

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn*

for the

Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity

-THURSDAY-

Enter ye in at the strait gate! – Matthew 7:13a

Our Lord and Savior said: *"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat"* (Matthew 7:13b). Why is this? Because the way to damnation, the way to hell, that way of unbelief and a life of sin is so suitable, so agreeable, and so pleasing to our depraved nature, our *"no good"* (Romans 7:18a) flesh. Therefore, the way of unbelief and persistent sin is a way of life that is wide, broad, and smooth, but *"strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:14). Why is this? Is God at fault here? Does God make it so hard for us to be saved? Oh, no! God has made it easy for us and all sinners to be saved. In and through Christ Jesus, in and through His perfect obedience of the Law of God in our behalf before God, God has declared us and all other sinners *"righteous"* (Romans 5:19b) before Him without any merit, or work, or contribution on our part, solely by virtue of the merit and work of Christ, our sinless Substitute and Savior before God. God's gifts of righteousness (Romans 5:19b), forgiveness (II Corinthians 5:19), and justification (Romans 3:24a) in and through Christ Jesus and His *"redemption"* (Romans 3:24b) are gifts given to the whole world. *"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:17-18). The wide and broad way, the way that *"many"* travel, the way of the ungodly *"world"* (I John 2:15-17a), the way of doing what **you** want to do and the way of doing what pleases **you**, the way of following the corrupt and carnal flesh (Romans 8:7-8), the way of persisting in sin with no repentance (Luke 13:3, 5), the way of rejecting Christ Jesus and God's work of salvation through Him, leads *"to destruction."* In contrast, the narrow way, the way of God's undeserved and unmerited grace in Christ Jesus, the way of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, that mercy which called us Christians out of the darkness of sin and unbelief, bringing us to receive by faith the marvelous blessings of *"everlasting life"* (John 3:36a) and the *"victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 15:57) over death, the grave, sin, hell, and the devil. Hallelujah!

PRAYER – Lord God, *"my light and my salvation, ...the strength of my life"* (Psalm 27:1) through Thy precious Word, help me to remember, as I travel through this short life, that *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18) in the eternal bliss of my heavenly home, prepared by Thee through Christ Jesus for me and all Thy dear people. Amen.

Scripture Reading for Thursday: I Peter 4:12-19 Theme this week: Cross and Comfort

* Adapted and revised from original publication

