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

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my Redeemer
liveth!”

—Job 19:25



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To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the *Book of Concord of 1580* and the *Brief Statement of 1932*.

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

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

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

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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.*"

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

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.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

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Job Confesses Christ's Resurrection and His Own

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the Latter Day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself; and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me."

—Job 19:25-27



This bold testimony of Job, as he grievously suffered under the chastisements of the Lord and looked forward to the very best “*way to escape*” (I Corinthians 10:13) the trials and tribulations of this present life, is a favorite of believers, not only as they celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead on Easter morning, but also as they lay to rest the body of a Christian loved one in the bosom of the earth. For it is not only the *personal* confession of an *individual* believer’s faith in the resurrection of the body on the Last Day, but it is the *verbally-inspired testimony* of the *Holy Ghost* that the resurrection of the dead was indeed, contrary to the gainsaying of so-called “modernists,” taught already in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and is not a “nuance” of the *New Testament* writers who were trying to bolster *their* claim that Jesus Christ *in fact, literally*, rose from the dead and became “*the firstfruits of them that slept*” (I Corinthians 15:20).

Without controversy, the literal, physical resurrection of Christ from the dead on the third day is a primary fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith; for the Apostle Paul writes: “*If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ [those who died confiding in Him as their Redeemer] are perished*” (I Corinthians 15:17-18) — contrary to the Savior’s own promise in John 3:16, “*that whosoever believeth in Him should NOT perish but have everlasting life.*” And St. Paul ties the resurrection of Christ to the resurrection of the dead in verses 12 and 13, saying: “*Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you [skeptics and scoffers of this doctrine even among professing Christians] that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen.*”

Job's bold confession forms the basis of that favorite Easter hymn, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives" (TLH 200), and is cited in the well-known aria and soprano air of Georg Friedrich Händel's oratorio, *Messiah*, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Part III, Scene 1). For the believing Christian, Job's initial words, "*I know*," repeated several times in both musical pieces, remind us of the fact that Job does not merely confess **acquaintance** with the **concept** of the resurrection and **recognizes** it as an abstract **hypothetical ideal** in the "mythology" of the Judaeo-Christian religion, but that he **accepts** the **objective truth** of the resurrection of the dead, both with respect to **Christ's** resurrection, as the **prototype** ["*the firstfruits of them that slept*"], and **his own** resurrection on the "*latter day*." This is the knowledge of faith, the confidence of the heart, based not upon superstition, mythology and legend, not upon feelings and emotions, but upon the sure promises of God (Romans 15:8-13), particularly of the Gospel (Galatians 3:21-22), that gives absolute certainty and comfort to the humble believer: "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him [my body and soul and their eternal welfare] against that day*" (II Timothy 1:12) based upon the Savior's simple but ironclad promise: "*Because I live, ye shall live also*" (John 14:19).

Considering the fact that Job lived in the time of the *Patriarchs* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and that in *their* time nothing had yet been specifically manifested about **how** the "*Seed*" of the woman (Genesis 3:15) and of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), "*which is Christ*" (Galatians 3:16), God's *Messiah*, would procure His blessing for "*all the nations of the earth*" (Genesis 22:18), it is significant that here in this precious text Job refers to Christ as his "**Redeemer**," namely, the One who, according to the meaning of that word, would "buy [him] back," who would "pay the price" required for his deliverance, who would in the place of fallen mankind (II Corinthians 5:21) perfectly satisfy God's justice (I John 2:2) and reconcile "*all the nations of the earth*" to God (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:14-16; II Corinthians 5:19). *Redemption* is specifically the work of God the Son; and we see Him referred to according to that divine name and work throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Psalm 19:14; 78:35; Isaiah 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6 – cf. Revelation 1:8; etc.), including the *vicarious* (substitutionary) value of His active obedience (Jeremiah 23:5-6) and of His innocent suffering and death (Isaiah 53) of behalf of, in the place and in the stead of, "*the transgressors*," v. 12b). This was Job's confidence concerning himself personally, as he confessed Christ to be not only "the" Redeemer or "a" Redeemer, but "*my Redeemer*."

His Redeemer “*liveth*,” says Job, referring not to the fact that, as God, Christ lives from everlasting as the eternal Word (cf. John 1:1), but in testimony of Christ’s bodily resurrection *from the dead* on Easter morning. For notice Job’s specific link between Christ as his “Redeemer” (by virtue of His suffering and death, cf. Galatians 3:13; I Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9b; etc.) and Christ as his living *Resurrector*, who would have been useless as a “redeemer” had He not *died* in Job’s stead, and who would have been a fraud as well if He had not also *risen from the dead* to life again (I Corinthians 15:14, 17). Jesus said to Martha in John 11:25, “*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*” “*Now if we be dead with Christ [our Redeemer], we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over Him; for in that He died, He died unto sin once [as our Redeemer]; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God*” (Romans 6:8-10) as the seal of our justification (Romans 4:25b). “*I know that my Redeemer liveth!*” cries Job in confidence of His redemption by Christ and of his reconciliation with God for Christ’s sake.

This living Redeemer “*shall stand at the Latter Day upon the earth,*” Job’s rectilinear (direct-line) prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:27), “*in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth*” (John 5:28-29a). “*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him*” (Revelation 1:7), just as Jesus testified to Caiaphas before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:64).

“*How say some among you that there be no resurrection of the dead?*” Paul asked the Corinthians (I Corinthians 15:12b; cf. the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23). Already at Job’s time — at the time of the *Patriarchs* — the resurrection of the dead was **known** and was **manifested** as a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith by inspiration of God in the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16). That’s how Martha knew about it (John 11:24), and that’s how the Sadducees knew about it — even if they didn’t believe it. Job testifies that “*at the Latter Day,*” when His Redeemer shall stand upon the earth, his very own body will be resurrected to life, not in some clone of himself, but “*in [his] flesh,*” even though it had by that time long since decayed and disintegrated. Examine briefly **the detail** to be expected in the resurrection of the body: “*Though after my skin worms **destroy** this body, yet **in my flesh** shall I see God, whom I shall see **for myself**; and **mine eyes** shall behold, and not another* (cf. Revelation 1:7a), *though my reins [all my bodily organs and entrails] be **consumed** [disintegrated] within me.*” What a wonderful comfort and assurance concerning those who long ago died, whose bodies had been buried and had returned to the dust (Ecclesiastes 12:7), bodies destroyed in

some catastrophic fire, cremated, or even eaten and digested by the fish of the sea! Nothing shall prevent the Lord from creating again “*of the dust of the ground*” (Genesis 2:7) the bodies which He created in the beginning and the bodies which He caused to be created when man became fruitful and multiplied in the earth (Genesis 1:28); for St. Paul writes by inspiration of God that the Savior, whose second coming we “*look for,*” “*shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself*” (Philippians 3:21). “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God [“by faith in Christ Jesus,” Galatians 3:26], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know [as did Job] that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*” (I John 3:2) — in our very own flesh and with our very own eyes. And so we sing with the hymnwriter, as Job sang in spirit concerning *his* Redeemer, *his* redemption and *his* bodily resurrection in this treasured Easter text:

When from the dust of death I rise
to claim my mansion in the skies,
e’en then this shall be all my plea:
Jesus hath lived and died for me!

Jesus, be endless praise to Thee,
whose boundless mercy hath for me,
for me and all Thy hands have made,
an everlasting ransom paid!

Amen.

(TLH 371, 6-7)

— D. T. M.



The Eternal Decree of Redemption for Our Justification

“...*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*”

—Revelation 13:8b

Having had the blessed opportunity during the holy Lenten season to review Christ’s *vicarious atonement* in payment for the sins of the world (Romans 4:25a), and having been joyed anew on Easter morning by the assurance of His resurrection from the dead as the seal of our justification (Romans 4:25b), we now have the privilege to explore in retrospect the entire “plan of salvation” for sinful mankind as it originated in God in eternity already and was carried out in time “*according to the Scriptures*” (I Corinthians 15:3).

Years ago, a Christian pastor, preaching to a group of jailed convicts on Galatians 4:4 and 5, asked if anyone could define the meaning of “time.” One prisoner shouted out, “I can, Preacher! We’re servin’ it!” While that sounds like a rather simplistic answer, it points up the fact that we poor, wretched sinners are ALL “servin’ time” here in this world as virtual slaves to our clocks and to our calendars. Why? Simply because we have no other points of reference by which to define the confines of our temporal [Latin: *tempus* meaning “time”] existence in this life. It begins on the date and at the moment of our conception (and then also our birth approximately nine months later), and it ends on the date and at the moment of our death. As to events that occur *between* our birth and our death, we refer to them as *having occurred* “in the **past**” or as *not yet having occurred* because they lie (or *perhaps* may lie) “in our **future**.”

Thus, with reference also to the things that belong to our salvation, particularly our Savior’s coming into the world, His holy life here on earth, His innocent suffering and death, and His resurrection on the third day, **we** human beings “reckon” or calculate those things as occurrences *in time*. Thus we speak of God’s people in the Old Testament “*looking forward* in faith” to the coming of the promised Savior and to the redemption He *would accomplish in time* by His vicarious atonement; and we speak of ourselves as *looking back* on the **accomplished** redemptive work of our Savior — as if redemption *had not yet occurred* **until** Christ’s death on Calvary’s cross in 33 A. D., and as if, since our justification is predicated on God’s acceptance of Christ’s propitiation of divine justice, God **first** forgave the sins of the world *when He raised Christ from the dead* on Easter morning. Indeed, trapped as we are *in time*, and restricted as we are to *time-lines* in processing occurrences,

acts, promises and their fulfillment, as sequential *in time*, God graciously accommodates Himself to our perceptions by speaking and by dealing with us in terms that we can understand.

Hence we know, understand and believe that “*when the fulness 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). The eternal Son of God was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary *in time*; He was born of the Virgin Mary *in time*; He “*did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not,...*” (I Peter 2:22-23), rendering to His Father perfect active obedience to earn righteousness for every soul of man (Romans 5:19) *in time*; He suffered the pains of hell *in time* and died on the accursed tree of the cross *in time* as our Substitute; and He mightily rose from the dead “*very early in the morning the first day of the week*” (Mark 16:2) on the third day after His death — *in time*. “*Now ONCE, in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Hebrews 9:26) — *in time*.

And yet, in the mind of the eternal **God**, the timeless One, “*with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (James 1:17), Christ, “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), was “*slain from the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 13:8b) as the timeless “*propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2). In the mind of God, all of this had already been accomplished “*in Christ,*” and He didn’t have to wait with His time-bound creatures and withhold the forgiveness of mankind until Christ came in time to accomplish what He was anointed to fulfill. In Isaiah 43:1, Christ’s redemptive work is spoken of as having already been completed; in Isaiah 53, His vicarious suffering and death is described as having already been rendered; and throughout the Old Testament, “*the Holy One of Israel,*” God’s Messiah, the Anointed One, is called “*the Redeemer,*” not the “one-day-to-be-the-Redeemer,” “*our Redeemer,*” “*thy Redeemer.*”

With our orthodox dogmatians on the basis of clear Scripture we recognize **eternal decrees** of God as *essential* [according to His *essence*], *internal* [terminating *within* the Godhead and all three persons agreeing] *acts* or operations — three in number, the *Decree of Creation*, the *Decree of Redemption*, and the *Decree of Predestination* (Cf. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 176; A. L. Graebner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, p. 49). These are not “ideas” that God “came up with,” as we human beings describe creative plans and inventions that we stumble upon in our efforts to solve problems; neither are they “timely” and “time-sensitive” plans that may or may not work.

All of the essential attributes of God, all of those divine attributes that belong to His essence (cf. *Catechism* Q/A 25), were in play in His *eternal decree of redemption* to reconcile the two attributes that *seem to be* mutually exclusive and hopelessly contradictory, namely, His justice and His mercy — His **justice** which demands perfection (*e.g.* Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48; James 2:10) and prescribes everlasting punishment for the slightest infraction (*e.g.* Romans 5:12; 6:23; Galatians 3:10) and His **mercy** which graciously forgives the sinner’s iniquities and transgressions and restores the relationship of peace between Himself and fallen mankind (Exodus 34:6; Isaiah 38:17; Hebrews 8:12). Dr. Graebner, in defining the *Decree of Redemption*, breaks it down into what we today call “sound bites” of Gospel truth to demonstrate that God determined, in eternity already, how to exercise mercy without violating His justice:

The decree of redemption is an eternal act of God, whereby He graciously and with divine wisdom purposed to work, in the fulness of time, through the Son made manifest in the flesh, a redemption of mankind, and to prepare a way of salvation for the whole human race, whose fall He had foreseen but not decreed. (*Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, p. 50).

And Dr. Mueller defines it similarly as follows:

The decree of redemption is that essential internal act of the Triune God by which He most graciously and wisely purposed to redeem fallen and lost mankind through the vicarious atonement of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, and thus to prepare a way of salvation for the whole world, whose fall He had foreseen but not decreed. (*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 176).

Thus everything that Christ accomplished in time by His holy life as true man “born of the Virgin Mary,” that is, by His *active obedience* in the place and in the stead of sinners, *propitiated*, that is, completely satisfied, the legislative demands of divine justice by earning perfect righteousness for every soul of man (Romans 5:19). And this propitiation had been decreed, foreordained and determined “*before the foundation of the world*” (I Peter 1:20) to be accomplished by Christ, “*as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (v. 19).

And everything that Christ endured in His great passion, that is, by His *passive obedience* in the place and in the stead of sinners (Isaiah 53), including His suffering the very pains of hell itself (Matthew 27:46), *propitiated* the punitive demands of God’s justice (Ezekiel 18:4b; Romans 6:23a; etc.) by bearing in His own sinless soul and body the imputed guilt of every sinner (II Corinthians 5:21) and thus redeeming us and all mankind from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13). Christ was “*delivered [into suffering and death] by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23),

“to do whatever [God’s] counsel determined to be done” (4:28) in eternity already as *“...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8b), *“the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (I John 2:2).

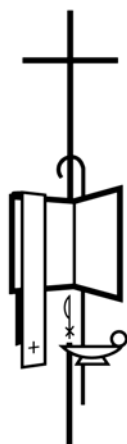
It was because of Christ’s propitiatory *vicarious atonement* [*“in Christ”*], consisting of His perfect active and passive obedience in the stead of fallen mankind, that God was able to be merciful and gracious to all of perverse humanity and to *“[justify] the ungodly”* (Romans 4:5), *“reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them”* (II Corinthians 5:19). Those precious two words, *“in Christ”* or *“in Him”* or *“in whom,”* namely, because of His foreordained, foredetermined, purposed and eternally decreed *vicarious atonement*, are repeated over and over particularly in the New Testament with reference to redemption (*e.g.* Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24b), to justification (*e.g.* II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:24a-25), and to predestination (*e.g.* Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; II Timothy 1:9) to show that the work of our Redeemer, to which He *“verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world”* (I Peter 1:20), was **absolutely essential** to the manifestation of God’s *“great love”* (Ephesians 2:4), His *“mercy [which] endureth forever”* (Psalm 118:1) and *“the riches of His grace wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence”* (Ephesians 1:7-8), *“according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself”* (v. 9).

Therefore, though God’s people in the Old Testament waited and longed for the appearance of the promised Redeemer *“when the fulness of the time was come”* (Galatians 4:4); and though we too, *“which have the firstfruits of the Spirit,”* are bound to time in this vale of tears and even now are still *“waiting”* in faith (confidence of the heart) and hope (anticipation and expectation) *“for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”* (Romans 8:23) when our living Redeemer (Job 19:25) comes again in glory to *“receive [us] unto [Himself]”* (John 14:3), we have the blessed assurance that we need never doubt, nor dare we ever doubt, what God in heaven **decreed in eternity** — the redemption of all mankind by the vicarious atonement of His Son — *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,”* the reconciliation and justification of the world because of His propitiation of God’s justice, and His universal will of grace according to which He earnestly desires that all men to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth and to childlike confidence in His precious Gospel of justification by grace for Christ’s sake through faith in His merits alone. *“To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen!”* (I Peter 5:11).

— D. T. M.

Christian Pastors as Undershepherds of Christ's Flocks

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. —Acts 20:28



In both the Old and New Testaments, the Lord refers to His believing followers as His “flock” (Ezekiel 34:30–31; Luke 12:32), “sheep” (Psalm 79:13; John 10:27), and “lambs” (Isaiah 40:11; John 21:15). These terms are generally used to highlight God’s loving care for us (Ezekiel 34:15), His guidance (Psalm 80:1) and protection (John 10:27–28), as well as our complete dependency upon Him (Psalm 119:176; John 10:11–15). And we do, indeed, most certainly need His help, since we are surrounded by enemies, the devil and false prophets in his service, who would otherwise quickly harm our souls and destroy us — enemies that are compared to “a roaring lion” (I Peter 5:8) and “ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). And while sheep, if left to fend for themselves, would be an easy prey for wolves and lions, we do not need to fear our enemies, because the all-powerful God of heaven and earth is our *Shepherd*. The 23rd Psalm is a well-known and highly-treasured Word of God that gives a detailed description of the great care provided for us by “the Lord” our “*Shepherd*,” so that we “want,” or lack, nothing (v. 1).

The amazing love of our divine Shepherd is most clearly displayed in the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (I John 4:9–10), in how the eternal Son of God, true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, became a true human being in order to take our place under the Law and die for our redemption (Galatians 4:4–5; Hebrews 2:14–15). Jesus tells us what it means that He is our “*Good Shepherd*” (and not “a hireling”) when He says: “*I am the Good Shepherd. **The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.** But he that is an hireling and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep and am*

known of Mine. ...And I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:11–15). Yes, our Good Shepherd laid down His life to purchase the forgiveness of sins for His sheep and for all mankind (I John 2:1–2). But that forgiveness can only be received by an individual sinner *through faith* (Romans 3:28; Acts 10:43); and that faith is created, sustained, and strengthened by the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 12:3) through the Gospel (Romans 1:16; 10:17; I Peter 1:23, 25; 2:2) —the divinely inspired record and testimony of our Good Shepherd’s love for us.

St. Paul asks rhetorically: “*How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*” (Romans 10:14). In order that sinners may be brought into His fold of sheep and be saved, Jesus commissioned His disciples to carry His Word to all nations (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15). Obviously, a good shepherd would not merely gather sheep together only to leave them to fend for themselves after that! Saving faith can be lost (Luke 8:13; II Peter 2:20–21); but it is the Lord’s desires to strengthen and preserve His flock in the faith unto eternal salvation through the Gospel (Acts 20:32). Therefore, in order to provide for the continued *feeding of His lambs and sheep* (John 21:15–17), the Good Shepherd has appointed *pastors* to watch over and care for local flocks of believers — congregations where professing Christians gather together on a regular basis for the hearing of God’s Word, for the reception of the Sacraments, and for joint worship and praise as brethren. The term “pastor” literally means “shepherd.” Now a faithful pastor will *not* try to take the place of the Good Shepherd but will diligently seek to carry out the God-given work assigned to him *under* the supreme authority of Christ, who is always to be acknowledged as “*the chief Shepherd*” (I Peter 5:4). This is why pastors are often called “undershepherds.” They are, indeed, shepherds; but they serve under “*our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep*” (Hebrews 13:20).

The pastoral office is not a *humanly-created* position of convenience or expedience but is a *divine institution*. In the Apostle Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian pastors, who are also called “*elders*” (Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5; “*presbyteroi*” in the Greek) as well as “*overseers*” (Acts 20:28; “*episkopoi*” in the Greek, the same word translated as “*bishop*” in Titus 1:7), he clearly states that the Holy Ghost put them in their position of authority and oversight in the congregation, saying: “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God*” (Acts 20:28). Notice how the work and responsi-

bilities of Christ's undershepherds are described here in a few different ways, including: *Taking heed* (giving watchful, attentive care) to all the flock; *overseeing* the congregation (making sure things are done decently and in good order); and *feeding* God's church (doing the work of a shepherd in tending to the spiritual needs of the flock). While pastors are under the same obligations as all Christians to tend to the *physical needs* of their neighbors, even those of their enemies (Romans 12:20), yet that is *not* the specific work that they are called to do in their office as undershepherds; and it pales in comparison to the infinitely more important work of tending to the *spiritual needs* of the flock through the faithful preaching, teaching, and application of God's Word. When the Christian congregation in Jerusalem had grown so large that the charitable work of feeding the poor could not be managed by the Apostles without taking them away from their pastoral work, they said: "*It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word*" (Acts 6:2–4).

In order to emphasize to the Ephesian pastors the love which the Lord has for His sheep, St. Paul reminds them how Christ purchased the redemption of His Church with His innocent suffering and death. "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). Indeed, Christ, who is true God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, according to His human nature shed His own blood in order to redeem and sanctify His Church (1 Peter 1:18–19; Ephesians 5:25–27). It is not surprising, therefore, that the welfare of His Church is very important to Him, and that He has taken care to provide for the spiritual feeding and safekeeping of His precious lambs and sheep. When the risen Savior called Peter to follow Him —making it clear that He still wanted him to be one of His Apostles even though he had shamefully denied Him three times— the Lord drew his attention to the important work of a faithful and caring undershepherd, telling him: "*Feed My lambs,*" "*Feed My sheep,*" "*Feed My sheep*" (John 21:15–17). And after His ascension into heaven, the Lord Jesus continued to send men to serve in various offices (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) to do the work of tending to the spiritual needs of His flock (Ephesians 4:10–12). The only one of those offices that we still have among us today is that of *pastor* (teacher, elder, bishop), the one office that requires both oversight and teaching.

The work of a faithful pastor in a Christian congregation takes the form of preaching, teaching, comforting, encouraging, counseling, rebuking, and correcting the sheep entrusted to his care and oversight; and it is always to be based firmly upon the Word of God, accurately setting forth the Lord's perfect teachings (doctrines). Accordingly, pastors are described as "*they who labor in the Word and doctrine*" (I Timothy 5:17). Likewise, in his second letter to the young pastor Timothy, the Apostle Paul describes the way that God requires His undershepherds to nurture, guide, and protect the flocks entrusted to their care by telling him: "*Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering [patience] and doctrine*" (4:2). Thus pastors are not to preach about themselves (II Corinthians 4:5), nor are they to set aside the teachings of Scripture in order to promote the fallible wisdom of sinful human beings (I Corinthians 2:4–5, 13). And because pastors are *undershepherds*, they "*must give account*" (Hebrews 13:17) to God for the way that they carry out the duties of their office in the care of His flock.

As the undershepherds of Christ, pastors should also be aware that the way they conduct themselves will reflect either positively or negatively upon their work and upon their Lord and Savior, whom they represent. The Scriptures, therefore, provide a detailed outline of the behavior that Christ requires of His undershepherds. "*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*" (I Timothy 3:2–6). "*For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*" (Titus 1:7–9). Not that pastors can eliminate sin from their lives or develop an immunity to the temptations of the devil; but they are to conduct themselves as examples to the flock (I Peter 5:3; I Timothy 4:12) —living in such a way that even those outside of the congregation cannot legitimately criticize their decency and Christian morality (I Timothy 3:7).

The fact that pastors are Christ's undershepherds not only places important responsibilities upon *them*, but also upon *the sheep* of the

flock, who are to treat their pastors with great honor and esteem. The members of the congregation are to receive their pastors as *Christ's own "ambassadors"* (II Corinthians 5:20), as those whom *the Holy Ghost has placed in their position of oversight* (Acts 20:28), and who thus by divine ordinance "*rule over*" (Hebrews 13:7, 17) the congregation "*in the Lord*" (I Thessalonians 5:12) as they "*labor in the Word and doctrine*" (I Timothy 5:17). Yes, such *well-ruling pastors* are certainly "*worthy of double honor*" (I Timothy 5:17) and are to be *esteemed "very highly in love for their work's sake"* (I Thessalonians 5:13). Remembering that they are placed in their position by God Himself, and that their work is the proclamation of the Lord's powerful and saving Word—the proclamation of the Law in all its fierceness and the proclamation of the Gospel in all its sweetness to the glory of God and for the salvation of souls—Christians should by all means give their pastors the utmost respect and not despise them because of personality quirks, odd mannerisms, physical appearance, voice quality, etc. To despise the pastor in his office as Christ's undershepherd is to despise Christ Himself (Luke 10:16; Galatians 6:6–7). If the members of a congregation refuse to submit themselves to the Scriptural teaching and faithful leading of their pastor, they bring sadness upon him; but they are ultimately harming their own spiritual well-being (Hebrews 13:17).

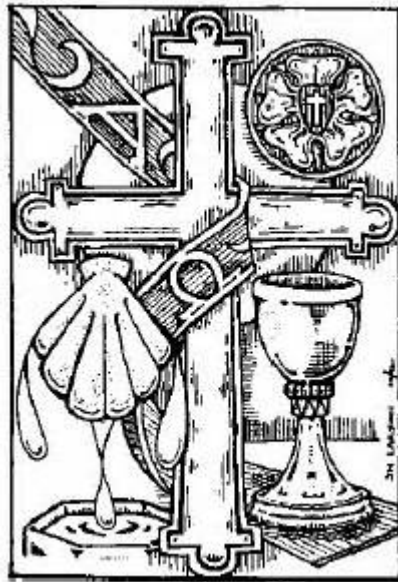
Obviously, if a pastor is "*handling the Word of God deceitfully*" (II Corinthians 4:2)—not preaching the doctrines of Holy Scripture in their full truth and purity (I Timothy 6:3–5)—then he should definitely *not* be followed, but should rather be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17) as a false prophet (Matthew 7:15; I John 4:1), assuming that he refuses to be corrected (Titus 3:10). Such a pastor is not fulfilling his duties as an undershepherd of the Lord Jesus with fidelity. However, when a true Christian pastor seriously considers the significance of the fact that God has called him to serve as an undershepherd in a congregation and to tend to the needs of the Savior's precious lambs and sheep, then he will strive with the help of God to become more and more diligent in the work of that great calling. So also, when the laymen clearly understand that their pastor has been placed by the Lord as an undershepherd tasked with the care of their eternal souls, then they should cheerfully submit themselves to his faithful leading. May the Lord continue graciously to bless all the members of our Conference, and cause both pastors and laymen to grow in their appreciation for what it means that Christ has appointed undershepherds to care for His flock.

Oh, may Thy pastors faithful be,
not lab'ring for themselves, but Thee!
Give grace to feed with wholesome food
the sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood,
to tend Thy flock, and thus to prove
how dearly they the Shepherd love.

Oh, may Thy people faithful be
and in Thy pastors honor Thee
and with them work and for them pray
and gladly Thee in them obey;
receive the prophet of the Lord
and gain the prophet's own reward!

(*TLH*, 493, vv. 2–3)

—P. E. B.



(Series: Exposition and Application of the Ten Commandments)

VII. The Seventh Commandment

“Thou shalt not steal.” — Exodus 20:15

In his *Small Catechism*, Dr. Luther explains what encompasses “stealing” according to Scripture, that is, on the basis of proof-texts (*sedes doctrinae*) which can stand on their own as authoritative without further explanation and/or interpretation. He asks, “What does this mean?” and answers as follows: “We should fear and love God that we may not **take** our neighbor’s money or goods, nor **get them** by false ware or dealing” (bolded words our emphasis). Thus he first of all explains, as he does also with the other commandments, the *prohibition*-side of the Seventh Commandment.

Although all overt sinful acts begin in the heart (Matthew 15:19), and in the case of *stealing* any “sinful longing for anything that belongs to our neighbor” (Cat. Q/A 66), we shall reserve the “sinful longing” aspect, not only of stealing but also of other overt sinful acts against our neighbor, for discussion under the Ninth and Tenth Commandments — the sin of *coveting* what belongs to our neighbor. While “*the Lord looketh on the heart*” (I Samuel 16:7) and judges not only an *overt act* of stealing, which is evident to human beings who can observe it, but also the *sinful desire* from whence it arises, **man** can identify, prosecute and punish — “*in the mouth of two or three witnesses*” (II Corinthians 13:1)— only the **overt act**, and even **conspiracy** to commit the overt act and **complicity** both before and after the fact (Proverbs 29:24), by what we commonly call “due process of law.” Therefore, for the purpose of our immediate study, we shall confine our discussion to the **overt act**, the demonstrable act, of *stealing*.

The concept and generic definition of **stealing** is commonly acknowledged, even by “*natural man*,” according to the dictates of his conscience (Romans 2:15), so that it is numbered as a **felonious crime** even in the **civil** statutes of worldly governments. Few (if any) condone it, although some may differ as to *degrees of application* when it comes to penalties prescribed.

Taking Luther’s words to define the two most obvious forms of overt stealing, we consider first of all “**taking** our neighbor’s money or goods,” taking from our neighbor what he is not willing to part with,

either as an outright gift (contribution) or in trade for something of equal or greater value (commerce). Thus we recognize, first of all, perhaps the grossest forms of stealing, namely, “every kind of **robbery** and **theft**” (Cat. Q/A 66). While the two may in certain respects overlap each other (and criminal courts may have to sort out subtle differences), they are fairly easy to distinguish.

“**Robbery**,” according to common dictionary definitions, involves the use of **force** or **threat of force** — the use of a firearm, a knife, or other weapon to incentivise the victim to part with his “money or goods,” or even the verbal threat of impending bodily harm or even death by a violent act if the demand is not complied with. Since it is often unlikely that the victim has any recourse or means of defense against such “strong arm robbery,” it is commonly the advice of law enforcement officials to yield what is demanded without resistance, even though the attacker may carry through on his threat notwithstanding compliance.

“**Theft**” is commonly defined as “**taking** our neighbor’s money or goods” *without force* or confrontation, although the criminal definition may vary according to circumstances. Thus a common “purse snatching,” latching onto an unattended cell phone or computer, picking a pocket of its contents, or driving off in an unattended vehicle in which the keys were inadvertently left in the ignition are examples of **thefts** which occur thousands of times every hour (or minute!). Thefts are also committed by means of “breaking and entering” (cf. Matthew 6:19b) into an unoccupied home or business, where the purpose is to find and remove from the premises cash, valuables, artwork, computers, and the like **without confrontation** with the owner. Note, however, that if the owner is present, the act is regarded as a robbery; and it is assumed (even under the law) that the offender will indeed threaten harm or even take the life of anyone who stands in his way. The same can be said of a “car-jacking” in which the owner is in the vehicle and is threatened, harmed and perhaps even held hostage in the process. Therefore if the victim resists and the perpetrator is injured or killed, no charges are usually filed against the property owner; and, even according to Scripture, such self-defense is warranted; and no guilt is attached to the injury or death of the robber (Exodus 22:2).

Luther also states that, according to Scripture, a person who “**gets** [his neighbor’s money or goods] by false ware or dealing” sins against the Seventh Commandment. This form of stealing, common in business transactions, is known as “**fraud**.” Dishonesty whereby our neighbor is

“defrauded” of his “money or goods” is divided by Luther into two categories: False *ware* and false *dealing*.

False *ware* is dishonesty in manufactured *articles* or *products* offered for sale. The term is usually used in connection with another word signifying the type of product (hardware, software, silverware, cookware, kitchen ware, Communion ware, etc.). This kind of fraud is perpetrated upon unsuspecting victims when *defective merchandise* is marketed — cars that don’t run, machinery that doesn’t work, products that don’t perform, unhealthy pets, and the like. The seller takes his neighbor’s “good” money in exchange for “false” ware and thus steals from him. In this day and age we also observe “false ware” in the form of *counterfeiting* — the counterfeiting of *money* and stock certificates and the counterfeiting of *products* (commonly referred as “knock-offs”) marketed as the “real thing.”

And then there is also *identity theft*, whereby thieves make unsuspecting victims a party to their theft by stealing under their name, using their credit card accounts, and even negotiate sizeable loans on the basis of their credit scores and records. Moreover we see the widespread theft of *intellectual property* and *industrial espionage* in which an engineer’s designs, inventions and innovations are appropriated and replicated without permission and compensation; and this is easily and surreptitiously accomplished technologically without any face-to-face confrontation by means of computer hacking. The same is true of downloading, copying and using licensed programs, software, music, and movies which have been digitally “pirated” and put out on the Internet for accessibility in the “public domain” without authorization.

False *dealing* is dishonesty in *representation* and *advertising*. It may be the representation of “false ware” as “good ware” — advertising as a “vacation site” a parcel of land in the middle of an Everglades swamp, for example — or it may be fraud in terms of *measurement*. In Leviticus 19:35, the Lord says to His people: “*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment* [that is, in making fraudulent estimates], *in meteyard* [in measurements of length (such as meters and yards)], *in weight* [using faulty scales or the old practice of a butcher putting his thumb on a scale platform while weighing a cut of meat], *or in measure* [in the measurement of volume (bushels, pecks, gallons, cubic yards, etc.).” In verse 36, the Lord tells them that He fully expects “*just*” measurements in their dealings with one another; and, in verse 34, that this applies also to strangers among them.

Dishonesty in terms of “the neighbor’s money or goods” also occurs when a **worker** is **deprived of just compensation** or when his labor is received but no wages are paid. The Lord says through Jeremiah: “*Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbor’s service without wages and giveth him not for his work*” (Jeremiah 22:13). Slang terms for this kind of fraud include “freeloading” and “mooching.”

Other examples of fraud in which someone profits unjustly at the expense of someone else include **non-payment of debts**, commonly known as “deadbeating,” concerning which the Lord says through the Psalmist: “*The wicked borroweth and payeth not again*” (Psalm 37:21). We should take serious warning from this word of God against utilizing the “convenience” offered to citizens by their government simply to ignore this principle of Scripture by permitting them to declare **bankruptcy** and to petition the court to free them from indebtedness by canceling their creditors’ legitimate claims against them. This “option” is specially tempting to those who, not having the wherewithal to support their desired “lifestyle,” irresponsibly run up their debt particularly on credit cards until they are literally drowning “under water,” unable to pay even the interest due on their indebtedness. Occasionally, however, overwhelming indebtedness occurs not because of recklessness but as the result of catastrophic illness and crushing medical costs. “Restructuring” debt with the cooperation of creditors is one thing because it demonstrates the intention to deal honestly; but not repaying what we legitimately owe is quite another, as the Lord declares through the Psalmist.

Much of the fraud perpetrated today in which people seek to profit at the expense of others involves sins against their government. Two examples quickly come to mind: **a)** We know that it is a legitimate right of God-ordained governments to collect taxes from their citizens in order to have the wherewithal to carry out their responsibilities (Romans 13:1-6); and citizens have the duty to “**render**” or pay their taxes. St. Paul writes: “**Render therefore to all their dues** [what is due, owed, and payable to them]: **Tribute** [taxes in general] *to whom tribute is due, custom* [taxes on products] *to whom custom, fear to whom fear* [namely, to authorities], *honor to whom honor* [as in the case of judges]” (v. 7). And the Lord Jesus said to the disciples of the Pharisees and to the Herodians: “‘*Show Me the **tribute** money [with Caesar’s image and name on it];’ ...Then saith He unto them: ‘**Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s**’” (Matthew 22:19-21). **Tax***

evasion is, therefore, **stealing** from the government its rightful revenue. The oft-cited justification for refusal to pay taxes is that “the government is corrupt.” Note that both Paul and the Lord Jesus were speaking of the *Roman* government under the *Caesars!*

b) Another fraud perpetrated against the government is in the matter of so-called “entitlements.” While there is nothing in Scripture that prevents the government to grant monetary support to the poor, to the disabled, to the unemployed, and to the aged — *legitimate* “entitlements” under the law, the Bible lays upon all of us the obligation to “*work*” or “*labor*” at a rightful occupation if we are able to do so and thus to avoid stealing as the means to “*have*” what we need to support this body and life, and even more than we need so that we are able to share with the needy: “*Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Ephesians 4:28). “*To do good and to communicate [share] forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*” (Hebrews 13:16). And the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says: “*If any would not [is not willing to] work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread*” (II Thessalonians 3:10-12). Regarding the legitimately “*poor and needy*” and our obligation to help them, more will be said later; but **fraud** is committed when people who are able to work but are not willing to work feel “entitled” to have “*their bread*” and living from the government; and such fraud is recognized as criminal and is identifiable as sinful, contrary to the Seventh Commandment (“welfare fraud,” “unemployment fraud,” etc.), even though it is often hard to prosecute.

Finally, concerning the “taking of our neighbor’s money or goods” when he is not willing to part with them, a word is in order about **gambling** as a sin against the Seventh Commandment. **Gambling** (as distinguished from a mere “drawing” or “door prize”) always involves a **price** that each participant must pay up-front in order to “play.” It may be a bet on a sports game (on-track or off-track), the cost of a raffle ticket, the entrance price at a bingo game, the “ante” in poker, the bet at a gaming table in a casino (roulette, blackjack, etc.), the “cost” of a lottery ticket, and so on. The amount of the price is immaterial — pennies or high-stakes; the principle is the same. And then the “player,” not by skill (as if he were working for wages) but by *pure chance*, either wins

EVERYTHING — everyone else’s “investment” — or loses what he laid down in hopes of winning. In the first case, he takes from every other player the money that the player did not really want to lose (and, in the case of the lottery, from millions of players!); and, in the second case, he loses his own “investment” in the game and therefore is guilty of carelessly wasting the “*daily bread*” which the Lord intends to be used for the support of his body and life and that of his household (II Thessalonians 3:12; I Timothy 5:8; etc.), for sharing with the poor and needy (Matthew 5:42; Proverbs 19:17; Hebrews 13:16), and for the support of His kingdom (II Corinthians 8:12; 9:7-8; Malachi 3:8-11). Note that **nobody WANTS to lose!** Otherwise he would simply give away his money to the other players without expecting, or even desiring, to win. In gambling, the winner *takes* the neighbor’s money or goods against the neighbor’s will; and the loser *forfeits* his money or goods against his will... a classic example of stealing and of being stolen from.

Not too long ago, gambling in just about any form was considered a “vice” and in many cases a “crime.” In schools, “pitching pennies” and “matching tosses” were dealt with as disciplinary matters; and betting on sports games, horse racing, and drag races was limited *by law*. The “numbers racket” was a *criminal* endeavor, and many spent time in prison for “running numbers.” *Now* it’s called “the lottery,” and “the numbers” are run by almost all states in the nation as a legitimate means of revenue! “*Organized* gambling” is still considered criminal activity and the basis for much of the “*organized crime*” in our country; but, oddly enough, *unorganized* gambling seems to be approved by almost everyone — especially if it supports a worthy cause, a “good purpose,” a noble endeavor (fire department raffles, church bingo parties, “split-the-pot” drives in the bleachers at school sporting events, and of course “the lottery” for the support of public education). However, as in the case of King Saul (I Samuel 15:13ff.), the end does not justify the means (Isaiah 5:20). Who would rob a store on the way to church in order to have money to give when the offerings are collected??

What is the motivation that, as “*lust*,” tempts people to sin against the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 15:19; James 1:14-15)? It is simply their desire to “get rich quick,” even at the expense of others, without the work required to earn wages (Ephesians 4:28). The Apostle Paul warns us against this trap (which often becomes *compulsive* because of the Old Adam, cf. Romans 7:7-25), saying: “*Godliness with contentment is great gain... And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be [want to be] rich fall into temptation and*

a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (I Timothy 6:6, 8-11).

Thus far we have discussed *sins of commission* against the Seventh Commandment, sins expressly forbidden by God’s Law which people nevertheless *commit*. But we dare not forget that, though we as Christians strive to avoid sins of commission (Galatians 5:25), which are easy to identify, we have, by virtue of the Old Adam within us (Romans 7), the inclination to *omit* doing those things which the Law requires. St. Paul writes: *“I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not” (Romans 7:18-19a).*

What then does God **require** of us in the Seventh Commandment (Cat. Q/A 67)? On the basis of Scripture we identify four things that God requires. The first is that, instead of stealing, that is, profiting at the expense of our neighbor, **we should work to earn** (as God’s instrument in His providence of our daily bread – Psalm 145:15-16; I Peter 5:7; Matthew 6:24-34) the things that we need to support this body and life. *“Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have....” (Ephesians 4:28).* *“Now them that are such [those who don’t want to work and don’t work at all] we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread” (II Thessalonians 3:12).* *“But if any provide NOT for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel [a heathen person]” (I Timothy 5:8).*

Secondly, according to Luther’s explanation, we should “help [our neighbor] to **improve** and **protect** his property and business.” And in the exposition of our Catechism (1943), we have two passages that support this (among the many others that could be cited): *“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again” (Exodus 23:4),* even if it requires us to inconvenience ourselves to do so. And, of course, the summary passage that includes all works of loving service to our neighbor, as we love him as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18b; Matthew 22:39): *“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law*

and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). To these could well be added: “By love *serve one another*” (Galatians 5:13) and “As we have therefore opportunity, let us *do good* unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith [our Christian brethren]” (Galatians 6:10).

Thirdly, we should help our neighbor in every need to alleviate his want. Concerning this requirement, we observed the same in the exposition and application of the Fifth Commandment and in the unselfish service of the Good Samaritan, epitomized by our Savior (Luke 10:33ff.). Notice that the following passages are not mere advice and recommendations. Particularly the first is an **imperative** of God’s Law: “*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*” (Matthew 5:42). Note that there is nothing in this injunction that warrants our judgment of the neighbor’s need, nor of its legitimacy, nor of his motives in seeking our help, nor why he doesn’t just get a job (See Zechariah 8:17). When a panhandler, for example, stops us on the street or at an intersection, certainly appears to be “*poor*” (Exodus 23:6) and “*destitute of daily food*” (James 2:15), and asks us for a relatively minuscule contribution out of what we have, we should **give it to him** and **not turn away from him**, the text tells us in straight-up, simple words that we can easily understand. —The second passage expresses God’s will as set forth frequently in the Old Testament concerning the “*poor and needy*” among His people and even strangers (Cf. for example Deuteronomy 15:11; 24:14; Psalm 82:3-4; and Proverbs 31:20): “*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again*” (Proverbs 19:17). —And the third confirms God’s pleasure in works of kindness and generosity: “*To do good and to communicate [to share] forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*” (Hebrews 13:16).

Fourthly and finally, we should rejoice when we see our neighbor prosper. Needless to say, “*the prosperity of the wicked*” (Psalm 73), particularly when **we** are in **want**, in **trouble**, or suffering under some **affliction**, may well be a source of frustration and pain to the Christian in his fleshly weakness, as it was to the psalmist Asaph; but when we go “*into the sanctuary of God*” and hear His Word concerning “*their end*” (v. 17), we learn that we should not be “*envious*” of their prosperity (v. 3), as that of the rich man who ignored poor Lazarus at his gate and ended up “*in hell*” (Luke 16:19ff.); for “*a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked*” (Psalm 37:16). Laboring for “*the meat which perisheth*” is, after all, of no enduring value; but the “*meat*” that the Lord Jesus gives us through His Word, namely,

the meat of “*everlasting life*” which He earned for us, is what really counts (John 6:27). And yet, true love or “*charity*,” St. Paul tells us, “*envieth not, ... seeketh not her own*” (I Corinthians 13:4-5). Out of love and gratitude to our gracious God, we should be “*content*” with the basic necessities of life that He grants us day by day, “*having food and raiment*” (I Timothy 6:8), and rejoice that both we and our neighbor, as unworthy as we are in His sight, are the beneficiaries of His merciful providence (Genesis 32:10) for our Savior’s sake.

In this commandment of only four words is much food for thought. It serves to curb the coarse outbursts of sin against the security of our money and goods and thus helps to keep order in the world; it shows us, as in a mirror, our own sins against this Commandment (both of *commission* and *omission*) whereby we have offended our God and deserve His wrath and punishment, and on account of which we desperately need a Savior; and, as a rule or straightedge, it shows us Christians which works please God as the fruit of our faith, works in which we should abound, moved and enabled by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, out of gratitude for our salvation in Christ Jesus. “*For [we] know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might be rich*” (II Corinthians 8:9) — rich in the spiritual blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation which He purchased and won for us, “*[who] died for all, that they which live [those who are spiritually alive by faith in His merits] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again*” (II Corinthians 5:15).

—D. T. M.

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

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

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. Balaiyi Thompson and The Rev. Bateinm Bestman, Pastors

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobele Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

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

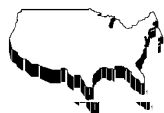
Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface, Pastor

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

4090 S. Melpomene Way, Tucson, AZ 85730 On the Web at: *GoodShepherdLutheranChurchTucson.com*

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

The Rev. DANIEL P. MENSING, Pastor

8464 East Wildcat Drive, Tucson, AZ 85730

E-mail: goodshepherdlutherantucson@gmail.com

Telephone (520) 721-7618

Pastor: (520) 448-8694

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Pastor: (708) 532-9035

Pastor's Cell: (708) 601-3943

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Pastor: (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 - 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

On the Web at:

StLukes-CLC.com

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Pastor: (206) 723-7418

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

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

Worship Service 3:30 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:45 p.m.

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

E-mail: d_mensing@hotmail.com

On the Web at:

StMarksEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

Pastor: (708) 655-7549

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

On the Web at:

TrinityEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Pastor: (708) 386-4145

Announcing the
Sixty-seventh Annual Convention
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

June 22, 23 and 24, 2018

at

St. John's Lutheran Church

Sixth and Tangent Streets

Lebanon, Oregon 97355

The Rev. Paul E. Bloedel, Pastor

with

The Plenary Pastoral Conference on June 19th & 20th

The Board of Directors Meeting on June 21st



Essay: *“The Vital Importance of Preaching Both
Law and Gospel in Every Sermon”* (II Timothy 2:15)

by Pastor David T. Mensing

Friday Sermon on Romans 6:23 — President Edward J. Worley

Sunday Sermon on Luke 24:47 — Pastor David T. Mensing

**Motto: The Vital Importance of
Law and Gospel Preaching**