

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.

Vol. LXII

November—December 2017

Nos. 11-12



“Glory to God
in the
Highest!”

—Luke 2:14



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Vol. LXII November-December 2017 Nos. 11-12

Official Organ of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of \$10.00 per year.

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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.*"

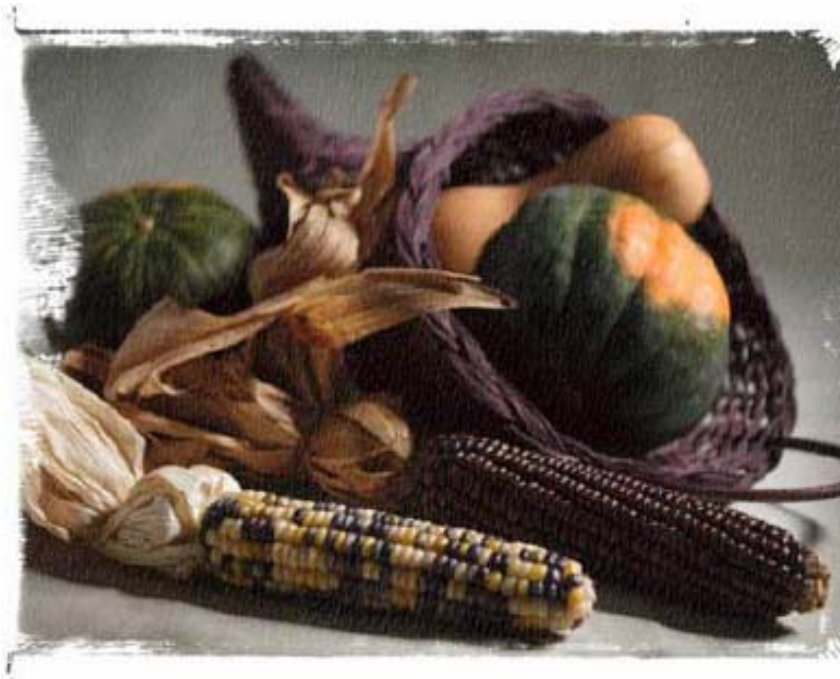
To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

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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How Shall We Render a Truly *Godpleasing* Thanksgiving?

*‘What shall I render unto the Lord
for all His benefits toward me?’ — Psalm 116:12*

Each year on the fourth Thursday of November, we Americans are granted a special legal holiday to commemorate the first bountiful harvest enjoyed by the immigrant Pilgrims in 1621 —and, by extension, to recognize with gratitude **to God** all His blessings to **us** during the past year. Originally, the proclamation of an annual Thanksgiving Day was intended to give all our citizens opportunity to attend special services in their respective **houses of worship**. But, sad to say, Thanksgiving observances **today** bear little if any resemblance to the purpose for which this day was established. For, instead of attending a **church service** on Thanksgiving morning, most Americans stay home, rest, and watch football games on television —and, in the case of most of the women, spend the morning preparing a sumptuous dinner for their family and their guests. Trying to squeeze in a **worship service** on top of all that is simply expecting **too much**, they say! What a sad commentary on our

times, that thankfulness to the Lord has, by and large, been replaced by “*eating, drinking, being merry*” (Cf. Luke 12:19) —and watching television, of course. Is it any wonder that what started out as a special day for rendering thanksgiving **to God** is now popularly known simply as “Turkey Day”??

For us Christians, on the other hand, **one** Thanksgiving Day per year is completely inadequate for the recognition of God’s bounty! For when we consider the many blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which our Father in heaven bestows upon us day-by-day, year-in and year-out, we can certainly do no less than thank and praise His holy Name every single day of our lives and recognize not ourselves but **Him** and His wondrous **grace** as the source from whom all blessings flow!

And yet, even if we were to set aside time for more frequent reflection upon His goodness to us and all creatures, how could we possibly thank Him **sufficiently**? This is precisely the question which the Psalmist of the Lord ponders in the title-text of our Thanksgiving meditation, the question to which he also provides the **answer** by inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit. And so, putting aside any vain reasonings of our own, let us go to the Word of our God for guidance, as we ask with David of old in the title of our article: **How Shall WE Render a Truly God-pleasing Thanksgiving?**

This question the Psalmist poses in verse twelve of the psalm when he asks: “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*” In order to feel and to render gratitude, we must first recognize our **blessings**. Of all the “*benefits*” we have received at the hand of our gracious God, surely the greatest is the **salvation** of our immortal souls. And this salvation, as we well know, has been bestowed upon us by God’s free grace *in Christ Jesus*. Now, what is “*grace*” but the merciful “*gift of God*” to us poor, undeserving sinners, as St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, chapter two, verse eight: “*By **grace** are ye saved through faith; and **that**, not of yourselves, it is the **gift of God**.*” And to the Romans he writes: “*The **gift of God** is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (6:23b). Indeed, if we were suddenly to be stripped of all earthly possessions —of money, goods, property, and even our families and loved ones (as was **Job** of old)— we could still rejoice in that **one benefit** that no one can take from us, namely, **salvation by grace**, the **forgiveness** of all our **sins**, and the **gift of life everlasting** in heaven!

And how do we gratefully receive THAT gift of grace and make it our very own? Why, it is through **faith** in Christ Jesus —through **trust** and

confidence of the heart worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. “*I will **take the cup of salvation,***” writes David in our text, that is, “I will cling in faith to the God of my salvation and praise His wondrous grace!” Here the Psalmist reminds us of the Old Testament **Pass-over** feast, which was a type or picture of our deliverance, not from earthly slavery (like that suffered by the children of Israel in Egypt), but rather from the slavery of **sin**, bondage to the **devil**, and the prospect of everlasting exile in **hell**! On that Passover table was a special chalice of wine that was to be passed around and shared in *thanksgiving* for God’s gracious deliverance. Those who partook of that cup confessed their faith in the God of their salvation, thanked Him for His wondrous grace, and looked forward in confidence to the promised Savior, the true Lamb of God, whose vicarious sacrifice would buy them back from sin, death and Satan.

Without such faith in the Savior, **NO** thanksgiving can please God, no matter how large the sacrifice, nor how loud the praise; for the Scripture plainly tells us: “*Without **FAITH** it is **impossible** to please Him*” (Hebrews 11:6). The so-called “thanksgivings” of **unbelievers** actually **disgust** the Lord! For how dare someone presume to thank God for His temporal blessings and, at the same time, **reject** His greatest benefit to mankind, His only-begotten Son, the Savior Himself! In Proverbs 15:8 we read: “*The sacrifice of the **wicked** is an **abomination** to the Lord, but the prayer of the **upright** is His **delight.***”

And so, in answer to our question, “**How shall we render a truly God-pleasing thanksgiving??**” the Psalmist exhorts us first of all to hold fast in faith to our salvation in Christ Jesus, to cling in childlike confidence to our **greatest benefit**, the Lord’s overflowing “*cup of salvation,*” and thus declare with the Apostle Paul: “*Thanks be unto **God** for His **unspeakable Gift!***” (II Corinthians 9:15); for that is the very basis and foundation for ALL of our thanksgivings!

But we note from the second half of verse thirteen that rendering a truly God-pleasing thanksgiving involves not only our Christian **faith**, but also our Christian **worship** which we eagerly offer with our whole heart. David writes: “*[I will] call upon the Name of the Lord.*” Already in the earliest Old Testament times, this expression, to “*call upon the Name of the Lord,*” meant to **offer grateful worship** to the true God, to **implore** His gracious forgiveness, and to **praise** His holy Name. And this, the Psalmist shows us, is a necessary ingredient in a truly God-pleasing thanksgiving.

Calling upon the Name of the Lord should be an ongoing, continuous activity within the heart of every believer, as when, for example, Paul writes to the Thessalonians: “*Pray without ceasing*” (I Thessalonians 5:17). Moreover, our worship is not merely to be a “Sunday morning affair,” as if we can simply **forget** about the Lord and all His benefits toward us during the week and then sing extra-loudly in church on Sunday morning! No indeed! For our worship, as well as our study of God’s Word, is to be a constant daily activity right in our own homes! The Lord our God instructs us in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, “*These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*” Yes, that is what it means to “*let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly*” day-by-day, “*in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord!*” (Colossians 3:16). —O, may God graciously pardon us for so often having failed to **show**, in our homes in the family circle with our children and loved ones, **heartfelt thanksgiving** to Him for all His blessings by our **worship** and **praise** of His holy Name and by our diligent **study** of His precious Word with those whom we are charged to “*bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!*” Let us, by His grace, re-establish our “family altar” each day, and “*call upon the Name of the Lord*” with truly God-pleasing thanksgiving!

But, in addition to the regular worship of the Lord in our homes, we Christians are also to worship Him **publicly** in the assemblies of His House, “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner [or habit] of some is*” [Hebrews 10:25]. And make no mistake, this does not mean that we merely “show up” at God’s House on Sunday mornings to “go through the motions” of worship and praise; for that is what the heathen do, who “*think that they shall be heard for their much speaking*” (Matthew 6:7). The mere **recitation** of liturgical forms like creeds and prayers and the **half-hearted singing** of responses and hymns is **NOT** the rendering of a truly *God-pleasing* thanksgiving, but the empty formalism that Jesus condemned in the Jews of His day, saying: “*This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me!*” (Matthew 15:8).

Let us keep in mind the real purpose of our liturgy, of our hymns, of our prayers, and of our praises in the divine services of God’s House: They are in large part a **sacrifice** or **offering** to the Lord in which we

bless His Name, beg His gracious forgiveness, and praise and glorify His love and mercy to us in Christ Jesus, our Savior. In such worship, we render **God-pleasing thanksgiving** “*for all His benefits toward [us]*” —**if** indeed we worship Him with our whole heart, with sincerity, and with dignity, both *knowing* and *meaning* what we are saying and singing. Therefore we should constantly **examine** our worship in our heart-of-hearts to make sure that it doesn’t become shallow, mechanical, and empty repetition of forms to which we have become accustomed over many years. For if **we**, who are **adults**, take due care to set our children the example of truly **devout and meaningful worship**, they will soon, even at a young age, set aside playthings in the pew to **join us** in rendering to their Lord and Savior truly God-pleasing thanksgiving in the services of His house. Children are never too young to learn and to comprehend the admonition of the Prophet: “**Keep thy foot when thou goest to the House of God; and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools**” (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Not paying attention, fooling around, day-dreaming, and napping during the service is **insulting** to the Lord instead of rendering Him the **due thanks** of a grateful heart and of **honoring** Him with sincere and thoughtful service.

But now the Psalmist concludes the answer to his question with the words: “*I will **pay my vows** unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.*” Here David gives us the third ingredient in a truly Godpleasing thanksgiving, namely, that we cheerfully support His kingdom with our gifts and personal service **as part of our worship**. Although no amount of sacrifice on **our** part could ever “*render*” payment for all the benefits we have received from our bountiful God and Lord, nevertheless He is truly pleased with our offerings of time and money when these flow from hearts of faith in His Son. Indeed, the Lord rightfully expects and even demands our offerings, saying through the Prophet Malachi that *withholding* them is the same as “*robbing God*” (3:8)! And yet, the **real motivation** for Christian giving is not the requirement of God’s **Law** but rather the sweet and healing balm of His **Gospel**, which, St. Paul says, “*constraineth us*” or forces us to give generously out of love to Him who first loved us. “*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” he says and beseeches us “*to **prove the sincerity** of [our] love*” (II Corinthians 8:8-9) by abounding in our gifts and sacrifices. Yes, it is a privilege much more than a duty to give for the support of God’s kingdom, because our gifts are used for the **cause of His Gospel**, that others too may hear the good news of salvation, be converted in their minds by the Holy Spirit through the Word, and receive by faith the gracious salvation that is already **ours** and **theirs** for Jesus’ sake!

But our gifts of time and money, that is, our **pledges** or “**vows**” as the Psalmist calls them here in our title-text, serve yet another purpose; and that is **the glory of God’s holy Name**. David writes: “*I will pay my vows unto the Lord now **in the presence of all His people**.*” Although a person’s offerings are not to be a matter of outward show, “*lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:9), they are not to be a closely-guarded secret, hidden away from view. For the Lord Jesus plainly instructs us: “*Let your light so shine before men that they may **SEE your good works and glorify your Father** which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16); and David exhorted the people of Israel: “*Give unto the Lord the glory that is **due** unto His Name. Bring an offering, and come before Him!*” Our offerings, be they of money or of personal service or both, should, of course, never be a source of personal glory and sinful pride for us Christians; but they should always redound to **God’s** glory and the welfare of **His Kingdom**; for then and only then do they belong to a truly God-pleasing thanksgiving!

Considering all that we have received from the hand of our bounteous God, benefits both temporal and spiritual, we can never **sufficiently** thank Him for His grace and mercy! In terms of **quantity**, no amount of praise, sacrifice, or service could ever **begin** to repay His goodness. BUT a truly **Godpleasing** thanksgiving is rendered out of **grateful hearts of FAITH in His Son** —as a **fruit** of which we should cheerfully render to Him our entire beings as “*a living sacrifice*” (Romans 12:1) or thank-offering for His wondrous salvation! “*What shall [WE then] render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward [US]?*” With the Psalmist, let us “*take the cup of salvation*” **by faith** in our Savior, Jesus Christ; let us “*call upon [His] Name*” day-by-day in our homes and worship Him with our **whole heart** in His holy Temple; and let us “*pay our vows*” to Him “*now in the presence of all His people*” by cheerfully giving of our substance, as well as of our time, that His Name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His good and gracious will may be done **among US** as it is in heaven! For SUCH is a truly **Godpleasing** thanksgiving to the glory of His grace in Christ Jesus, “*His unspeakable Gift!*”

— D. T. M.

Christian Contentment and Gratitude – Under Constant Attack by Materialism

“In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” —I Thessalonians 5:18

We live in an age of materialism. Materialism may be defined as a philosophical attitude and a manner of living which holds that nothing exists except matter, denying all spiritual things. Moreover, materialism manifests itself in the single-minded pursuit of physical comfort and sensual happiness through acquisition of those possessions which serve that goal.

The Savior warned against such an attitude and lifestyle, exposing it to be the sin of covetousness: *“And He said unto them, ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth’”* (Luke 12:15). Each of us must *“take heed,”* examining ourselves by God’s standards as to our internal attitude and how we conduct ourselves in this world. We must ask ourselves, for example: Do I view my life in terms of sensual comfort and the accumulation of possessions? Do I think that the pursuit and attainment of “things” is the key to happiness? The prophet condemns that type of thinking in these telling words: *“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!”* (Habakkuk 2:9). Just after warning His hearers against the sin of coveting, the Lord told them the parable about a rich fool whose materialistic attitude expressed in his internal dialog is recorded for our learning: *“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry’”* (Luke 12:19). Laying up treasure for himself was the “be all and end all” of his life, the key to true happiness, which he saw as a goal nearly completed — once his bigger barns were built and filled! The rich fool was oblivious to the true needs of his soul and did not recognize his utter poverty before God.

We should not be surprised that our day and time is filled with a similar mindset and that so many live a similar lifestyle. The Lord foretold that the end of the world would see conditions similar to the days of Noah

and Lot, times of rank materialism (cf. Luke 17:26-28). The Apostle Paul speaks of the last generation in these words: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good”* (II Timothy 3:1-3). *“Lovers of their own selves”* and *“unthankful,”* *“covetous”* and *“unholy”* – all those terms describe materialism and are found to be very prevalent in our day.

But it should not be so among the true believers in Christ! Our title-text declares the will of God concerning Christians: *“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (I Thessalonians 5:18). Mark well that God tells us both when and why we should live a life of gratitude: expressing our thanks to God for all He has done and still does for us, body and soul.

When should we, as true believers, give thanks to God? *“In everything”* — at all times, under every circumstance, throughout our life! We are to be: *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 5:20). *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful”* (Colossians 3:15). *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him”* (v. 17).

Consider why we are to be thankful. As believers in Christ we have the greatest gift: The personal possession of salvation in Christ Jesus. Gifted by grace, through His saving work, we have the ultimate benefit: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities”* (Psalm 103:2-3a). Rather than marking our iniquities, God the Father forgives poor sinners because His Son paid the full price for them: *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (I John 1:7b). The Savior *“loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood”* (Revelation 1:5b). In our place God’s Son incarnate took upon Himself the sin, guilt and punishment of the entire fallen race, appeasing God’s wrath and satisfying His justice once and for all on Calvary: *“And 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). *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”* (I Peter 3:18a). Christ also provided us with the positive righteousness every sinner needs in order to enter heaven as He

fulfilled God's Law perfectly in the place of every man (Romans 10:4). God the Father declared the entire ungodly human race righteous in Christ, "*for He hath made Him who knew no sin [His holy Son, Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (II Corinthians 5:21). The gift of salvation, of full remission of sins and complete righteousness before God, is offered and given through the Gospel. Through the Gospel, God also works the faith needed to receive the benefit personally: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8). All true believers in Christ recognize and praise God daily for this gracious gift; and this is the chief antidote for ingratitude, discontent and materialism!

In addition, the true believer, in his New Man, has the proper attitude regarding the things of this world, the temporal blessings found under the term "*daily bread*" in the Lord's Prayer, namely, all we need to live in this world and to support earthly life. The believer understands God's standard for contentment: "*And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*" (I Timothy 6:8). Having *food* for the belly and *raiment* or "coverings" for the body (clothes and shelter) is all we need for "contentment." As did the Apostle, the believer should learn to live within his present circumstances: "*Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*" (Philippians 4:11). He is enabled to do so because of his God-wrought trust in God's promises: "*Let your conversation [manner of life] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'*" (Hebrews 13:5). "*Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith*" (Proverbs 15:16).

When God's providence tests the faith of believers, they find sure and certain comfort, knowing that God will work all things to their good (cf. Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20). The believer relies on God's promise: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). A believer also repents when his sinful flesh causes him to worry or complain at times, and his New Man is enabled to return to the true, proper and effective way to handle such matters: "*Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6-7). "*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you*" (I Peter 5:7).

The believer knows why he should give thanks to God in everything, *“for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (I Thessalonians 5:18b). The believer knows that *“it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High, to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night”* (Psalm 92:1-2). By God’s gracious Spirit, through His Word, the believer is given the sure and certain answer to this rhetorical question: *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). The believer’s thankfulness centers *“in Christ Jesus.”* He is the reason for our gratitude and for the way we live: *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). Our Savior is also the motive for our life of gratitude: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich”* (II Corinthians 8:9). The Gospel works effectually in believers (I Thessalonians 2:13) so that they will and do of God’s good pleasure (Philippians 2:13), loving Him who first loved us (I John 4:19) and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I John 4:10) that we might live through Him (I John 4:9).

So that we maintain the proper spiritual perspective, the Lord also promises true believers ultimate contentment and complete satisfaction throughout all eternity. When our spirits are made perfect (cf. Hebrews 12:23), not only having been justified but also freed from the Old Adam that now still plagues us, and they are returned to our resurrected and glorified bodies on the Last Day (cf. II Corinthians 5:14; I Corinthians 15:42-56), we shall see the complete joy of heaven: *“As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). *“Thou wilt show me the path of life. In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”* (Psalm 16:11). *“How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light”* (Psalm 36:7-9). The perfect joy of heaven, a sure and certain reality for believers, is the cause for gratitude and rejoicing even now: *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!”* (Philippians 4:4). The reason is clear, as the Lord says in Luke 10: *“Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven”* (v. 20b). Until that great day

of full and complete joy, of total satisfaction, we are to heed this exhortation: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:1-4).

Dr. Martin Luther considered Psalm 118 his favorite. Psalm 118, verse one, is really the motto for every Christian life: *“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth for ever.”* On this text, Dr. Luther said: *“Giving thanks is the greatest service to God. This verse teaches us what the proper sacrifice is that pleases God most; for we cannot perform any greater or better work for God, nor can we render Him a nobler service, than thanking Him.”* (*What Luther Says*, E. Plass, #4355, pp. 1352-1353).

May God continually work in us by means of His precious Gospel true gratitude for all His blessings and genuine contentment in everything, so that every day is a Thanksgiving Day, for Jesus' sake!

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

(*TLH* 29, 1)

— **E. J. W.**



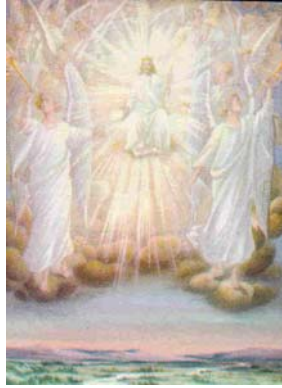
Why Should We Christians Eagerly Look Forward to Our Savior's Second Advent?

*“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing
of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” —Titus 2:13*

Sometimes Christians create in their minds thoughts concerning Jesus' *second advent* (His second visible coming) on the Last Day that scare them unnecessarily. They may think of the Bible's description of that day as quite terrifying, as a day that will include a great upheaval of everything around them and the destruction of this entire world and universe (Luke 21:25–26, 33). The Apostle Peter writes: *“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ...All these things shall be dissolved. ...The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”* (II Peter 3:10–12). Additionally, some may wrongly picture a grotesque scene as might appear in a horror film when they hear what the Bible teaches about all the dead coming forth from their graves on the Last Day (John 5:28–29). Now it is true that for *unbelievers* —the vast majority of people on the planet (Matthew 7:13–14)— Jesus' second coming will be a most dreadful event, because they will have all their wickedness exposed (Jude 14–15) and be condemned to an eternity of suffering in hell (I Thessalonians 5:3; II Thessalonians 1:7–9; Matthew 25:41; Matthew 24:30, 51). But none of those things should produce any kind of apprehension or fear within us Christians, since the Scriptures describe the second advent of Christ as a wonderful and glorious event for the believing children of God (II Timothy 4:8). There are, indeed, many reasons why we should look forward with joyful anticipation to Christ's return (Titus 2:13; Luke 21:28).

One of the things that we look forward to seeing on the Last Day is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, sitting on the throne of His glory. *“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory”* (Matthew 25:31). Then all the enemies of Christ, including those who condemned

Him to death (Matthew 26:64–66) and those who inflicted great pain upon Him (Revelation 1:7), will see Him in His power and glory and be



forced to acknowledge His supremacy as the Lord God (Matthew 24:30; I Peter 3:22) —the King over all (Revelation 17:14) and the Judge of all (II Timothy 4:1). There will then be no one who dares despise or mock the Lord Jesus. Not that the unbelievers will be changed into Christ’s believing followers on that day; but His enemies will be thoroughly humbled under His feet and be forced to bow before Him (Philippians 2:10–11; Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 2:7–8; I Corinthians 15:25).

The display of His awesome power and majesty, the open triumph over all enemies at “*the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13), is something that the true believers can be very excited to witness on the Last Day.

Another thing to anticipate with joy in connection with our Lord’s second advent is the glorification of our bodies. “*Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body*” (Philippians 3:20–21). Like the glorified body of Christ in His own resurrection from the dead, the resurrected bodies of those who died in the Lord will be drastically changed from the condition in which they existed during and after their earthly lives — being made immortal and having all infirmities, injuries, sicknesses, and pain completely removed (I Corinthians 15:42–44, 51–53). Now some Christians will still be alive when Christ returns. They will, therefore, not be resurrected but will nevertheless be *changed* and *glorified* (I Corinthians 15:51). In his first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul says that, on the glorious day of Jesus’ second advent, the believers who have died will first be resurrected and lifted into the air, followed by the Christians who are still alive at that time; and then all of the saints shall enjoy the presence of the Lord in heaven forever (4:14–17). This is certainly something that should bring true comfort to our hearts (v. 18) as we look forward to the Last Day — the day that God has appointed “*in the which He will judge the world in righteousness*” (Acts 17:31).

But is not the thought of being *judged* by Christ at His second advent quite a *terrifying* prospect, considering how many sins we have committed

over the course of our lives, some manifest and some secret and known only to ourselves? The Bible declares: “*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Corinthians 5:10). We should *not*, however, fear that any of our sins will be brought up against us in the coming judgment, since they have all been completely forgiven. “*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin*” (Psalm 85:2). “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1). On account of the Savior’s vicarious work of redemption (Romans 3:24; Isaiah 53:5), the Lord has graciously removed our sins from us “*as far as the east is from the west*” (Psalm 103:12), and has put them out of His memory (Hebrews 8:12). Therefore, being cleansed from all sin (I John 1:7), the only works that will be brought up in the judgment of God’s believing children will be their *good works* (Matthew 25:34–40) as evidence of their saving faith (James 2:17–20).

So then will we Christians be judged at all on the Last Day? The answer to that question depends entirely upon what is meant by the term “judged.” We will *not* be judged in the sense of being condemned on account of our sins; but we *will* be judged in the sense of having a verdict pronounced upon us — and that verdict will be God’s declaration of righteousness and innocence on the basis of Christ Jesus’ work of redemption. “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth [declares us righteous]. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*” (Romans 8:33–34). Having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is the only way that a sinful human being can be accounted “*worthy*,” or fit, to escape the judgment that will befall the unbelievers (those who reject God’s gracious forgiveness in Christ), and to stand before the Son of Man at His second advent (Luke 21:36).

While obviously looking forward to seeing the Lord in glory, some Christians might still have some apprehensions about seeing the utter destruction of the earth on the Last Day —witnessing the fiery end of this magnificent planet, the only habitation that they have ever known. However, if we consider the end of this present world in view of the *new world* (heaven), the paradise that will take its place, then we can certainly look forward to this present world being destroyed and being replaced with the far better dwelling place above. Although the world in which we now live was marvelously crafted by God for our use and

enjoyment (Psalm 115:16; Acts 14:17) and for His own glory and pleasure (Psalm 148; Revelation 4:11), it has also been marred by sin (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20–22), and therefore must be replaced by a new dwelling place for the next life in which there will be no sin at all. After describing the utter destruction of this present earth and universe (II Peter 3:10–12), the Apostle Peter goes on to say: *“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (v. 13). Consequently, we really should not become too attached to the world around us, but regard ourselves as *“strangers and pilgrims”* upon it (I Peter 2:11) —as sojourners whose true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Referring to Abraham, who *“sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country...for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Hebrews 11:9–10), as well as the other patriarchs of that time, the Scriptures declare: *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ...Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city”* (Hebrews 11:13–16).

Our existence in the new world of heaven will be far different from this present life, for *“there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away”* (Revelation 21:1–4). And, thankfully, there will be no possibility of losing the *incorruptible* and *undefiled inheritance* that has been reserved for us in heaven (I Peter 1:4), which Christ has prepared for us (John 14:2–3) through His perfect atonement for our sins (Ephesians 1:7–11). When the Lord Jesus returns and brings us into heavenly glory, we will have the image of God’s perfect righteousness and holiness (which Adam and Eve lost through their disobedience) fully and permanently restored (Psalm 17:15). Accordingly, the Apostle John tells us: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is”* (I John 3:2). Being freed from all the sin, pain, sadness, and stresses of this earthly life, we will finally be able to enjoy a most blessed *rest* from our labors (Revelation 14:13) and join with our fellow saints in glory and the whole host of angels in singing the praises of our gracious God and Savior (Revelation 5:8–13).

That most wonderful existence in heaven shall never be taken from us, nor shall its glory ever be diminished (Matthew 6:20). St. Peter tells us: “*When the chief Shepherd [Christ] shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*” (I Peter 5:4). In heaven we shall both *serve* Christ and *reign* with Him for ever (Revelation 22:3–5). The Bible connects the promise of the Lord’s second visible advent with the promise that we shall abide in His presence forever (I Thessalonians 4:16–17). Our dear Savior has given us this promise: “*I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:3). And St. Paul writes to the Christians in Colosse: “*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*” (3:4).

We Christians are obviously looking forward to seeing the Lord Jesus come in His glory, to having our bodies glorified like His, to inheriting the kingdom of heaven through His merits, to living in His presence for all eternity in righteousness, perfect contentment, and endless joy (Psalm 16:11). There are no legitimate reasons for Christians to dread the appearing of Christ on the Last Day. And it is important for us to keep these things in mind for our encouragement and comfort in the “*perilous times*” that the Lord has told us to expect prior to Jesus’ return (II Timothy 3:1). Yes, “*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (II Timothy 3:13); “*many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matthew 24:11–12). The true believers will be surrounded by wicked and vile blasphemers, as were Noah and Lot (Luke 17:26–30). Seeing their filthy conduct and unlawful deeds will, of course, vex our righteous souls from day to day (II Peter 2:7–8). But still, when we see those and other such signs of the last days being fulfilled around us, Jesus tells us: “*Then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*” (Luke 21:25–28). And in loving consideration for our spiritual brethren, we should draw together around the Word of our Lord and Savior (Colossians 3:16) and exhort one another to be faithful in our Christian faith and life as we await Christ’s second advent. Indeed, “*let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*” (Hebrews 10:23–25).

—P. E. B.

Why Was the Angel's Message One of Great Joy?

*“Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,
which shall be to all people!” — Luke 2:10*

Imagine yourselves sitting with those shepherds of Bethlehem on a grassy hillside tending their flock of sleepy sheep. It is late at night, and the shepherds are tired from their day's work. The grass is wet with dew; the crisp night air, in spite of its stillness, pierces through their cloaks; and the shepherds move yet closer to the glowing coals of the watch fire, trying to keep warm. It is so quiet there on the meadow under that clear, star-speckled sky, that the slightest complaint from a sheep or lamb would be a startling disturbance. Yet, barring the intrusion of a hungry wolf on the prowl, this night should be peaceful enough and should pass as easily as most.

Suddenly, without warning, the sky is ablaze with blinding light, with *“the glory of the Lord,”* the Christmas Gospel tells us, with a *holy* brightness that terrifies the shepherds! Could it be that the day of God's judgment has come upon them?? They look up and see a figure standing in that light, a heavenly messenger who beckons for their attention to what he is about to say. *“Sore afraid,”* the shepherds brace themselves for the worst, as they anticipate the pronouncement of God's just anger against them because of their sins.

The angel speaks with a clarity of a heavenly trumpet, but also with the sweetness of a shepherd's pipe: ***“Fear not!”*** he says. *“Don't keep cringing and shrinking back in terror at what my message might be. Don't hide your face from the light of God's glory because of your sins and your unworthiness before Him.”* What could this holy messenger be about to say that would make them less fearful of God's justice?? What could possibly change things that drastically for the shepherds, that instead of quaking at this sight, they should now put away their fear and hearken calmly to the rest of the message?

“Behold, I bring you GOOD tidings of great JOY,” the angel continued. **Good** news? **Great joy**? **A Gospel** message to **US**?? Those poor, humble shepherds needed some good news at that —not just good news

about sheep prices, or about the political situation with the Roman occupation, or about the economy and heavy taxes— although most people, even in those days, would probably have welcomed that kind of news. No, this was to be a **far better** kind of news, because this news was to soothe away the “*fear*” of God’s justice! These “*good tidings*” were to calm the guilt-ridden heart and to replace grave terror with “*great joy*”! Oh, how those shepherds, those Old Testament believers in the coming, promised Messiah, had been waiting, yea, longing for just this very news!

And what about US? Do **WE** *long* for the good tidings of the Gospel? When in the mirror of God’s holy Law we see **ourselves** as **HE** sees us—vile, perverse, rebellious and vain sinners by nature. And when that Law *indicts* us as His **enemies** and pronounces the sentence of **eternal death** upon us according to our *own deserts*, do we *long* for that promised Savior, as did the shepherds on that first Christmas night?? Oh, if **not**, then we must take yet another look into that perfect mirror and come to the inevitable realization that, on the basis of our works, no *peace with God* can ever be effected, no *truce* can be made, not even an *approach to God* is possible for us by nature, because even the best things we do as Christians smell like garbage in His holy nostrils as far as earning His favor is concerned! The Bible says that “[*We*] are all gone aside; [*we*] are altogether become **FILTHY**; there is **NONE** that doeth good, no, not one!” Oh, **we too** need some good news, all right, just like those humble shepherds on Bethlehem’s fields.

But, whatever that good news is, is it intended also for us poor **Gen-tiles**?? Or is it just for God’s “chosen people,” the **Jews**? Listen to the angel’s unmistakable words, dear convicted and contrite sinner: “*I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE!*” Yes, that includes also **US**, whose forefathers were not God’s chosen people, whose barbaric, idolatrous ancestors did not have the sacred oracles of God, the Holy Scriptures of the **Old** Testament – or those of the **New** Testament– to point them to the Savior. Yes, **WE TOO** are the intended recipients of these “*good tidings*,” thanks be to God and His unmerited grace! How **our** hearts, **too**, burn with hopeful anticipation, as we perk up our ears with the shepherds of old to hear what that “*good tidings of great joy*” is all about!

“*For unto YOU is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord!*” In that one simple sentence of the Christmas Gospel, the heavenly messenger brings not only the tidings themselves, but the sure and certain proof that **this Babe** is in fact the promised **Messiah**,

the Anointed One of God, that He Himself is **God**, manifested in the flesh (John 1:14; I Timothy 3:16). —“*Born*”—the miracle of miracles that **God** should become **man** to take **our** place under the Law (Galatians 4:4-5), and to give **His** life a ransom for **our** sins! (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). —“*This day*”—**now**, today, an accomplished **fact** and no longer just a promise to look forward to. The Messiah was actually here on this earth, just as the prophets had foretold! (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:5-6). —“*In the City of David*”— “Of what significance is *that*??” we might ask as Gentiles, as “*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise*” (Ephesians 2:12), outsiders not versed in the Scriptures of prophecy. But those shepherds knew. Not only were they presumably from “*the City of David*” themselves, the town of Bethlehem, the ancestral home of King David, from whose line the Messiah was to come. But they well knew the prophecy of Micah, chapter 5, verse 2: “*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*” The promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God Himself “*from everlasting*” was to come forth from that little, seemingly insignificant town of Bethlehem just to fulfill sacred prophecy! This was indeed the proof that the shepherds could readily see and understand!

“A **SAVIOR**” —not just an earthly Rescuer from the Romans, for that would not be good news to “*all people*,” but only to the **Jews**. **This** Savior is the very **source** of “*good tidings of great joy*” to all people, of all times, and of all places — to sinners like us! He is the Savior of our sin-corrupted souls, as well as of our bodies, the ransom-price of our redemption, of whom the Prophet Isaiah wrote some 700 years before: “*He was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities,... and with His stripes WE are healed. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of US ALL!*” **That** is a **SAVIOR** worthy of the name; for **He** saves from **sin, death** and the **devil** —a feat that could never be accomplished by a mere man, for the Bible says of human beings: “*The redemption of their soul is precious!*”

And this Babe of Bethlehem is not just **any** Savior, for the angel calls Him “*Christ*,” that is, the **Messiah**, the One chosen of God to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21), “*whom GOD hath set forth*,” writes the Apostle Paul, “*to be a propitiation [that is, a **payment** of complete satisfaction] through faith in His blood*” (Romans 3:25). This was the “*Branch*” that God Himself had promised to raise up unto

David, the King that was to “*reign and prosper*” over the hearts of men with His righteousness to cover their sins (Jeremiah 23:5). —“*Good tidings*”?? “*Of great joy*”?? Oh, indeed, of joy **unspeakable**, both to the leaping hearts of the shepherds and to ours as well!

And the crowning word in this brief sentence of joy now comes forth: “*Which is Christ, **the LORD!***” This, too, had been foretold; for the Prophet Jeremiah had written: “*This is His name whereby He shall be called: **THE LORD, our Righteousness***” (Jeremiah 23:6). This was no mere man-Savior, no mere human being chosen for a special task, as was John the Baptist, the Savior’s forerunner. But this was “*the Lord,*” **Jehovah** Himself, as we confess in the Nicene Creed: “*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.*” —This was **Immanuel, GOD with us.**

And the *mystery* of Jesus’ incarnation and humiliation is declared by the angel **too**, for the “*sign*” he gives to the shepherds, the identifying mark by which they would be able to recognize “**God manifest in the flesh,**” was that they would find this Babe “*wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*” Think of the immensity of this news: “A Savior, **Christ,**” the **Messiah,** “*the Lord,*” **God** Himself, was to be found in the lowliest of poverty-stricken conditions, with nowhere to lay His precious head but upon rough hay, with nowhere to make His bed but in the feeding trough of common farm animals, with nowhere to call his home but a rude stable! What a miracle indeed, that “*though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He BECAME poor, that [we] through His poverty might be RICH!*”

Is it any wonder then that the angels of God, sinless though they are and thus unable, in the truest sense, fully to appreciate the magnitude of this gracious gift of God — is it any wonder that those celestial beings burst forth with a heavenly song of praise — “*a multitude*” of them, filling the sky above the awe-struck shepherds? “*Glory to God in the highest,*” they sang, “*and on earth peace, good will toward men!*” Yes, glory to **God**, whose love and mercy to sinful mankind in Christ Jesus made this gift and its glad tidings a **reality!** No credit for any of it is due to miserable mankind, wallowing in their sins, shame and utter helplessness. For the Bible tells us: “*God was in Christ RECONCILING the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*” This was **God’s doing alone**, and **all glory** was due to Him alone!

And what was the **RESULT** of this glorious *reconciliation* in and through the precious Babe of Bethlehem? “*Peace on earth*,” the choirs of angels sang —not earthly peace which lasts only for the brief interval between wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6) — but real, **lasting** peace on earth, “*peace with God*” (Romans 5:1) through His forgiveness of our sins; — and “*good will toward men*” God’s good will toward us, not ours to Him, lest we puff ourselves up to be our own Saviors! No, God’s good and gracious will toward us caused Him to reconcile us “*unto Himself*,” to send His only-begotten Son to be the price of our redemption, “*the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2), so that His perfect justice was thereby satisfied, and that, by faith in our Redeemer and what He wrought for us, Paul writes to the Romans, chapter 5, verse 1, “*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” **THAT** is the peace of which the angels sang on that first Christmas night: “*Peace on earth and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled!*”

Is all of this really “good news” to **YOU**, my dear reader? Do you feel so weighed down with the guilt of sin that these words of the Christmas angels really mean something to **YOU personally** in your heart of hearts? Do you, by God’s grace, with those humble shepherds on Bethlehem’s fields, **long** to hear those “*good tidings of great joy*” again and again in the precious Gospel of salvation, realizing full well that the Babe of Bethlehem is your only way to God in heaven? Oh, then take these “*good tidings*” into your heart by faith, trust them as God’s own reliable message of “*peace*,” **His** peace and **His** good will, **His** everlasting mercy and grace to you, as well as to **all people!** Hasten with those shepherds of old to the manger bed in Bethlehem’s stall —to the manger bed of the **sweet Gospel** where your Savior lies **FOR YOU**; take Him up into your arms of faith, and hold Him fast to your trembling breast, praying:

“Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
make Thee a bed soft, undefiled
within **my** heart, that it may be
a quiet chamber kept for Thee.” (Luther, 1535)

— **D. T. M.**



(Series: Exposition and Application of the Ten Commandments)

IV. The Sixth Commandment

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Part Two — The Breaking of Holy Marriage and Sins of Unchasteness

I. The Breaking of Holy Marriage — Sadly **Holy Marriage**, the civil estate that God intended from the beginning to be “a *life-long* union,” is easily broken nowadays with the permission of civil governments which, in these latter days of loose morals and rampant *hedonism* (“do your own thing”-ism), permit divorce without restriction and without penalty in so-called “no-fault” divorces. Thus, in a “politically-correct” manner, no one is allowed to play the “blame-game;” no one is held to be “at fault” for putting asunder what God had joined together (Matthew 19:6); and the “life-long union” simply **goes away**, as if it never existed — with no one bearing any burdens or scars except for the children (if any) who constitute “collateral damage” and are expected to “respect” the decision of their parents as legitimate. The husband and wife, or at least one or the other, testifies that there are “irreconcilable differences” between them that make continuance in the bond of matrimony difficult if not impossible; and the judge *may* (but is generally not constrained to) assign some sort of marital “therapy” with a court-appointed psychologist to see if the relationship is “salvageable” before granting a decree of divorce; but in most cases the bond has already been broken.

This is particularly the case among those who are not true Christians, for “*the carnal mind*” has no respect for **God’s** commandments, ordinances and institutions (Romans 8:7) and denies any obligation to obey them. It is filled with “*enmity against God*” and cannot be subject to the Law of God because “*they that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (v. 8). Because they are unbelievers and are not “*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26), they are not motivated by the Gospel of God’s love and mercy to them in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:14-15, 19; I John 4:11; etc.) to fear, love and trust in **Him** above all things. “*For it is God which worketh in [believers] both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13).

Therefore, when the commitment “wears thin” for one or the other (or

both) in a marriage, when they become “bored” with the relationship and find that they are no longer emotionally “attracted” and “connected” to their mates and are not personally “satisfied” in their self-interests — whether early in the marriage or when the spouses later in life are “empty-nesters” — instead of renewing and strengthening the relationship with the grace that only God supplies in and through His Word (II Corinthians 12:9), the marriage is simply canceled like a magazine subscription. It’s “the easy way out.” Sadly, one out of two marriages today is dissolved in fewer than five years on average! And even more sadly, what started out as a *Christian* marriage with God’s blessing upon it often falls victim to Satan’s interference, as one or the other partner forsakes the Lord, makes shipwreck of his or her faith, falls into the idolatry of “self,” and virtually destroys the family! With Luther, we pray “that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice; and though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and obtain the victory” by His grace in Christ our Savior!

Thus it is quite frequently NOT “adultery” in the *narrower* sense (namely, *fornication* or sexual intercourse with someone other than his or her own marriage partner, commonly referred to as “an affair”) that *causes* the dissolution of the life-long union — although it *may* be the proverbial “straw that breaks the camel’s back.” Rather, it is a “wrong spirit” (cf. Psalm 51:10) or attitude- of- mind that attacks the *commitment* of one or the other (or both), renders it meaningless and thus destroys it, and *causes* the union to deteriorate. It is for the most part *carnal* expectations that arise out of the “me-first” mentality of *selfishness* in violation of Scripture (cf. Romans 12:3, 10; I Corinthians 13:4-5; Ephesians 4:32; etc.) which require *self-esteem*, *self-realization*, *self-fulfillment*, *self-image*, *self-confidence*, *self-reliance*, and the like, all of which militate against the cooperative and self-sacrificing spirit that should exist between husbands and wives according to God’s Word (which was pointed out in Part I of this article). Common among these are: The spouse isn’t “*attentive* enough” — doesn’t do what **I** want; he or she “doesn’t *listen*” — doesn’t agree with **me**; “doesn’t *communicate*” — doesn’t tell me what **I** want to hear;” he or she is “*opinionated*” — expresses an opinion that is different from **mine**; “makes me feel *worthless*” — comes up with an idea that is better than **mine**; “I’m not ‘*in love*’ with him or her anymore” —he or she no longer satisfies **my** needs and desires the way he (she) used to when our love was “new,” **OR I** no longer want to satisfy **my spouse’s** needs and

desires the way I used to. Thus even the simplest affectionate intimacies disappear from the relationship — smiles, winks, hand-holding, caresses, hugs, and even friendly, casual conversation. The *self*-concepts result in the repudiation of responsibility toward *anyone else*; and the “life-long union of one man and one woman unto one flesh,” characterized as it should be by such inclusive expressions as “we,” “my husband and I,” “my wife and I,” etc. are generally replaced with “I;” and the possessives “our” and “ours” are replaced with “my” and “mine.” And so the commitment and solemn vow to “**love** (devote oneself unselfishly), **honor** (highly respect), **cherish** (deeply treasure), and [in the case of the wife, to] **obey**” the spouse “**until death** us do part” (cf. I Corinthians 7:39), gives way to “**as long as it works for me.**” And so, our society today, driven as it is by selfishness, now accepts “**no-fault**” divorce — the breaking of the marriage covenant and its permanent relationship — for capricious reasons and selfish expectations of one party over against the other, which no one wants to recognize as “**faults.**”

Typical of the *cited* causes of divorce is the catch-all, “**irreconcilable differences,**” of which the Bible says in no uncertain terms: “**If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**” (Matthew 6:15). “**And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses; but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses**” (Mark 11:25-26). “**Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you**” (Ephesians 4:32). “**First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift**” (Matthew 5:24); etc.

It is clearly the will of God that the covenant and estate of Holy Marriage — the temporal analogy to the spiritual relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:23ff.) — **NOT be broken** (Matthew 19:5-6, etc.). The *Sixth Commandment*, therefore, is **violated**, first of all, by the breaking of the marriage covenant and vow, which is the deliberate abandonment of the “chaste and decent life” which God ordains and creates in those whom He has “*joined together*” (Cf. I Corinthians 7:2).

Because of sin in the world and the depravity of man’s whole human nature since the fall of Adam and Eve, God Himself recognizes that Holy Marriage will be broken, just as other iniquities and transgressions

and sins will be committed. And God Himself judges the “guilty party” as being responsible for the breakup. But “*from the beginning it was not so*” (Matthew 19:8b) that a married couple could be divorced and the bond of marriage could thus be dissolved. Nevertheless “*because of the hardness of your hearts,*” Jesus told the Jews, Moses permitted the Children of Israel “*to put away [their] wives*” for the specific cause of “*fornication*” (v. 9, cf. 5:32). Divorce for any *other* reason is the commission of “*adultery,*” says Jesus. While God Himself does not require it, **He permits the innocent party to procure a divorce**, “*a writing of divorcement,*” to end the marriage and to marry again. The act of “*fornication*” itself does not **end** the marriage, but a **divorce** granted on the grounds of fornication does. Nevertheless, if the guilty party is truly penitent and sincerely desires, as the fruit of faith with the help of God, to bring forth the fruits of renewed fidelity, chastity and love in the marriage, the aggrieved party, having forgiven the penitent spouse, *may* take him or her back and continue in the bond of wedlock, though not compelled to do so. The *guilty party* who caused the divorce (or unjustly sued the *innocent party* for divorce), though free to marry again in the eyes of the *state*, may not do so in the sight of *God*. The remarriage of the guilty party is *adultery* in God’s eyes; and the one who marries the guilty party is also guilty of *adultery*.

The *Sixth Commandment* is also **violated** when the marriage is **deliberately abandoned** by one spouse or the other, the faithful spouse is **maliciously deserted**, and the bond of wedlock is thus **unilaterally terminated** despite the mutual vow and commitment to keep it holy and unbroken **until death**. “**Malicious desertion,**” according to its Scriptural parameters, is not merely a *temporary* absence from the home and from conjugal love and intimacy (as following a spat or falling-out on the part of the spouses), nor is it absence for a designated number of years, as defined by the state, or as in the case of incarceration, nor yet the withholding of conjugal intimacy because of chronic illness or disability.

“*Malicious desertion*” is the leaving of one’s spouse and of the marriage itself *with the intention of never coming back*. That’s what makes the desertion “malicious.” The *malice* may be expressed in **words** (which should be *witnessed* for it to be “*established,*” II Corinthians 13:1), such as “I’m leaving you **for good!**” or “**I don’t want** to be married to you **anymore!**” or “As far as I’m concerned, this marriage is **over!**” etc., OR the malice may be expressed in **deeds** which effectively **END the relationship**: The guilty party may simply move out and establish a **permanent residence** elsewhere. The guilty party may file for divorce to **end**

the marriage because he or she no longer wants to be married to the spouse. (Such a filing usually claims “irreconcilable differences.”) The guilty party may actually remain in the physical residence —not wanting to incur the stigma of a divorce— but **permanently terminate** all conjugal rights, privileges, and relationships, including intimacy (“*benevolence*”), which are “*due*” the other spouse in Holy Marriage (I Corinthians 7:3-5). Such a unilateral termination is “*fraud*” and an offence by which the deserted party may be tempted by Satan to unchasteness (v. 5c). St. Paul writes regarding **malicious desertion**: “*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord: Let not the wife depart from her husband*” (I Corinthians 7:10). “*But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God hath called us to peace*” (I Corinthians 7:15). The **bond** of marriage **has been broken** by the deserting party, and the innocent party is “*not under bondage*” to him or her *before God*, although a divorce decree will likely be required to end the marriage bond *before the state*.

[Note also in the context of these passages that a difference in faith is not grounds for divorce or for desertion. It IS cause for not *entering into* marriage with an unbeliever *in the first place* as an “*unequal yoke*” in which the unbelieving spouse may exert dominating influence over the believing spouse to the detriment of the latter’s faith (II Corinthians 6:14-18), but it is NOT a cause for dissolving a marriage already in force.]

The **Sixth Commandment**, therefore, is violated, first of all, **by the breaking of the marriage covenant and vow**, which is the deliberate abandonment of the “chaste and decent life” which God ordains and creates in those whom He has “*joined together,*” and by **unscriptural divorce** whereby the breaking of the marriage covenant and vow for capricious and selfish reasons (Matthew 19:9) is sought to be legitimized before men.

II. Sins of Unchasteness — The **Sixth Commandment** is also violated by all sexual activity *outside of*, that is, *apart from*, Holy Marriage (Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 39:9; Matthew 15:19; Ephesians 5:12; and I Peter 2:11; etc.). This clearly includes all of the following:

- a) **Fornication**: Intercourse outside the bond of marriage, that is, having sexual relations with a person to whom one is not married. Mere “living together” without the commitment of a permanent, lifelong

relationship in Holy Marriage is *fornication*—just as much as so-called “casual sex,” “sleeping around,” and “hooking.” (Ephesians 5:3; Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 39:9; I Corinthians 6:18).

- b) **Sexual familiarity** (short of intercourse) which arouses sinful passions and fulfills the lusts of the flesh: Petting, necking, fondling, etc. which amount to sexual “foreplay” in anticipation of and preliminary to intercourse. (Ephesians 5:3; I Peter 2:11; I Corinthians 6:19; Proverbs 1:10; 5:20; II Timothy 5:22; etc.).
- c) **Homosexuality**, which the Bible clearly teaches is a perversion particularly abhorrent to God. It is NOT an “alternative lifestyle” acceptable to God, nor is it in any sense of the term a legitimate “alternative” AT ALL to the *heterosexual* love that is “*honorable in all*” in Holy Marriage! (Romans 1:24-32; I Timothy 1:10; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; etc.).
- d) All unchaste, unclean **thoughts** (Matthew 15:19; Psalm 51:10; Philippians 4:8), **desires** (Matthew 5:28; II Timothy 2:22; Proverbs 1:10; I Peter 2:11; etc.), **words** (Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; 5:12; etc.), and **deeds** (Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:3; Genesis 39:9; I Corinthians 5:18-19; etc.).

● Sexually explicit and even suggestive **entertainment** so common in our day is to be *condemned* and earnestly *warned against!* Not only is it filthy in and of itself and a sure and certain danger to our souls, but constant exposure to it eventually dulls our sensitivity to it, and we begin to tolerate it as “relatively harmless.” The following, while not an exhaustive list, may be noted as examples:

- 1) Filthy books, magazines, pictures, calendar centerfolds, movies, videos, Web sites, etc., which graphically and in “living color” appeal to “*the lust of the eyes*” (I John 2:16; also Matthew 5:28, etc.);
- 2) Sexually-charged, filthy language, lyrics in songs, jokes, and stories which involve the sins of the tongue (James 3:3ff.; Ephesians 4:29; Ephesians 5:4; etc.);
- 3) Sexually-graphic, filthy gestures, hand signals, and body language, as well as suggestive and immodest dress, personal appearance, and behavior, all of which incite to evil thoughts, words, and deeds (Romans 6:13; I Peter 3:3-5).

NOTE that much of the “body language” used in a great deal of the **social dancing** popular today is sexually *suggestive, provocative*, and

even *explicit* in the imitation of sexual intercourse and a walking advertisement of what the observer can expect if he or she is “lucky” enough to take the person “home” afterward! An even casual observation clearly bears this out; and immoral children of the world who thus “shop the field” boast about the effectiveness of the “advertising.” Add to that the fact that in so-called “slow dancing” **the intimate, romantic embrace** between partners is inappropriate for those who are not married to each other (Proverbs 5:20).

Consistent Christians do not object to ALL dancing. *Some* dancing is not at all lustful, either in its form or in its appeal (i.e. folk dancing, pure square dancing, most classical ballet, tap, and some line dancing.) However, at social events, some of these may constitute the “open door” to objectionable, *lustful* forms of dancing, to which the guest may be unsuspectingly exposed and in which he or she is then also expected and tempted to participate so as not to “make waves” and “spoil the party.”

What is *lustful* is anything that arouses sinful thoughts and desires in oneself or in one’s neighbor. It may take the form of suggestive (or explicit) body *language*, romantic *intimate* body *contact* (which would be objected to as inappropriate contact in any *other* venue than dancing), *suggestive dress* (not deemed appropriate or decent for normal street attire), or even the *atmosphere* designed to create the opportunity for and to foster lustful activities.

Moreover, **offense** must be avoided (Matthew 18:7), including giving the *impression* that Christian marriage partners would not object to a “cut” by someone who is not their spouse, **OR** that Christians see nothing wrong with lustful entertainment, **OR** that Christians are able to play the line between right and wrong without falling into sin. In the latter case, an appeal to the Christian’s “sanctified judgment” and the dominance of his “new man” is plain ludicrous, since willful exposure to opportunities for unchasteness demonstrates **NO** “sanctified judgment” at all and **NO** evidence of the New Man triumphing over the Old Adam (II Timothy 2:22; I Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:25). “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!*” (I Corinthians 10:12).

Thus the **violation of sexual purity**, including sexual sins which defile people’s chaste and decent lives here in this world and to which even Christians are inclined because of their flesh (Romans 7:18), are violations of God’s holy *Sixth Commandment*.

What should we Christians do to lead a “chaste and decent life in word and deed” (Luther) in our lives of sanctification? To this question (Q/A 64 in our 1943 Catechism), we respond with a two-fold answer, the first of which addresses our *battle* against the devil, the world, and our flesh:

a) In the fear of God we should *fight* to overcome all impure thoughts and desires (Zechariah 8:17; Philippians 4:8), as well as any sinful acts that they bring forth (Matthew 15:19; James 1:14-15), with **God’s Word** — His *Law* to curb our flesh, to show us our sins, and to teach us God-pleasing alternatives, and His *Gospel* to motivate and enable us to “*live unto Him which died for [us] and rose again*” (II Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 2:13); with **prayer** — not as a means of grace but as our application, in Jesus’ name, for God’s help and strength to follow the Word of our heavenly Father (Psalm 51:10; 119:35); with **work** — as a means of occupying our time, including our *leisure* time, in profitable pursuits (Ephesians 4:28; Ecclesiastes 10:18; etc.); and with **temperance** — the *moderate* use of those things (alcohol, etc.) which, when used to excess (which *itself* is a sin), become a stumbling block to our Christian faith and life, weakening our resistance to the temptations of the devil, the world, and our flesh (James 4:7; I Peter 5:9a), and actually fostering the works of the flesh (Proverbs 23:31-33).

The second part of the answer addresses the *strategies* which God’s Word itself supplies whereby we can address sins against the Sixth Commandment proactively:

b) In the fear of God we should *flee* and *avoid* every **opportunity** for unchasteness: “*Flee fornication!*” (I Corinthians 6:18); “*flee also youthful lusts!*” (II Timothy 2:22). The *fear of God* is manifested “when with our whole heart we ...**avoid** what displeases Him” (Q/A 31). These passages address the New Man of faith, to whom “*fornication*” and “*youthful lusts*” are abhorrent. Joseph (in Egypt) cried out, when the **opportunity** for fornication with Potiphar’s wife presented itself: “*How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God??*” (Genesis 39:9). The Lord, through St. Paul, warns us regarding those who pose a danger to our souls: “‘**Come out from among them, and be ye separate,**’ saith the Lord, ‘**and touch not the unclean thing!**’” (II Corinthians 6:17). It is folly and spiritually reckless to commit people to their perceived level of sanctification (I Corinthians 10:12), instead of to the express Word and will of

God (John 8:31-32), and permit them to associate with known fornicators, porn addicts, sexual perverts, and worldly-minded scoffers at God's Law and HIS definition of "a chaste and decent life," and to "hang out" with them in their venues of activity and amusement, **as long as they do not actively participate!** *"Be not deceived! God is not mocked! For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap! For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption!"* (Galatians 6:7-8a).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." — Philippians 4:8

"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." — II Corinthians 5:15

—D. T. M.

We take this occasion to convey to our dear brethren in Nigeria and in Russia our best wishes for a truly happy and blessed Christmas and New Year in our precious Savior!



Our readers and the members of our congregations are encouraged to convey Christmas greetings individually to the brethren through their pastors, whose e-mail addresses are found on the following page.

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

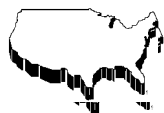
The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface and

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

P. O. Box 123

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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

“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.”

— Luke 2:11-12

