause of man’s damnation to the “hidden purpose of God,” because he regarded this to be the only *logical* and *reasonable* answer to the question: “If God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish?” (*Calvin’s Commentaries*, II Peter 3:9). Simply put, the “logical” argument of the Calvinists is this: Since God can do anything He wants, and since not all people are saved, it proves that God does not truly want to save all people. Now this particular defense of the Calvinistic heresy is actually the *origin* of the heresy—it is the only “reasonable” explanation that Calvin could imagine to explain why God does not save all people, when He certainly has the ability to do so.

In trying to solve the seeming mystery concerning why God does not save all people, the only solutions that occur to the fleshly or “*carnal mind*” of man, in which “*dwelleth no good thing*” (Romans 7:18) and which is “*enmity against God*” (Romans 8:7), are that there must either be a difference in God’s initial disposition toward some people (as opposed to others), or a difference in some people’s (as opposed to others’) natural disposition toward God. *Calvinism* maintains that the difference is in *God*—that the Lord does not truly want all to be saved. *Synergism* (the teaching that man must assist in his conversion) maintains that the difference is in *man*—that some people in their natural condition resist the Holy Ghost more or less than others do. The Scriptures, however, show both of those opinions to be false.

The Jews of Jesus’ day often contrived questions intended to “*entangle Him in His talk*” (Matthew 22:15). Similar insidious questions still today are phrased in such a way as to “set up” the Christian to give a *false* answer no matter how he addresses them. In some cases, the “trick” or self-contradiction is obvious: “If God is almighty, could He create a stone so great that He couldn’t move it?” Other questions, however, simply trigger carnal rationalism and suggest that a *false* answer is completely “reasonable.” At the behest of Satan, such questions are *offensive* and come from those who “*savor not the things that be of God but those that be of men*” (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33).

Dr. Franz Pieper noted in the *Brief Statement* of 1897 that such questions “[have] been frequently raised in the Christian Church, especially in our day” — certainly not on the part of the orthodox but on the part of the heterodox in outward Christendom — to trap believers into espousing either *Calvinism* or *synergism* in the matter of conversion. He cites one in the following words: “*What is the cause why not all men are converted, seeing that the grace of God is universal, and that all men are alike found in a state of utter depravity?*” We also find the trap worded in other ways: “*Why some and not others?*,” “*Why some instead of others?*,” and “*Why not all?*” This trap has been called the *crux theologorum* or the “*cross of theologians*,” a cross certainly not of **God’s** making to strengthen us (cf. Hebrews 12:10b-11), but a trap of the **carnal mind** to ensnare us (cf. II Timothy 2:23). We “cannot answer” such tempting questions because of *the way they are worded*, neither should we be made compelled to answer them *according to the way they are worded* (Proverbs 26:4) because of the disastrous results that occur when people do so.

Restricting ourselves to what God has revealed in the Bible, we *are* able to answer these separate questions: “Why are those saved who are saved?,” and “Why are those damned who are damned?” The *cause of man’s salvation* is the grace of God in Christ apart from any merit on the part of man (Ephesians 2:8–9; II Timothy 1:9); and the *cause of man’s damnation* is his own sins, unbelief, and rejection of the Gospel (Matthew 23:37; II Thessalonians 1:7–9). These truths do not, however, permit us to explain why one person is saved as opposed to another, because God’s grace in Christ is universal (I Timothy 2:3–6), and because man’s opposition to the Gospel by nature is also universal (I Corinthians 2:14). Holy Scripture does not allow us to say, or imply, that the Lord is even partially to blame for a man’s damnation; nor does Scripture allow us to say, or imply, that man is even partially responsible for his own salvation. God says: “*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help*” (Hosea 13:9).

Our orthodox Lutheran forefathers strenuously warned against trying to explain why not all people are saved—warning against falling into Calvinism or synergism. Consider what was written by Dr. Pieper in his original *Brief Statement* of 1897 concerning the question “What is the cause why not all men are converted?”:

We profess that on Scriptural ground we know only this much, that it is due to the grace of God, and to it alone, if

men are *converted*, while it is due to men, and to them alone, and is not due to a defect in grace, if men are *not converted*, as is written, Hosea 13:9: “*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*” Here we rest the matter, since Scripture has revealed nothing further.

And in the *Brief Statement* of 1932 (which, by God’s grace, is still our confession today) under the section *Of Conversion*:

As to the question why not all men are converted and saved, seeing that God’s grace is universal and all men are equally and utterly corrupt, we confess that we cannot answer it. From Scripture we know only this: A man owes his conversion and salvation, not to any lesser guilt or better conduct on his part, but solely to the grace of God. But any man’s non-conversion is due to himself alone; it is the result of his obstinate resistance against the converting operation of the Holy Ghost, Hosea 13:9.

And, regarding reiterate conversion *versus* judicial hardening:

As regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should with Paul place the finger upon our lips and remember and say, Romans 9:20: “*O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*” The Formula of Concord describes the mystery which confronts us here not as a mystery in man’s heart (a “psychological” mystery), but teaches that, when we try to understand why “one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again” [*Triglotta*, p. 1081, 57–59, 60b, 62, 63; Mueller p. 716ff.] we enter the domain of the unsearchable judgments of God and ways past finding out, which are not revealed to us in His Word, but which we shall know in eternal life, I Corinthians 13:12. Calvinists solve this mystery, which God has not revealed in His Word, by denying the universality of grace; synergists, by denying that salvation is by grace alone. Both solutions are utterly vicious, since they contradict Scripture and since every poor sinner stands in need of, and must cling to, both the unrestricted universal grace and the unrestricted “by grace alone,” lest he despair and perish. (*Brief Statement* of 1932, Sections 14–16)

“In answering questions,” Dr. Pieper concludes, “we do not proceed further than Scripture leads us, and Scripture teaches that whoever is

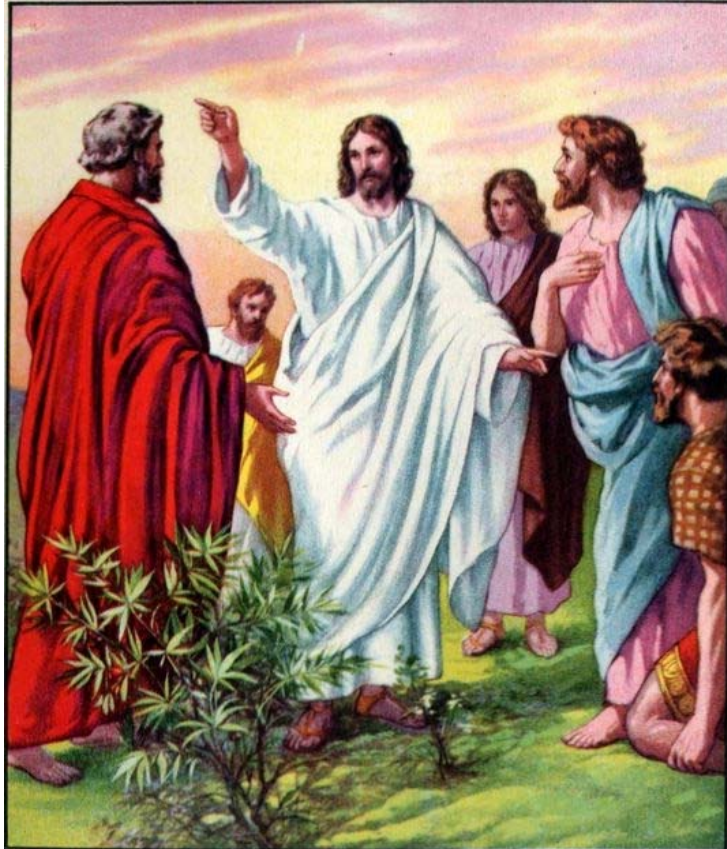
converted is converted solely by the grace of God, and whoever remains unconverted must ascribe this fact to the resistance which he has offered to the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost" (*Brief Statement* of 1897).

Clinging to the glorious Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus, we can all rejoice in the fact that the Lord truly loves us and desires to save each and every one of us, because the Bible clearly teaches that He loves and desires to save *all mankind!* Moreover, we can all rejoice that our eternal salvation in heaven is not in the least bit dependent upon our works (or lesser resistance of the Spirit), but is completely the result of the gracious working of God in our behalf. May the Lord, therefore, graciously preserve us from all rationalism and human speculation that would undermine His precious Word and mercifully grant unto us true humility of spirit to believe and confess only that which is in full harmony with the sacred Scriptures!

— P. E. B.

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. —II Corinthians 10:5

The On-Going Need for Faithful Christian Pastors



“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”
—Matthew 9:37

Not only did this word of the Lord Jesus pertain specifically to the situation at hand when He uttered it; but it certainly applies to our circumstances today, having been written, as are all the Holy Scriptures, *“for our learning”* (Romans 15:4). This past June, by the grace of God, we graduated two candidates of the Holy Ministry (*c.r.m.*'s); and almost immediately they were called by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28) into the pastoral office of Conference congregations. At present, we again find ourselves with no students; and again we have no available candidates

should one (or more) of our current pastors be called home to heaven — or become disabled and no longer able to function as undershepherds of Christ in His churches. Needless to say, therefore, our need for future pastors, though it was temporarily relieved last June, is as critical now as it has ever been, considering the fact that we have a five-year curriculum in our seminary program, and we certainly do not want, even because of an emergency, to feel pressured to certify as “fit and well-prepared” a man whose training is in any way deficient (cf. II Timothy 2:15).

Since we have now left the holy Epiphany season (the theme of which is Christ’s *manifestation* of Himself as the Son of God and the Savior of the world) and have entered upon the holy Lenten season (focusing our attention upon Christ’s *vicarious atonement* for the sins of the world), God’s plan of salvation stands before us in the Word of His Gospel, “*the Word of Reconciliation*,” which He has intended to be preached in all the world to every creature (Mark 16:15). “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*,” we read in II Corinthians 5:19 concerning God’s gracious justification or forgiveness of the entire world of sinners —then and now. To this gracious disposition He was moved *for Christ’s sake*, that is, because of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of divine justice as the Substitute and Scapegoat for the ungodly (Romans 4:5; 5:8-9). Accordingly, “[God] will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy (I Timothy 2:4), expressing the Lord’s *primary will* that He earnestly desires the salvation of *every sinner* and wants “*the world*,” for whom He gave His only-begotten Son to be its Redeemer (John 3:16), to be brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ, “*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). These and other clear and certain texts of Holy Scripture stand in direct opposition to Calvin’s false teachings of a limited atonement, of particular grace, and of a double predestination; “*for the Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (II Peter 3:9).

However, “*the knowledge of the truth*” of God’s *objective justification* of the world for Christ’s sake does not belong to man’s *natural knowledge of God*, neither is it committed to men “out-of-the-air” by the immediate revelation of the Spirit; nor yet is the saving faith whereby a poor sinner lays hold on God’s gracious forgiveness for Christ’s sake bestowed upon him without means. For St. Paul, writing to the Romans, asks the following rhetorical questions to which the answers are obvious in the text itself: “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom*

they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:14-15) ...and the Apostle's divinely-inspired conclusion in verse 17: "*So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*"

Therefore "*the Word of Reconciliation,*" the "good news" of God's reconciliation of the world unto Himself, the precious Gospel of God's saving grace in Christ Jesus, has been "*committed unto us,*" Paul says, II Corinthians 5:20, so that we can **proclaim** it "*in all the world, ...unto all nations*" (Matthew 24:14). "*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (I Corinthians 1:21). And the "marching orders" given by Paul to the young pastor, Timothy, as he sallied forth "*as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (II Timothy 2:3) to "*do the work of an evangelist*" and to "*make full proof of [his] ministry*" (4:5), expressed the pleasure of the Lord that the chief duty of a Christian pastor is to "*preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove; rebuke; exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (II Timothy 4:2ff.). Moreover, the public preaching or proclamation of the Word is not limited to the pulpit on Sunday mornings and on special occasions and festivals of the church year, but it occupies the attention of a faithful pastor or spiritual shepherd on a *full-time* basis as he *feeds* the church of God, the local flock of the Savior (John 21:15ff.; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2), as he *teaches* (I Timothy 3:2), as he *admonishes* (I Thessalonians 5:12), as he *oversees* the flock and *watches* for their souls (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17), as he functions as the *steward of God's mysteries* in the public administration of the Office of the Keys (I Corinthians 4:1ff.). Thus the office of the "public ministry," the Pastoral Office (*das Pfarramt*), is not merely a human arrangement, devised without God's particular ordinance and institution but simply for the sake of good order in the Church (I Corinthians 14:40), as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and others teach contrary to Scripture (cf. Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; etc.). On the contrary, "[It] is no human institution, but an office which has been instituted by God Himself" (Walther, *Church and Ministry*, Part II, Thesis II).

"*Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful*" (I Corinthians 4:2). The Scriptures lay down very specific qualifications for the Pastoral Office in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 —among which we search in vain for "professional" training in conflict resolution, substance abuse rehabilitation, social work, marriage and family counseling, corporate management, and other purely secular courses which have little if anything to do —even collaterally— with the office instituted by God. The *faithfulness* required of a pastor (bishop—I Timothy 3:1, elder—I Peter 5:1-2) is faithfulness to the *Word of God*

(Jeremiah 23:28; Titus 1:9; etc.); faithfulness to “*the doctrine which is according to Godliness*” (I Timothy 6:3; 4:13; etc.), both in its teaching and in its application; faithfulness in the performance of all the duties incumbent upon him for the sake of the sheep and lambs committed to his charge (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; etc.); faithfulness to the call of God’s Holy Spirit, which makes him answerable not only to the local congregation that called him but to God Himself (Hebrews 13:17; Ezekiel 33:7-9; etc.), in whose holy office he serves as an incumbent at the Lord’s pleasure (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 5:4).

Pastors who confound Law and Gospel in their preaching, teaching, and practice; pastors who preach the truth of God’s Word *as theory* but do not apply it *in practice*; pastors who refuse to indoctrinate their members by means of thorough instruction but are satisfied with giving prospective members an “orientation course” prior to their reception; pastors who regard inconsistent practice (either on their own part or on the part of their people) merely as “imperfect sanctification” which must be tolerated; pastors who “mark” error and persistent errorists but refuse to “avoid them” (Romans 16:17); and pastors whose standard of spiritual truth is not “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:19) but their own “professional judgment,” private interpretation, subjective rationale, and personal experience; —these are not *faithful stewards* of God’s mysteries, but, as He Himself characterizes them, worthless watchmen or “watchdogs” that are blind, ignorant, dumb, asleep on the job, lazy, greedy, lacking in understanding, and looking out only for themselves (Isaiah 56:10-11)! Sadly, we see far too many such “dogs” or “curs” in the ministry today; and their sheep either ignorantly enjoy the silence and lack of concerned “barking,” or they have become so accustomed to lack of instruction and spiritual oversight that they sit secure in their ignorance and think that their “*dumb dogs*” are really on the job! In either case, they are being neglected.

The Lord Jesus bids us: “*Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9:38). And the Lord, as we well know from His Word, answers every proper Christian prayer, though in His own way and in His own good time. Nevertheless, He does not promise to provide us with pastors “out-of-the-blue.” He expects qualified, gifted, faithful and Gospel-motivated men to *volunteer* themselves for labor in His vineyard (Isaiah 6:8). He expects us who are pastors to *train* such faithful men, committing to them what we have learned, so that they will be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2). He expects those men to *study* to show themselves “*approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*” (II Timothy 2:15). And

He expects our people to show to *prospective* pastors, by the love and respect they render to *their own* pastors, that they value the workmen “*which labor among [them], and are over [them] in the Lord, and admonish [them]*” (I Thessalonians 5:12-13), and that they gladly hear and learn God’s Word from their mouths as from the lips of Jesus Himself (Luke 10:16). Such an example of eagerness to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Savior (II Peter 3:18), of high esteem for the ministry (I Thessalonians 5:13), and of love for Christ’s ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20) should greatly encourage young men among us with the prospect of having one day, at the call of the Holy Ghost, a flock of like-minded sheep who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

We all have plenty of work to do in the Lord’s harvest, also with respect to recruiting and training competent and *faithful* laborers for His vineyard —laborers whom the Lord of the harvest may then one day, at His choosing, send forth into His harvest and, at the call of His Holy Spirit, make them “*overseers*” over a local “*church of God*” to “*feed*” it (Acts 20:28), to “*watch for [the] souls*” of its sheep and lambs (Hebrews 13:17), to tend it (I Peter 5:2-3), and to love it (cf. John 10:11-12) for the sake of their loving and incomparably Good Shepherd, Christ Jesus (John 10:14), the Savior and Head of His Church (Ephesians 4:11-16). To that end we beseech the Lord of the harvest to move the hearts of men throughout our Conference with the earnest desire to become trained in our fine seminary program for labor in His vineyard and for service in the Pastoral Office, that a future ministry may thus be provided for us, for our children, and for their children after them, through which His name may continue to be hallowed among us in the faithful preaching, teaching, and practice of His pure Word to the salvation of our souls. Therefore we also pray with the hymnwriter:

O bless Thy Word alway,
our souls forever feeding;
and may we never lack
a faithful shepherd’s leading.
Send workers forth, O Lord,
the sheaves to gather in,
that not a soul be lost
which Thou art come to win!

(TLH 485, 4 & 6 adapted)

—D. T. M.

Lord of the Harvest, Hear

*Lord of the harvest, hear
Thy needy servants' cry.
Answer our faith's effectual prayer
and all our wants supply.*

*On Thee we humbly wait,
our wants are in Thy view.
The harvest, truly, Lord, is great,
the laborers are few.*

*Anoint and send forth more
into Thy Church abroad,
and let them speak Thy Word of Power
as workers with their God.*

*Oh, let them spread Thy name,
Their mission fully prove;
Thy universal grace proclaim,
Thine all-redeeming love!*

TLH #489

Churches in Fellowship

ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG

Ekaterinburg, Russia

The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor

P. O. Box 27

620039 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

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CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

Pastoral Vacancy at present

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

The Rev. Onesimus Ekele, Pastor

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria

The Rev. Innocent Karibo, Pastor

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria

The Rev. Elison B. Agborubere, Balaiyi Thompson and Bateinm Bestman, Pastors

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobebe Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

The Rev. Allenson Karibi Asawo, Pastor

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Kula, Nigeria

Pastoral Vacancy at present

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S NYEMONI LUTHERAN CATHEDRAL

Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface and

The Rev. God'stime E. D. Douglas, Co-Pastors

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyeface@yahoo.co.uk



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH On the Web at:
4090 S. Melpomene Way, Tucson, AZ 85730 *GoodShepherdLutheranChurchTucson.com*

Worship Service 9:30 a.m. Telephone (520) 721-7618
Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

The Rev. DANIEL P. MENSING, Pastor
550 North Harrison Road, Apt. 11107, Tucson, AZ 85748 Pastor: (520) 448-8694

E-mail: goodshepherdlutherantucson@gmail.com

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH On the Web at:
Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 *PeaceEvLutheran.com*

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m. Telephone: (708) 532-4288
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 Pastor: (708) 532-9035

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH Telephone: (541) 258-2941
Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor
483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355 Pastor: (541) 258-2941

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH On the Web at:
5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178 *StLukes-CLC.com*

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m. Telephone: (206) 723-1078
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor
9658 – 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118 Pastor: (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 EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH On the Web at:
22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 *StMarksEvLutheran.com*

Adult Bible Class 3:00 p.m. Telephone: (708) 757-6859
Worship Service 4:00 p.m.

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor
22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 Pastor: (708) 655-7549

E-mail: d_mensing@hotmail.com

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH On the Web at:
300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 *TrinityEvLutheran.com*

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m. Telephone: (708) 386-6773
Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor
233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 Pastor: (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

**The Sixty-Fourth
Annual Convention**
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

June 26th, 27th and 28th, 2015

at

Peace Ev. Lutheran Church
Oak Forest, Illinois

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor

with the

Plenary Pastoral Conference

on June 23rd and 24th

and the

Board of Directors Meeting on June 25th

Convention Motto:

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Ephesians 2:20

The Friday Keynote Sermon is on **Ephesians 2:20**

The Sunday Convention Sermon is on **Luke 16:29**

The Convention Essay:

*"Holy Scripture — The Only Source and Norm
of Christian Faith and Life"*