

*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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“Thou shalt  
call His name  
Jesus.”

— Matthew 1:21





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## “Forget not all His benefits!”

— Psalm 103:2

As we look about us on our national day of thanksgiving and survey even briefly the innumerable blessings that we as Americans enjoy on a day-to-day basis, we cannot help being struck with **awe** and with **gratitude to God** for His bountiful goodness! If only we could maintain throughout the year the same level of appreciation for His unwavering kindness that we feel and express on *one special Thanksgiving Day!* To be sure, if Americans lack anything at all of a temporal nature, it is not so much the “concrete” things which so often first come to mind — food, drink, housing, employment, health (and health care), etc. — but it is the “abstract” sense of **gratitude** that is so apparently lacking in our society! The word “please” has almost disappeared from the national vocabulary (particularly among *young* people), and a civil “thank you” is just as rare. We who are parents sometimes have to “hound” our kids about simple telephone manners (which may or may not apply as well to “texting”) and about the Godpleasing virtue of expressing *thanks* to those who have done something for them, even something *little* like taking a message, giving them the right change after a purchase, or providing them a ride home after school or work. And we **adults** aren’t much better at expressing **simple gratitude** to those who go out of their way to be of kindness and service to **us!** Yes, even we **Christians** (who surely *know* better and ought to *show* better in our lives as God’s adopted children) — even **we**, because of our sinful flesh, take so much for granted from one another— but, **much worse**, also from the Lord and His gracious hand!

Ingratitude is a grievous **sin against God** —a sin born of the same **pride** and fleshly **arrogance** as is damning **unbelief!** Yes, it is **sinful pride** that rejects God’s saving grace in Christ Jesus as the only cause of man’s salvation; and it is the same pride that produces **ingratitude** and causes a person to credit **himself** with his successes and his riches, saying: “*MY power and the might of MINE hand hath gotten me this wealth!*” (Deuteronomy 8:17). It is a **sin** for which we must constantly, every day, turn to the Lord in true repentance, and confess with Jacob of old: “*I am NOT worthy of the LEAST of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant*” (Genesis 32:10. — And the **fruit** of such repentance, the **evidence** that we really *mean* what we say in such a confession, is that we **give credit where credit is**

**due**, and that we **thank and bless** the Name of our gracious and merciful God for everything we have. —It is this very fruit of true repentance to which the Psalmist David exhorts us, saying:

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!”*

Writing as I am chiefly to professing Christians and to brethren in the faith who know of their duty, in view of God’s fatherly, divine goodness and mercy toward them, “*to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him*” (Luther, *First Article*) in accordance with His Word, I will not dwell in this article upon this duty and high privilege as such, but rather upon the REASONS WHY we Christians should live in constant gratitude to God and show forth that gratitude in thankful prayers and praises.

It is the Lord “*who forgiveth all thine iniquities,*” David reminds us in verse three of this well-known Thanksgiving text on which our pastors have often preached. Note the **order** in which the beloved Psalmist lists these reasons by inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Indeed, the first and foremost blessing we have from the Lord is the full and free **forgiveness** of all our **sins** for Jesus’ sake. These are the misdeeds, iniquities, and transgressions against His holy Law by which we have earned for ourselves the very opposite of His forgiveness, namely, punishment, wrath, and just retribution in the fires of hell forever! “*For the wages of sin is death,*” the Bible tells us. Yet, for Jesus’ sake (who Himself **paid** those wages **for us** with His innocent suffering and death on the cross), God gives us freely, as His BEST “*benefit,*” **forgiveness of sins** —a benefit that we, poor impotent human beings, could never merit for *ourselves*, and a benefit that no one *else*, living or dead, can merit for us, no matter how much effort is expended, good works are done, prayers are offered, or sacrifices made! Speaking of man’s ill-directed attempts at satisfying God for the sins of others (as is done chiefly by the Romanists in prayers for the dead and sacrifices on their behalf), the Psalmist says: “*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious*” (49:7-8)

No wonder then that David points out our complete unworthiness of this best-of-all benefits, the **forgiveness of sins**, and exhorts himself and us: “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not,*” as he says later on in this same psalm, that “*the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.... He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As*

*far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us*” (vv. 8, 10-12). Oh, how **that** benefit **ALONE** should cause us without ceasing to “*bless the Lord*” —to sing praises to His Name and to thank Him humbly and unceasingly for His undeserved kindness to poor, miserable sinners like you and me!

But now the Psalmist continues that it is the Lord “*who **healeth** all thy **diseases.***” This clause is frequently understood as referring to the Lord’s gracious hand in healing our *physical* diseases and relieving our *physical* infirmities. There is, of course, no question about the fact that the Lord **does** heal the diseases which often ravage our bodies, that He **does** grant His blessing upon the efforts of doctors and surgeons who minister to our physical ills, and that He **does** work, very often in mysterious ways, to turn the tide of potentially fatal illnesses contrary to the expectations of so-called “health care professionals” and thus to do, especially for His believing children, “*exceeding abundantly above all that [they] ask or think*” (Ephesians 3:20). And so, we Christians are directed to “*call upon [the Lord] in the day of trouble*” (Psalm 50:15), to offer up “*prayer for the sick*” (James 5:14), and confidently to cast all our illnesses and weaknesses upon Him who can lay His loving hand upon us and we shall recover —**if it be His will to heal us**, as Jesus amply demonstrated in His many miracles (Cf. Matthew 8:2; Luke 5:12). —Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that the Lord does **not** heal **ALL** of our *physical* illnesses, nor does He **in every case** relieve us of our pain, or grant success to our surgery, or shrink our tumors, or get emergency aid to our side “in time” to re-start our fibrillating or arrested heart. Indeed, sometimes, for our own good and ultimate blessing, He permits us to **succumb** to an illness, to contract a **terminal** disease, or to **die** on the operating table. Thus, although He is “*able*” (Ephesians 3:20; cf. Luke 1:37; Matthew 19:26) to do so, the Lord does not “*heal all [our **physical**] diseases,*” but He **does** turn them all into **good** for His believing children according to His gracious promises (Romans 8:28).

The diseases that the Lord **always** heals for us are our *spiritual diseases*, caused by sin and relieved by the forgiveness of sins, diseases brought on by the rejection of God’s grace and healed by His Holy Spirit through the *means* of His grace. What are some of these “*diseases*”? How about spiritual **malnutrition**, spiritual **weakness**, lack of spiritual **stamina**, spiritual **depression**, spiritual **unfruitfulness**, spiritual **anorexia**, spiritual **cowardice**, spiritual **SELF-confidence**, spiritual **indifference**, and so on. Thank God, I say, that through His

precious Word and Sacraments, preserved to us in their purity in “*the place where [His] honor dwelleth,*” the Lord graciously “*healeth ALL (our) diseases*” so that we can cheerfully sing with the hymnwriter as we dig diligently and, above all, confidently into the Savior’s own medicine chest:

*“Just as I am, poor, wretched blind,  
sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come!”*

The same is He, David reminds us, “*who redeemeth thy life from destruction*” —according to the Hebrew of the Old Testament a reference primarily to our deliverance from the “*pit*” of hell! Only the Lord Himself is able to grant this unspeakably great benefit to you and to me, even as He already granted it *objectively* for Jesus’ sake to all the world, “*not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19), so that the pit of hell is still **intended** for those for whom it was originally “*prepared,*” namely, for “*the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41). Thus, by faith in the Savior, we can confidently declare with Paul: “*The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom*” (II Timothy 4:18). Therefore, as we are still in this old sinful world, subject to the attacks of the devil and the snares he has set to bring us down into that “*pit,*” let us thank our gracious God particularly for this great “*benefit*” and gratefully, diligently, and faithfully **wield** the “*Sword*” He has provided us in His precious Word (Ephesians 6:17b) to fend off our vicious “*adversary*” (I Peter 5:8), to overcome his temptations, and to obtain the ultimate victory — having our life “*redeemed from destruction*” for Jesus’ sake, who crushed the serpent’s head and defeated him in order to “*deliver them who though fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15).

But now the Psalmist continues: “[*He*] *crowneeth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies*” —the very **opposite** of what the devil has in store for us. Not only has the Lord, for the sake of Jesus’ redemptive work, reconciled us unto Himself and prepared for us a “*crown*” of everlasting life in **heaven**, but He has even “*crowned*” our life **here on earth** with “*lovingkindness and tender mercies,*” so that we, as His children, need never worry or fret about our temporal needs. In fact, when we seek His Kingdom **first** in our lives and make Him, His blessed Word, and His precious Church, yea, all of God’s *spiritual*

blessings, the **top priority** in ALL our considerations, we have Jesus' own ironclad promise also of necessary *temporal blessings* for our body and life here in this world, ALL of which, He says, "*shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). By whom?? By **Him!** **He** it is who "*crowneth [us] with lovingkindness and tender mercies,*" not because WE are good, but because "*HE is good, because His mercy endureth forever!*" (Psalm 118:1).

Finally, it is the Lord "*who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" While this statement sounds at first like a reference to our "*daily bread,*" we see upon closer examination a much **deeper** meaning. The Psalmist is speaking particularly of the Christian's gratitude for a benefit that "*renews [his] youth like the eagle's.*" This is not a promise that God will reverse the temporal aging process that is the result of sin in the world and restore us all to the vigor of youth. The image here is of an eagle that has gone through the **molt-ing process** —dropping worn and broken feathers to acquire new and stronger ones— an image that pictures a **rejuvenation of grace** and **spiritual renewal** brought about by the Lord Jesus Himself as He nourishes us Christians on **Himself**, the "*Bread of Life*" (John 6:35), through the spiritual *manna* of His **Word** (cf. Matthew 4:4). As "*new creature [s]*" (II Corinthians 5:17) we "*put off*" (like a soiled garment —or a plumage of worn and shabby feathers) the Old Man of sin and corruption; and we "*put on the New Man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Ephesians 4:22, 24). THIS is the Holy Spirit's gift or "*benefit*" of **sanctification**, to which Isaiah also refers in his 40<sup>th</sup> chapter, saying: "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint*" (v. 31).

By God's grace, **we**, beloved brethren, **have** the spiritual food and drink we need for just such rejuvenation in His precious **Word and Sacrament**, the sweet and appetizing and perfectly nourishing food that "*satisfieth [our] mouth with good things*" and gives us the agility, endurance, and tenacity to "*fight the good fight of faith [and to] lay hold on eternal life*" (I Timothy 6:12) with the claws of rejuvenated eagles. The question is: Do we really **appreciate it**? Does its sweet taste (I Peter 2:3) still **appeal** to our spiritual senses, or have we perhaps become somewhat "fed up" with it (cf. Numbers 21:5b)? Are we **feasting upon it** or just nibbling at the crumbs? Is it **satisfying** our Christian **appetite** for those truly "*good things*" which we so desperately need to nourish our faith? —Let's face it: We spend hour upon hour each day

and passing week “*labor[ing] for the meat which perisheth*” (John 6:27), including even many luxuries that we don’t even NEED to support our body and life. What about the all-important **spiritual meat** for the nourishment of our **immortal souls**?? How much time do we dedicate to **THAT**?? “*Forget not all His benefits,*” the Psalmist reminds us; for without **those** precious benefits for our **souls**, we keep **from ourselves** His blessings and set ourselves on a course that ends up in the “*pit*” of destruction!

May we, not only on our annual Thanksgiving Day but every day of our lives, stop for **sober reflection** upon all the Lord’s special benefits toward us; and, as we gratefully enjoy the many things that our heavenly Father has richly and daily provided us for the support of our body and life (Luther, *First Article*); let us behold those bounties with eyes of **spiritual sight**, recognizing them to be only **passing symbols** of the **greater blessings** which our heavenly Father for Jesus’ sake has bestowed upon us in such abundance at the banquet table of His Son! — And, as we remember to thank Him for the food for our bodies set before us so sumptuously on Thanksgiving Day and on the other festive days of the holiday season, let us not “*forget*” all those **priceless spiritual “benefits”** which we enjoy richly and daily at His gracious hand. Let us thank Him **very especially** for **THEM**, and then **show forth** our sincere gratitude by **treasuring them** and by **using them** to His glory and to our own eternal welfare, looking for and hastening unto the perfect and enduring thanksgiving that we will be privileged to render in heaven for Jesus’ sake!

— D. T. M.





## “Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come!”

This hymn, #55 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, is a prayer to the only Savior for the world of sinners, Christ Jesus. The writer of this hymn is unknown. In 1664, the Rev. Johann Gottfried Olearius of Halle, Germany, first published this hymn in his book *Jesus! Poetische Erstlinge an geistlichen Deutschen Liedern und Madrigaleln* [*Poetic Firsts in Spiritual German Songs and Madrigals*]. It was entitled “On Advent” and based on Matthew 21:5-9.

Professor August Crull, a graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1865, translated this hymn into English, giving it the new title of “Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come.” It was included among the hymns in the *Evangelical Hymn Book* of 1889. *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941 altered the second stanza extensively.

The opening stanza is an intercession by believers to Him who alone is “*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6a):

Come, Thou precious Ransom, come;  
only Hope for sinful mortals!  
Come, O Savior of the world;  
open are to Thee all portals.  
Come, Thy beauty let us see;  
anxiously we wait for Thee!

In this stanza we have the voice of saving faith in the “*Seed*” of the woman, “*which is Christ*” (Galatians 3:16b). An unbeliever would not talk as the hymn writer talks in this opening stanza, for “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (I Corinthians 2:14). However, we, as the disciples of Jesus, know and believe that He most certainly came in the “*flesh*” (John 1:14a) as our promised and absolutely-needed “*Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14b) “*when the fullness of the time was come*” (Galatians 4:4a), that is, at God’s own exact appointed time. Since we, as the followers of Christ, “*walk by faith, not by sight*” (II Corinthians 5:7), we again and again look, by faith, to “*Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,*

*who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). The Apostle Peter, in his First Epistle, wrote to his dear brethren about Jesus Christ in this way: “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” (1:8-9).*

As God’s dear “*children by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26), we want Him, who is our precious and priceless Ransom, to keep coming to us through His written Word of “*truth*” (John 17:17b), to keep reminding us that when we sin and fall short of being “*perfect*” (Matthew 5:48a), “*we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation [the totally satisfactory ransom and payment] for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:1b-2).

Since the Law of God demands complete compliance to all of its demands and commands, we, who were conceived “*in sin*” (Psalm 51:5b) and are included in St. Paul’s declaration that “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23), are “*guilty*” (James 2:10b) and “*cursed*” (Galatians 3:10b) before God according to His holiness and His justice. How can we be freed from this great guilt and complete curse of God’s Law? We have the only right and changeless answer to this question in the priceless words of Jesus Himself in John 8: “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (v. 36). The Apostle Paul also gave and continues giving lasting comfort to us undeserving sinners when he wrote in his Epistle to the Galatian Christians: “*Christ hath redeemed 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). No one else but Christ Jesus has paid the full and completely satisfactory ransom price to God for us and for all sinners in the world. We are assured of this marvelous truth by the Apostle Paul’s message to Timothy: “*There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” (I Timothy 2:5-6).

Therefore, God’s “*people*” (I Peter 2:10a), generation after generation, century after century, sing with persistent intercession, grateful worship, and genuine faith: “*Come, Thou precious Ransom, come; only hope for sinful mortals; come, O Savior of the world, open are to Thee all portals; come Thy beauty let us see, anxiously we wait for Thee.*”

By God's grace in Christ, coming to us through His Gospel to work in our hearts and souls, may this also be our continuing song and prayer. In the second stanza of this hymn, the individual disciple of Jesus sings:

Enter now my waiting heart,  
glorious King and Lord most holy.  
Dwell in me and ne'er depart,  
tho' I am but poor and lowly.  
Ah, what riches will be mine,  
when Thou art my Guest Divine.

This is, once again, the "*supplication*" (Philippians 4:6b) of a dear "*sheep*" (John 10:27a) of "*the good Shepherd*" (John 10:11a). Only a believer in Jesus has a waiting heart, a trusting heart, a heart which identifies Jesus as his glorious King and Lord most holy. The Psalmist David, in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, confessed: "*Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my Defense; I shall not be greatly moved*" (vv. 1-2). This same psalmist, in the 27<sup>th</sup> Psalm, made this confession and gave this counsel to all of his readers: "*I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord*" (vv. 13-14).

Just as in the first stanza of this hymn where the born-again Christian (John 3:3; James 1:18) prays that his Savior would keep coming to him through His Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17), so also, in this second stanza, we have a similar petition to the Savior to keep entering and to keep dwelling in the individual Christian's waiting, believing, trusting heart and soul. Jesus, in John 8, taught the following: "*He that is of God heareth God's words*" (v. 47a). The waiting heart, the believing heart, the trusting heart of the child of God keeps on hearing God speak to him through His Word, keeps on wanting the Word of God to enter, dwell, and live in his heart and soul more and more, again and again.

Though we, God's children by faith in Christ Jesus, are poor and lowly **on our own** because of our flesh and our many sins and shortcomings; though we are not "*worthy*" (Genesis 32:10) of having any of God's gifts and blessings through Christ Jesus, yet our glorious and gracious King, our divine Guest, "*the true God and eternal life*" (I John 5:20b), "*though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might be rich*" (II Corinthians 8:9b), rich by "*His grace,*" having "*the forgiveness of sins*" (Ephesians 1:7b), rich because

of “*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]*” (I Peter 1:4).

In the third stanza of this hymn, we have the believer in Jesus coming to Him “*with thanksgiving*” (Philippians 4:6b):

My hosannas and my palms  
graciously receive, I pray Thee.  
Evermore as best I can,  
Savior, I will homage pay Thee;  
and in faith I will embrace,  
Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.

An unnamed psalmist, in the 116<sup>th</sup> Psalm, asked a very important question and then gave a three-part answer: “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people*” (vv. 12-14). This third stanza expresses similar thanks, praise and homage (respect, reverence) to the Savior for the benefits of His vicarious atonement, the merit of His fulfillment of God’s Law to earn righteousness for the world of sinners (Romans 5:19) and His innocent suffering and death as the payment to God for the elimination and cancellation of the huge debt caused by our sins and by the sins of the whole world (I Peter 1:18; I John 2:2; II Corinthians 5:19). In his second Epistle to the Corinthian Christians, the Apostle Paul confessed: “*The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live [the believers in Christ] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again*” (vv. 14-15). Here we see, as the third stanza sets forth, that saving faith embraces the meritorious, substitutionary work of Christ to God and that, in grateful remembrance of that work, true believers live each day for Him who lived, died, and rose from the dead for them. Let us, the disciples of Jesus today, grow in our desire to keep on embracing Him by faith, showing forth our ever-increasing homage for Him and for His work of Redemption manifested in His precious Word, thanking Him more and more because He first graciously “*loved [us] and gave Himself for [us]*” (Galatians 2:20b).

Now let us consider the fourth and final stanza of this Advent hymn:

Hail, hosanna, David's Son!  
Help, Lord, hear our supplication!  
Let Thy kingdom, scepter, crown,  
bring us blessing and salvation;  
that forever we may sing:  
"Hail, hosanna" to our King.

On Palm Sunday many centuries ago, Matthew, in his Gospel, reported that *"the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest!'"* (21:9). This *"Son of David"* (Matthew 1:1 and 6), this Descendant of David, this human Seed of David deserves many on-going *hosannas* and many songs of praise, not only in this life, but also in the perfect life reserved and waiting for all of God's *"children"* (Galatians 3:26) in the glory and bliss of *"paradise"* (Luke 23:43b). Why? He deserves such (and is accorded such in this final verse of the hymn) because *"He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5). The Apostle John, in Revelation 5, wrote that he *"heard the voice of many angels, ...the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing'"* (v. 11).

In gratitude for this Lamb of God, this King of grace and mercy, this Son of David, who has brought us the rich blessings of pardon for all of our sins and the treasure of our eternal salvation, let us grow in continuing to bring Him our *hosannas*, our praise, our honor, our worship, our reverence, and our supplications in hymns such as *"Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come,"* ever desiring to show our love and thanks more and more for Him who *"first loved us"* (I John 4:19b).

— R. J. L.



# Drunkennness:

## *A Particular Temptation during the Holidays*

*“Be not drunk ... but be filled with the Spirit”* — Ephesians 5:18

As we approach the holiday season (Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Eve) every year, we are reminded of a particular temptation: Drunkennness! The civil authorities ramp up public service announcements, sobriety check points, free ride services and the like during this period because of the rise of drunk driving which occurs every year during the holiday season. What is it that drives people — even Christians in their fleshly weakness (Romans 7:14-25) — to overuse or abuse alcohol (and other drugs) at festive occasions? The reasons are many, but the problem is not exclusive to this time of year.

The abuse of alcohol in particular, specifically mentioned in our title-text, as well as hallucinogenic drugs — even “legal” ones, is a serious problem, not only at holiday time! But it appears as a special temptation during the holidays when “celebrations” and “partying” are common. Where should Christians turn for guidance? The opinions of the medical establishment and law enforcement officials are sometimes helpful, but a Christian should not base his life on human opinion. A Christian should turn to the *only* source and norm for his faith and life: Holy Scripture, God’s unchanging Word!

Our title-text is Ephesians 5:18: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* It contains a crystal-clear divine prohibition of drunkennness with a definition which shows why it is a sin, and an exhortation to the Godly alternative. We note, however, that St. Paul does not say, “Do not drink wine!” He condemns the *abuse* not the *use* of alcohol. Scripture certainly allows the *moderate* use of alcoholic beverages, as belonging to man’s daily bread, and indicates their legitimate purposes (Cf. Psalm 104:14-15; Proverbs 31:6-7; Ecclesiastes 9:7; 10:19; Zechariah 10:7). We also have the following specific examples: Our Savior’s first miracle was the production of 90 to 120 gallons of the finest wine from water at a wedding feast in Cana, thus graciously providing a completely legitimate beverage for the proper enjoyment of the guests (John 2:1ff.). Our Lord Himself drank wine as a beverage with His meals; and, although He never sinned by doing so, His enemies falsely

accused Him of overindulgence, slandering Him as a “*wine-bibber*” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). The Apostle Paul instructed the young pastor Timothy to use “*a little wine*” to help relieve his stomach problems (I Timothy 5:23). The New Testament clearly forbids the judging of anyone because of *what* they eat or drink: “*Let no man therefore judge you in meat (food) or in drink*” (Colossians 2:16). As Christians we are simply to follow this general principle laid down by Christ’s Apostle Paul: “*Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer*” (I Timothy 4:4-5). The Bible tells us, for example, in Psalm 104:14-15: “*He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.*”

So while the moderate, conscientious use of alcohol is a matter of Christian liberty, the *abuse* of alcohol for drunkenness is absolutely forbidden by God. Paul says: “*Be not drunk*,” thereby prohibiting overindulgence, inebriation, intoxication, drunkenness. Paul mentions the means, “*with wine*,” simply because it was the commonly used *alcoholic beverage* in the Orient at Paul’s time, the excessive consumption of which results in drunkenness (Cf. Genesis 9:20-21).

To be “*drunk*” is to be intoxicated, to be stupefied, impaired, and rendered incompetent and ultimately unconscious as the result of *excessive* consumption of alcohol. Most state laws contain a similar definition of “intoxication” when referring to “driving under the influence” of alcohol and other substances that impair one’s judgment and responsible operation of motor vehicles. While such secular definitions are instructive in their limited scope, Solomon, as the penman of the Holy Ghost, describes both the condition and the result of drunkenness in Proverbs 23:31-35 as a spiritual evil; for drunkenness, as he points out, also leads to other sins such as sexual sins —sexual lust and filthy language— as well as to a host of other sins and offenses (cf. Proverbs 31:5, Isaiah 5:22-23, 28:7, Hosea 4:11, Habakkuk 2:5, 15-16, etc.). While the Bible’s reference in our title-text is specifically to the “*wine*” commonly consumed in ancient times, wine today is but one example of many substances, the abuse of which can render a person “*drunk*,” intoxicated, “buzzed” and “high.” The prohibition: “*Be not drunk*” covers all such situations.

During these latter days of sore distress on the earth, wherein the chil-

dren of the world blatantly display their spiritual depravity, unbridled lust, debauchery, and hedonistic behavior without the slightest apology, they regard God and His Word and will to be foolishness (I Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:5-8). And, even while drowning in destruction and perdition as the result of their materialism and worldliness (I Timothy 6:9), they deny the reality of sin, of sin's guilt, and of sin's consequences, refuse to repent, and continue down the broad and easy road that leads to hell (Matthew 7:13), literally destroying themselves in the process (Hosea 13:9a). Sadly and tragically, they ignore the hammer of God's Law (Jeremiah 23:29) and seek instead to deny their accountability, to escape their reality, to mask their pain, to dull their anxiety, and to drown their sorrows in various kinds of intoxication. In so doing, however, they only compound their troubles in *the sin of drunkenness*, which destroys the inhibitions created by curb of the Law and produces even more sin and vice out of their unbridled hearts (Matthew 15:19). And this is more pronounced today than in any other period of history.

Jesus earnestly warns us, His latter-day disciples, even as He warned the twelve apostles: *“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (Gk., becoming giddy, “tipsy,” “buzzed” by overindulgence in alcohol), and drunkenness (Gk., heavy drinking), and cares of this life, and so that day (Judgment Day) come upon you unawares”* (Luke 21:34). Drunkenness robs a person of proper *awareness*, not only for the Last Day now nigh at hand, but also for the temptations of the devil (I Peter 5:8), the world (I John 2:15-17), and our sinful flesh (I Peter 2:11), all of which create and contribute to the *“cares of this life,”* the anxieties which are often blamed for “driving us to drink” in the vain hope of escaping the stress, tension, responsibility and frustration of everyday life. We should beware of these powerful temptations and, with the help and by the grace of God, *“cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for [us]”* (I Peter 5:7)!

Some people get drunk only *occasionally*, such as when they attend a party; but this is no excuse, nor does it mitigate the sin of drunkenness. The Bible specifically mentions what we would call today “binge drinking” and becoming “party drunks.” *“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you”* (I Peter 4:3-4). In Galatians 5, such wild partying (“*revellings*”) and the “*drunkenness*” that typically results from it are listed under the manifest “*works of the*



*flesh*” (v. 19); and Paul says: “*They which do such things [Gk., they who perpetrate and persist in such things] shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (v. 21). The same combination is noted in Romans 13:13-14: “*Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness.... But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.*”

The Bible also speaks of *habitual* drunks, whom we identify today as “alcoholics,” people who cannot control their drinking but have become at least psychologically, and perhaps even physically, *addicted* to alcohol. Alcohol has become their master. But that fact does not relieve the alcoholic of his responsibility before God for his drunkenness. St. Paul describes addictive drinking in the phrases “*given to wine*” (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7), referring to one whose constant companion is alcohol, and “*given to much wine*” (I Timothy 3:8, Titus 2:3), indicating those who are literally “enslaved” by wine in excessive amounts. The fact that these descriptions occur in Paul’s discussion concerning the qualifications set down in God’s Word for pastors and for deacons shows that such addiction can indeed occur among professing Christians and that even those who aspire to offices in the church are not immune to these temptations.

The question is often asked whether a person can be a true Christian and an alcoholic, a drunkard, at the same time. If a person *continues* to get drunk (Romans 6:1-2) and allows alcohol and other intoxicants to be the *master* (Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 5:16; etc.) of his life, the answer is obvious: He is not a Christian. Since drunkenness is listed among the gross outward sins of the flesh and typical of the ungodly unbelievers, as we have already noted (I Peter 4:3; Romans 13:12-13; Galatians 5:21; etc.), no one who is a Christian dare “*continue*” in such sins (Romans 6:1) and deliberately (“*willfully*”) commit them (Hebrews 10:26ff.) lest he make “*shipwreck*” of his faith (I Timothy 1:19) and despise both the redeeming blood of his Savior and the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 10:29)! “*God forbid!*” Paul cries out. “*How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein??*” he asks in Romans 6:2. “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

Drunkenness is not a spiritual “misdemeanor” to be excused or condoned; it is to be condemned according to God’s Law, so that drunkards see the greatness of their sin and repent. Impenitent drunkards “*shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (See above); and our refusal to partake of their sins (I Timothy 5:22) and to be their “drinking buddies” is itself a testimony of the Law to them, as Paul writes in I Corinthians 5:11: “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*” The sinner, be he a “casual” drunkard, a chronic alcoholic, a hapless drug addict, or one who persists in *any* manifest transgression of God’s holy Law must learn first to see himself as God sees him in the mirror of that Law: Hopeless and helpless, unable to save himself in any way, without excuse, unquestionably guilty and deserving of eternal punishment. And he must recognize his need of deliverance, his need of salvation by the work and power of another, namely, by the One who is truly capable of accomplishing the otherwise impossible (Matthew 19:26; Philippians 2:13). Until he is brought to such knowledge and realizes his hopeless condition under the indictment of divine justice (Romans 3:20), he cannot be converted to saving Christian faith. He cannot be helped even by the Gospel; for he rejects the very idea of sin and guilt and thus sees in himself no need for salvation. He must first be able to cry from a heart crushed by the hammer of the Law, convicted by its justice, and terrorized by its threats: “*What must I do to be saved?!*” (Acts 16:30).

Then, and only then, is the precious Gospel or “good news” of salvation in Jesus Christ meaningful to him as a truly contrite sinner! Then, and only then, is he ready to hear that his merciful and gracious God loved him in spite of himself and did something, already in eternity, to rescue him and all mankind from sin and lack of righteousness: “*Before the foundation of the world*” (I Peter 1:20), God determined to save the world of sinners through His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He gave of His free grace to be their Savior (John 3:16). In the fullness of time, He sent Him (Galatians 4:4-5) to live our life under the Law perfectly, from the womb to the tomb, to give us a righteousness that alone avails before God, to take our sins, guilt and full punishment upon Himself, willingly suffering in His own soul and body the hatred and wrath of God, with the full agony of damnation, as He hung on the cross in darkness, forsaken by God, in the place of all sinners. Shedding His blood as the ransom-price of our salvation (I Peter 1:18-20), Jesus bought us back and redeemed us to God to be heirs of eternal life. We are declared

righteous by God's undeserved love for the sake of the Righteous One, God's only-begotten Son. In Him we are accepted before God as His children; in Him we are redeemed, restored and forgiven. This Gospel message works simple childlike faith in our hearts (Romans 10:17) by the power of God's Spirit, as also does "*the washing of regeneration*" (Titus 3:5), Holy Baptism.

Now, when Paul says in our title-text literally, "*On the contrary: Ever be being filled with the Spirit,*" he refers to the renewing of the Holy Ghost begun at conversion, which continues throughout the life of the believer through the power of Gospel. The Holy Spirit of God constantly renews us in the new man, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:22-24: "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" The putting on of the new man includes that, as we clothe ourselves by faith in the righteousness of Christ, we do nothing to accommodate the flesh in which "*dwelleth no good thing*" (Romans 7:18), that is, to enable the flesh to gain the upper hand over the new man of faith; for Paul writes in Romans 13:14: "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.*" Bringing forth "*the fruit of the spirit*" (Galatians 5:22) is evidence of spiritual resurrection to a living faith (John 12:24; 15:5, 8), a faith that lives *unto Christ* out of gratitude for His priceless vicarious atonement (II Corinthians 5:15). "*Walk in the Spirit,*" Paul instructs us, "*and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... If we live in the Spirit* (if we are really alive spiritually), *let us also walk in the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:16, 25).

The Spirit working through the Gospel renews us day by day so that we are able to glorify God in our body, the temple of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19), mortify (that is, kill) the sinful flesh by true contrition and faith (Romans 8:13-14, Galatians 5:16-25, 6:7-8), and produce good works, spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving, acceptable to God by virtue of Jesus' blood and righteousness (Ephesians 2:10, I Peter 2:5). So let us turn to the Gospel in time of need, in times of stress, in times of anxiety, not to alcohol or drugs; and we will find help that never fails. The Psalmist sings: "*The Lord is my Light and my Salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?*" (Psalm 27:1). Even though the world and our own deceitful flesh consider drunkenness a trifle to be laughed off, a simple escape from care, or, especially during the holidays, an unavoidable

result of partying, we Christians, according to our new man of faith, know better. Ephesians 5:18 tells us the truth of the matter: “*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” By the grace of God and by His Spirit of grace in the Gospel, let us ever order our lives according to God’s clear Word and desire as His dear children what David longed for: “*One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple*” (v. 4). God grant it for Jesus’ sake.

— E. J. W.

## Psalm 1

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

*The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

## *The Significance of Our Savior's Name*

*“Thou shalt call His name **Jesus**, for He shall save  
His people from their sins.” — Matthew 1:21*



As we celebrate anew at Christmas time the birth of our precious Savior, it behooves us to “ponder in our mind God’s wondrous love in **saving** lost mankind” (*TLH* 84, 5). And, while we cannot treat in this brief article the entire doctrinal subject of *soteriology* — the doctrine of *salvation* — the title-text above summarizes in few words the **PURPOSE** of Jesus’ coming into the world on that first Christmas night, both in **the name itself**, which was first mentioned by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:31) “*before He*

was conceived in the womb” (Luke 2:21), and in **the conjunction “for,”** which in the Greek (as well as in English and most other languages) expresses **purpose** and answers the question “Why?” The name **Jesus** is, in fact, only one of many names given to our Savior and recorded in the Scriptures — actually, in point of time, the last name given to Him as He made His appearance on earth to undertake and to accomplish **the work** which, in eternity already, His Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). Jesus said, for example, in his discourse with Nicodemus in John chapter 3: “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be **saved**” (v. 17). Thus, “when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to **redeem** them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

“Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,” writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy (I Timothy 3:16). The **incarnation** of the Son of God is an unfathomable “*mystery*,” not only that God the Father would even **do** such a thing as to offer up His only-begotten Son to be the “*propitiation*” of the world’s sins (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2), the sacrifice of sufficient value to satisfy His justice and thus to make it possible for Him to “*reconcil[e] the world unto Himself*” (II Corinthians 5:19), but that He would manifest Him “*in the flesh*” and cause Him in His *state of humiliation* to assume our flesh and blood in all lowliness, to place Himself “*under the Law*” as our Substitute, to fulfill the Law’s requirements perfectly in the stead of all mankind, and to bear the guilt and punishment of the sins of the world in His own sinless soul and body as the *Redeemer* and **Savior** of men.

In the opening verses of John’s Gospel we read concerning this amazing mystery of the incarnation of “**the Word**,” the eternal Son of God: “*In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word was **made flesh** and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1-3, 14). We briefly summarize this Christmas mystery in the words of the Nicene Creed, as we confess: “[I believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds: God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and **for our salvation** came down from heaven, and was **incarnate** by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was **made man**.”

Before the eternal Son of the Father, “*the Word*” (John 1:1), effected the *personal union* in the fulness of time “by taking the manhood into God” in His incarnation (Athanasian Creed) by the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), He was manifested to men throughout the Old Testament era by several Divine Names which identified Him not only according to His person but also according to His work, of which we would mention just a few. He is frequently called “*the Angel of the Lord*” — particularly when divine names, attributes and worship are ascribed to this special “*Messenger*” [“Angel,” *mah-LACH* in Hebrew, meaning “messenger”]. Note, for example, how “*the Angel of the Lord*” appeared to Hagar in Genesis 16; “*and she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, ‘Thou God seest me’...*” (vv. 7-13).

—“*The angel of the Lord*” stopped Abraham from killing his son, Isaac, saying: “*Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me*” (Genesis 22:12). Also, in verses 15 and 16, the same “*Angel of the Lord*” identifies Himself as “*the Lord.*”

—“*The Angel of the Lord*” appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) and identified Himself as “*the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*” (v. 6), the “*I am*” (v. 14), ***Jehovah***.

—And one last example: In Psalm 34:7, “*the Angel of the Lord*” is said to deliver them that “***fear Him,***” such fear not to be rendered to mere created angels (Revelation 19:10) but to God only (Matthew 4:10).

— He is also called “*the Messenger* [or angel, *mah-LACH*] of the ***Covenant***” (Malachi 3:1), “***the Lord***” whom His people *sought* by faith in the ***Gospel***-covenant promises of the Messiah to come, who would “*suddenly come to His temple,*” according to His prophetic office to ***manifest Himself*** as the Redeemer and ***Savior*** of the world, and according to His priestly office to ***make good*** on that covenant by ***doing*** what was necessary to ***be*** the Redeemer and ***Savior*** of the world.

And finally, there are many other Divine Names ascribed to the Son of God, the promised ***Savior***, in the Old Testament Scriptures: The “*Redeemer*” (Job 19:25), the “*Holy One of Israel,*” “*Redeemer*” and “*Savior*” (Isaiah 41:14; 43:1-3; 11, among still other locations); the “*Lamb [led] to the slaughter*” and “*My righteous Servant*” (Isaiah 53); “*Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14) — “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:23); the “*Righteous Branch*” out of David’s lineage and “*a King*” (Jeremiah 23:5); “*the Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:6); God’s

“Anointed” [*Messiah*] (Psalm 45:7; cf. Acts 10:38 and Hebrews 1:9; Isaiah 61:1; cf. Luke 4:18; and Acts 4:27); and all those wonderful names ascribed to Him in that beloved Christmas prophecy, Isaiah 9:6 — “Wonderful,” “Counselor,” “the mighty God,” “the everlasting Father,” and “the Prince of Peace” (cf. “Shiloh” in Genesis 49:10).

But the name given to Him by God to *exalt Him* for **His work** as the **SAVIOR** of the world (“*Wherefore* — for which reasons — *God also hath highly exalted Him...*”), the “name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9-10), is “*Jesus*,” the name announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel “before He was conceived in the womb” (Luke 2:21), the name by which she was to call Him (Luke 1:31), the name by which also Joseph was to call Him according to our title-text (Matthew 1:21), the name officially given to Him on the day of His circumcision (Luke 2:21), the name by which He was known throughout His public ministry (Luke 17:13), and the name under which He was crucified as a malefactor among malefactors (John 19:18-19). This name was commonly “given among men” (Acts 4:12) in those days — and is still commonly given to babies today, particularly among Latin American peoples. **Jesus**, pronounced [yay-ZOOS] in Greek, and [hay-ZOOS] in Spanish, means “rescuer,” “deliverer,” “savior.”

*Jesus* is the New Testament Greek equivalent of the very popular Hebrew name among the Jews then and now, *Joshua* (or *Yeshua*), meaning “*Jehovah is salvation*.” The reader will no doubt remember from Old Testament Bible history that “*Joshua, the son of Nun*” (Exodus 33:11), a faithful, Godfearing young man who served Moses in the wilderness as an assistant (Numbers 11:28), was one of the **twelve spies** sent by God’s command to investigate the Promised Land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1ff.). And he was one of only two spies who brought back a favorable report, who stood together confident of God’s promises, and who urged the people to go into the land and possess it. The other was “*Caleb, the son of Jephunneh*” (Numbers 13:6; 14:24, 30.) It was when the people rebelled against Moses and Aaron and blasphemed the Lord, accusing Him of treachery and deceit and malevolence in bringing them out into the wilderness to die, that the Lord extended the time of their wandering by *forty years* (Numbers chapter 14) — when they could have possessed the land *immediately*, had they only trusted God’s promises. As it turned out according to the Lord’s declaration, only Caleb and Joshua, of all the adults that left Egypt in the Exodus, were permitted to enter the Promised Land at the conclusion of the forty years. Even Moses and Aaron died before the conquest of Canaan. The point of this historical digression is to show the remarkable connec-



tion not only between the names *Joshua* and *Jesus* — both meaning “*Jehovah is Salvation*, the Deliverer, the Savior” — but also between the calling and work of *Joshua* and *Jesus* as “deliverers” or “saviors” of God’s people. The names are virtually **the same**, as noted above; and this is strikingly apparent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 8, where the holy writer states concerning **Joshua**, who led God’s people into the peaceful rest of the Promised Land of Canaan: “*If Jesus* [i.e. *Joshua*, the son of Nun] *had given them rest* [real, lasting and permanent *rest* for their souls], *then would he not afterward have spoken of another day*,” the day of *everlasting* peace and rest for all true believers in the *heavenly* Promised Land, into which *Jesus Christ* (*Jesus*, the *Messiah*) has already entered as our “*Forerunner*” (Hebrews 6:18-20).

**Joshua** “saved” **his** people, the temporal Israel, the seed of Abraham *according to the flesh* (cf. Romans 9:3), “*the children of the flesh*” (Romans 9:8) — believers and unbelievers alike — from their **trials, tribulations**, and seemingly endless **wanderings** in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula [the *Wilderness of Sin* (Exodus 16:1; 17:1); the *Wilderness of Paran* (Numbers 12:16; 13:3, 26), and the *Wilderness of Zin* (Numbers 13:21; 20:1; 27:14)] by “delivering” them safe and sound across the Jordan River into the Promised Land of Canaan. **Joshua’s** mission was primarily a **temporal** mission, and, at that, also a **temporary** mission; for the Children of Israel were not to have the Land of Canaan as their permanent possession. [Note that the expression “*forever*” in connection with the physical possession of Palestine by Israel as their heritage (cf. Exodus 32:13; II Chronicles 20:7) is also properly translated “for a long time.” Not only were the **Ten Tribes** of the Northern Kingdom disinherited of the land in the Assyrian Captivity, so that no trace of them thenceforth was ever found, not even by the most skilled anthropologists; but the very “*scepter*” (the self-governance) also “*depart[ed] from Judah*” (Genesis 49:10) in the course of time, and Palestine became the colonial spoil of one heathen government after another; and it is still today a fractured land, much smaller than it once was and politically divided, only *claimed* but never wholly *established* as the undisputed heritage of ANY one people.

“*Jesus*,” said the angel to Joseph, would “*save His people from their SINS*” (Matthew 1:21, our title-text). “*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). —As noted above, the names **Joshua** and **Yeshua** (**Jesus**) mean “*Jehovah is salvation.*” Gabriel said to Mary: “*That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be*

called the **Son of God**” (Luke 1:35; cf. vv. 32-33). The angel said to the shepherds of Bethlehem: “*Unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ [the Messiah], the Lord [Jehovah Himself]!*” (Luke 2:11). “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver THEM [all sinful mankind] who, through fear of death [“the wages of sin” (Romans 6:23)], were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:14-15) — bondage to sin, death, and Satan. “**Jehovah,**” in the person of Jesus Christ, “*is salvation.*” “*For He shall save His people from their sins.*”

Jesus’ mission, unlike that of Joshua, was a spiritual mission, and, at that, also an effective and permanent mission of delivering “*His people from their sins*” and from everlasting death into “*everlasting (eternal) life*” (John 3:16; 10:28) in the promised land of **heaven**. According to Scripture, however, we properly distinguish two specific uses of the word “*save*” with respect to Christ’s work as our “*Savior.*” — God, in the fulness of time, sent His Son “*to redeem them that were under the Law*” (Galatians 4:5), the “**guilty world**” of unrighteous, ungodly people (Romans 3:19) — the “**all**” for whom Christ “*died*” (II Corinthians 5:15), for whom He rendered to God His **propitiatory vicarious atonement** (I John 2:2; Romans 3:25) in His *active* (Romans 5:18-19) and *passive* (I Peter 2:24a; cf. Isaiah 53) obedience, “*that the world through Him might be saved*” (John 3:17). Christ’s work of **universal redemption** was therefore the basis of God’s **universal or objective justification** of the world, who “*in Christ*” reconciled “*the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19). That gracious, forensic act and declaration of forgiveness and justification of “*the ungodly*” (Romans 4:5) by God was made possible because Christ perfectly satisfied the demands of God’s justice, fulfilling the Law as man’s substitute — both its requirement of perfect righteousness and holiness (Leviticus 19:2, etc.) and its punishment of death as “*the wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23a). In that sense “*He is the Savior of ALL men,*” as St. Paul writes to Timothy (I Timothy 4:10a), even though the vast majority of mankind would **NOT be saved** but would be **lost eternally** (Matthew 7:13; Romans 9:27, 11:5; etc.).

Contrary to the false teaching of the Calvinists in particular, “[*God*] will have **all men to be saved** and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). That is His **primary will**, who “*is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (II Peter

3:9). Therefore God manifested or made known “*the truth*” of His salvation to **all the world** (Romans 10:18) in “*the Word of Reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19), in “*the Gospel*” (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; 10:16), in the “*good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*” (Luke 2:10).

Indeed, “*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [that Gospel] to save them that believe*” (I Corinthians 1:21), having ordained that His “*gift*” (Ephesians 2:8) of salvation, the evidence of *His love* for sinful man (John 3:16; I John 4:9), purchased and won for **all men** by Christ (II Corinthians 2:21; Romans 4:25; I Peter 1:18-19; 2:24; Hebrews 2:14-15; etc., etc.), be **ACCEPTED and RECEIVED by faith** (Mark 1:15; 16:16; John 3:16, 18, 36; 6:40, 47; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:28; 5:1; etc., etc.) — faith worked in the heart by the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel.

Therefore Paul, writing to Timothy, calls Jesus BOTH “*the Savior of ALL MEN,*” in that He REDEEMED all men to God as their “*Propitiation*” (I John 2:2) and became the efficient cause of their *reconciliation* and *objective justification* by God (II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:23-24), AND “*especially of those that BELIEVE*” (I Timothy 4:10) since **only believers** “*receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43), “*have peace with God*” (Romans 5:1), are personally “*justified*” (Romans 3:28), are regarded as “*righteous*” by God (Romans 4:5), and “*have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

Sadly and tragically, “*they have not all obeyed the Gospel*” (Romans 10:16), both the Apostle Paul and Isaiah lament concerning those who have heard but have rejected the Word of the Gospel in **unbelief**. Therefore, despite the fact that God “*gave His only-begotten Son*” (John 3:16), “*not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*” (v. 17); despite the fact that Christ by His *vicarious atonement* became the “*Propitiation*” not for our sins only, but “*also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2), having “*died for all*” (II Corinthians 5:15) and having thus “*bought* (redeemed)” even those who “*deny*” Him in unbelief “*and [who therefore] bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (II Peter 2:1); despite the fact that, on the basis of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of divine justice as “*the Savior of all men*” (I Timothy 4:10), God reconciled “*the world*” unto Himself, “*not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19); and despite the fact that “[*God*] will have **all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge** [the saving knowledge, including be-

lief] of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4); “they have not all obeyed the Gospel” (Romans 10:16). And the Bible expressly says of them: “He that **believeth not** the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “He that **believeth not** is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (v. 18), in the name of **Jesus**, “the Savior of **all men**, **SPECIALLY** of those that **believe**” (I Timothy 4:10).

Similarly, of the Children of Israel, to whom the Promised Land was **given**, and to whom the gift and promise were **preached**, many did “not **enter in** because of **unbelief**” (Hebrews 3:19; 4:6). In **unbelief** they **rejected** the gift — the good and earnest, promised inheritance — and **forfeited** their receipt and possession of the temporal Promised Land of Canaan which God fully intended them to have, the “*exceeding good land*” (Numbers 14:7) into which they could have entered immediately and possessed it, had they believed the good tidings of Caleb and Joshua and trusted God’s promised protection in their conquest of it. Instead they had to wander for forty additional years in the wilderness until all, save Caleb and Joshua, had died.

The words of our title-text, “He shall save **His people** from their sins,” do not champion the “particular redemption” only of the elect that the Calvinists teach, nor do they deny the “*universal* redemption” that the Bible teaches (as set forth above). They do, however, express the **final effect** of Christ’s redemptive work and of the faith in that work that God Himself requires for **final salvation**, as Jesus told the Jews: “This is the work of God, that ye **believe** on Him, whom He hath sent” (John 6:29). “He that **believeth** on the Son **hath** everlasting life, and He that **believeth not** the Son **shall not see life**, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “He that **believeth** and is baptized shall be **saved**, but he that **believeth not** shall be **dammned**” (Mark 16:16). In that very **SPECIAL** sense, then, Christ is “the Savior...**SPECIALLY** of those that **believe**” in that He brings **only believers** into the mansions of heaven, only those who are “the righteous” (Matthew 25:37; 46b) “by faith” (Romans 3:22; 4:5b, 13; 9:30b; 10:6-11), only those who “endure [in faith] unto the end” (Mark 13:13b). In that very **SPECIAL** sense, “He shall save **His people** from their sins.” St. Paul reminds us in Romans chapter nine: “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (v.6); ...“but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (v. 8). Only **true believers** are the true Israel, Christ’s true “people.” “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a **remnant** shall be

saved'” (Romans 9:27). “[We] are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26), St. Paul writes concerning believers and their special relationship to God; and in Psalm 95, we hear of that same relationship by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, namely, that we, who by faith “make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation...with thanksgiving” (vv. 1-2; cf. I Corinthians 10:4), are “the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand” (v.7). Jesus said: “**My sheep** hear My voice; and I know them; and they follow Me; and I give unto **them** eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man [Greek: anyone] pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28).

Indeed, what a wonderful “**Jesus**” we have manifested “for **us** and for **our salvation**” (Nicene Creed) in the Christmas “[Gospel-] tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10), namely, the “**Savior, Christ the Lord**” (Luke 2:11), whom, in the Holy Scriptures, we “trace” as “the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss, from His poor manger to His bitter cross” (TLH 84, 5). For, by virtue of His perfect, vicarious active and passive obedience, “*He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2). By the operation of God’s Holy Spirit through the power of that precious Gospel, let us ever hold fast in faith to this best of all Christmas gifts even unto the end, “*His unspeakable Gift*” (II Corinthians 9:15), **Jesus**, “*the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe*” (I Timothy 4:10). “*For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
in the believer’s ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
and drives away his fear.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,  
my Prophet, Priest and King,  
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
accept the praise I bring.

(TLH 364, 1 and 5)

— D. T. M.

*In Heaven with her Savior...*

## a Waltraut Elisabeth Natterer a



It hath pleased Almighty God in His all-wise providence (Romans 11:33-36) and according to His gracious promises in Christ Jesus (John 11:25-26; 14:2-3) to call out of this vale of tears to Himself in heaven the soul of Waltraut Natterer, the beloved wife of Pastor-Emeritus Melvin L. Natterer. Mrs. Natterer died peacefully in her sleep on Wednesday, November 12, 2014, at her home in Lebanon, Oregon, at the age of 87 years.

Mrs. Natterer was born Waltraut Elisabeth Koenig in Konigsberg, Germany, on September 16, 1927, to Emil and Louise Koenig. Her brother, Lothar, preceded her in death. Already as an infant, Waltraut was received into the kingdom of God's grace in Holy Baptism and was brought up by her parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When she was three years old, the family moved to the United States, settling initially in Michigan and then making their home in Chicago, Illinois. There, as a youth, she was instructed in the chief parts of Christian doctrine and was received by the rite of confirmation into the communicant membership of Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church (*Missouri Synod*).

Waltraut graduated from high school in Chicago and, on June 11, 1949, at the same church in which she had grown up, she was united in holy marriage with the Rev. Melvin Louis Natterer, who had served his vicarage there in her home congregation. Having just graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary (*Missouri Synod*) in Springfield, Illinois, Pastor Natterer briefly served a congregation in Fessenden, North Dakota, and then accepted a call to Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Lansing, Illinois, where he served until the fall of 1951. By then the Natterer family included two little daughters, Linda and Mira. It was in Lansing that the young pastor, who had marked the *Missouri Synod* as a heterodox church body, was persecuted by the officials of the synod's Northern Illinois District because he refused to join it. Instead, in September, 1951, he and other brother pastors became founding members of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, the parent body of our present Conference, even though they knew

that they and their families would pay a heavy price for their faithfulness to the Word of God and for their obedience to its clear injunction in Romans 16:17. On the evening of Reformation Day, October 31, 1951, synodical officials invaded Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Lansing, falsely accused its pastor of “unfaithfulness,” and had him thrown out of the office into which the Holy Ghost had placed him (Acts 20:28). Temporarily without a call and out of a job, Pastor Natterer had to seek secular work to support his family; and his dear Wally quickly learned, by God’s grace and with His neverfailing help, how to endure trials and tribulations that few young wives ever experience and that none truly anticipate. The Natterers and their two toddling daughters were for a brief time members of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Tinley Park, Illinois (now Oak Forest, Illinois), where he served as secretary of the congregation. Then in May of 1952, Pastor Natterer accepted a call to St. John’s in Lebanon, where he spent the next sixty-one years as its shepherd, retiring in 2013. By God’s grace, Mrs. Natterer remained constant and faithful to His Word, a loving pillar of strength to her husband, and an example of Christian piety both to her family and to the congregation. Pastor and Mrs. Natterer, together with their growing family, became established Oregonians; and all the children still live in Lebanon or relatively nearby.

Mrs. Natterer was not only, by God’s grace, a loving and faithful wife to her husband and a caring and nurturing mother to their ten children; but she was, in every sense of the word, her husband’s best friend. She was not only his helpmeet according to God’s ordinance and his devoted and loving companion in their sixty-five year marriage together; but she was his “pal,” and he was hers; and they shared the joy of their Savior’s gracious presence together in “*the unity of the Spirit*” and in “*the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3) in a truly blessed Christian home, cherishing God’s precious Word as their daily comfort and strength, “*lamp and light*” (Psalm 119:105). Their blessed unity remains unbroken *today yet* as Mrs. Natterer now has it in “*fulness of joy*” (Psalm 16:11), safe in the mansions of heaven, and as Pastor Natterer has it in the inerrant truth of the Scriptures and in the fellowship of those who “*all speak the same thing*” (I Corinthians 1:10) according to the “*oracles of God*” (I Peter 4:11).

Mrs. Natterer will be sorely missed by her dear husband and family, but also as a dear sister in the faith by the members of St. John’s in Lebanon and the brethren of the Concordia Lutheran Conference.

She is survived by her devoted husband, Mel, by their ten grown children, by numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren, and by many

friends and Christian brethren in their congregation and in our precious fellowship.

Her mortal remains were committed to the ground following a Christian funeral service at St. John's Lutheran Church in Lebanon, where Pastor Paul E. Bloedel officiated and preached the sermon based on John 3:16. Her body now awaits the resurrection of the flesh on the Last Day, while her soul "*from henceforth*" experiences fullness of joy everlasting with her Savior and all the "*blessed dead*" who by faith in Him have laid hold on eternal life and rest in peace (Revelation 14:13).

May we remember Pastor Natterer in our fervent prayers, that his aching heart be healed and his void of loneliness be filled with the comfort and assurance of the Gospel of our Savior to all true believers, that "*whether we live or die ...we are the Lord's*" (Romans 14:8) and that our inheritance of grace, "*incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*" is reserved even now in heaven for all those who are kept by the power of God, the power of His precious Gospel, through faith unto salvation (I Peter 1:4-5). Let us also "*comfort one another with these words*" (I Thessalonians 4:18).

*Soli Deo gloria!*

—Ed.





# The Christmas Gospel

Luke 2:1-21

**A**nd it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a **Savior**, which is **Christ the Lord**. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called **JESUS**, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

## Churches in Fellowship

### **ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG**

Ekaterinburg, Russia

**The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor**

P. O. Box 27

620039 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

**E-mail:** Schurganoff@mail.ru

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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 171<sup>st</sup> 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

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

**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 Best Christmas Gift of all

*For 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