

*The*  
*Concordia*  *Lutheran*

“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

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

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“The Lord  
hath made  
known His  
Salvation!”

Psalm 98:2a

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

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.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

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.

# True Gratitude is A Fruit of Saving Faith.

*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. —Colossians 3:17*

One day while waiting at a doctor's office, I overheard a mother with two small children talking with the receptionist. The lady at the front desk had just given the children some candy, and the young mother said what we would hope all mothers say to their children: "Say thank you to the nice lady." The children obediently said, "Thank you," and they left. This young mother was teaching her children a valuable lesson in life, to be grateful for the things they receive. Gratitude must be taught and learned. You do not have to teach a child to be selfish, to think of himself first, or to take what he wants from other children; such behavior is quite natural to him. But we do have to teach children to be considerate, to think of others first, to be grateful for what they receive, and generous toward other people. Such attitudes are not native to the human heart. God also teaches His children to give thanks for the undeserved blessings that flow to them from His boundless grace revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. True gratitude toward God is a fruit of saving faith.

Man's heart by nature is proud and rebellious toward God. From conception mankind is spiritually blind and unable to discern or believe the things God has revealed (I Corinthians 2:14). His unwillingness to glorify and give thanks to God reveals his spiritual darkness and confusion. Paul describes sinful man in his rebellion to God and the evil fruit of unbelief as follows: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (Romans 1:21). This will also be the spiritual condition of natural man right up to Judgment Day, as St. Paul writes to Timothy: "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, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, hav-

*ing a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away” (II Timothy 3:1-5). As man continues to depart from God’s Word in the last days, he will love himself and his own ideas more than God; pride will harden his heart against the truth of God’s Word; and his religion will be a mere outward form of godliness which he holds in unbelief in opposition to the Gospel.*

Pride is the mother of ingratitude! When the Holy Spirit converts a sinner, He humbles him before God and His Word. The Law shows man his sins and his inability to save himself or to do anything to prepare his own heart to believe on Christ. The Gospel reveals salvation as the gift of God’s grace received by faith apart from human works. The Holy Spirit humbles man to receive the life-giving Word of God that creates and sustains saving faith in his heart. Therefore we are to *“receive with meekness [humility] the engrafted Word, which is able to save (our) souls”* (James 1:21). When a man finally is convinced of his miserable, sinful condition before God, is brought to God pleasing contrition for his sins, and clings to the satisfaction that Christ accomplished for him by His holy life and by His innocent suffering and death on the cross, receiving by faith the assurance of forgiveness revealed and offered to him in the Gospel, his heart will overflow with thanksgiving and praise to his blessed Savior. Gratitude and thanksgiving to God is the fruit of saving faith in the heart of a believing sinner, causing him to give all glory to God for his salvation. When truly believing Christians express their gratitude to God, it is pleasing to Him for Jesus’ sake. *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name... for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Hebrews 13:15-16).

Therefore we should take time to think of all the blessings we have been given in Christ Jesus! We have been freely and fully redeemed, forgiven, and reconciled to God through the death of Christ, our Savior, *“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24). God has poured out His mercy and grace upon us and taken away the guilt and punishment of our sins. He made us His children by faith in Christ Jesus, preserves us in the true faith through the Gospel, continues to lead us in the paths of righteousness through His Word, and guards and protects us from all evil each and every day. As we consider all of the blessings God has given us, let us also remind ourselves of what we truly deserve according to His justice. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). By nature, even we Christians deserve God’s righteous wrath and punishment because of our sins;

therefore every good thing we receive in this life comes from God's mercy and grace freely given in Christ Jesus. The Son of God drank the entire cup of God's wrath on the cross and, by His atoning sacrifice, suffered the penalty of death and hell for us. Therefore, as we meditate upon our unworthiness of the least of God's benefits and upon His mercy and grace to us in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, we are moved to praise and thank our gracious God for the countless blessings He has poured out upon us undeserving sinners.

Paul's admonition to the Colossians concerning giving thanks to God is in the context of the church's public worship. He describes the Divine Service in Colossians 3:16— *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* True worship begins in the heart of the believer and is expressed in congregational singing as members of the Body of Christ together express their thanksgiving and praise to God. As the local church glorifies and sings praises to God, its true members teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns that are rich in doctrine and instruction. As the teachings of God's Word impart to us divine wisdom through which the Holy Spirit strengthens us in our faith, God's grace overflows in our hearts. Our worship is acceptable to God for the sake of our Savior, whose blood renders our good works acceptable; and we offer up *“spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (I Peter 2:5). This spirit of praise and thanksgiving should characterize the life of every true believer in Christ, so that *“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”* (Colossians 3:17). This is why we gather together in the Divine Service each week to express our gratitude and praise to our blessed Savior for all that He has done and still does for us and for our salvation. May God continue to grant to each of us such humble and genuine Christian gratitude for Jesus' sake. Amen.

—R. A. M.



# The Coming Savior in Old Testament Prophecy

*“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple,  
even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in,  
behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”*

—Malachi 3:1

On Sunday, November 27th, we find ourselves once again in the holy season of **Advent** as we enter upon a new Church Year of grace. Ever since the fourth century A. D., the Sundays before Christmas (at first five and then four) were set aside as a time of *preparation* for the *Feast of the Nativity of our Lord*, the feast celebrating His coming into the flesh to be our Redeemer. As such, the season was called **Advent** [from the Latin word for “coming”]. During the weeks of this *penitential season* (characterized traditionally by the color *purple* in vestments, paraments, and even Advent candles), we examine ourselves regarding our sins and our dire need for the “coming” Savior, express our sincere contrition and repentance for all of our transgressions, and thus prepare our hearts to receive Him in humble, childlike faith as God’s “*unspeakable Gift*” (II Corinthians 9:15) to us and to all the world. Moreover, thus prepared for His coming into our *hearts*, we also look forward in joyful anticipation (Luke 21:28) to His *second visible* advent on the Last Day and to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (I Peter 1:9) which He purchased and won for us and for all mankind (I John 2:2; II Corinthians 5:19).

But the yearning for the Savior’s *advent* or coming is not limited to the **Advent season**, even for us Christians in these latter days; neither did it have its beginning in the early New Testament church when the liturgical year was developed and established to focus the attention of God’s people on all that He had done (and continues to do) for their salvation. For already at the beginning of time (Genesis 3), when man fell into sin, lost God’s image, and brought upon himself God’s wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal damnation in hell as “*the wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23), God promised to send a **Redeemer** in the person of His only-begotten Son, who would come as the Seed of the woman to

destroy the power of the devil (Genesis 3:15), to atone for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53, etc.), and to establish reconciliation and peace between Himself and His rebellious creatures (Exodus 34:6, Daniel 9:24, etc.). Since that day, sinful man was “*justified by faith*” (Romans 5:1), was forgiven and made right with God by confiding solely in the merits of that promised Redeemer and in the reconciliation which God, in view of Christ’s vicarious atonement, had already in eternity decreed for all the world (II Corinthians 5:19).

God had said to the serpent, in the presence and for the comfort of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: “*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her SEED. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel*” (Genesis 3:15). Adam and Eve confidently looked forward in faith to the advent of that promised Deliverer, hoping for the prompt appearance of that greatest of all possessions. In fact, when Eve gave birth to her very own first-born son, whom they named *Cain* (meaning “*possession*”), Eve declared: “*I have gotten a man, the LORD,*” as her words in Genesis 4:1, properly translated, read in English. But “*the fullness of the time*” (Galatians 4:4) had not yet come for the Savior to be born into the world; and Eve’s son turned out to be the world’s first murderer instead of its Redeemer.

Nevertheless, God in His great mercy continued to promise the advent of His *Messiah*, the Anointed One, the Holy One of Israel, the Savior, in one prophecy after another, as well as in types and pictures of the Christ to come (Colossians 2:17), to remind His people of the covenant of His peace which, in mercy, He would surely keep (Isaiah 54:10). To Abraham He said: “*In thy SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*” (Genesis 22:18); and the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:16 makes it crystal clear that the SEED promised to Abraham “*is Christ.*” Moreover, for OUR comfort and assurance as Gentiles, God’s promise says that not only the physical descendants of Abraham would be the beneficiaries of the Messiah’s redemptive work and its resulting justification, but “*all the nations of the earth,*” showing that the Gospel, “*the Word of Reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b) “[*should*] *be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations,*” as Jesus Himself, “*the Propitiation...for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2), stated in Matthew 24:14. And St. Paul tells us in Romans 4:3 that “*Abraham believed God, and it [i.e., his faith, v. 5] was counted unto him for righteousness,*” that he was personally justified before God by faith in His promise.

God repeated that same promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:4) and to Jacob

(Genesis 28:14); and, when Jacob was old, he passed along the Messianic Promise to his son, Judah (Genesis 49:10), whose descendants as a nation, he said, would still be self-governing until the advent of God's "SHILOH," a name which means "*Prince of Peace*" (Cf. Isaiah 9:6). Indeed, in spite of the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews, from which God delivered them after seventy years in exile, and in spite of other conquests of Palestine thereafter, during and because of which the Jews lost a great deal of their sovereignty as a nation, "*the scepter*" or self-rule did not completely and irretrievably "*depart from Judah*" until its colonization and occupation by the Romans shortly before the birth of the Savior. To be sure, the Jewish Sanhedrin still had considerable political power and influence — even over Rome's procurator, Pontius Pilate, whom it blackmailed into convicting Jesus (John 19:12ff.) — but the Jews were no longer completely autonomous in their own affairs, as is evident from the fact that they had no legal authority to put anyone to death (John 18:31-32). And the Christ child Himself, at the time of His birth, was subject under the law both to the Romans (Luke 2:1ff.) and to their political "hack," King Herod the Great, who ruled in Jerusalem at the time of the Wise Men's visit (Matthew 2).

But the prophecies of the coming Savior did not cease with the promise to Judah and his descendants. In fact, they became not only *more numerous* as time went along, but they became *more detailed* in what they revealed about the promised Redeemer. Witness, for example, Moses' words to the Children of Israel in Deuteronomy 18:15 concerning Christ in His office as our Divine Prophet. He said: "*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.*" And in Numbers 24:17, Balaam prophesied that "*there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel,*" a prophecy which may well have been uncovered by the Wise Men in their research to learn the meaning of the star which they saw in the east shortly after the Savior's birth.

The Psalms, too, are *full* of Messianic prophecies which reveal considerable detail about the promised Redeemer, both as to His person and as to His work, some of which Jesus Himself referred to as Divine testimony concerning Himself (Cf. for example Psalm 110:1 with Matthew 22:42-46). Clear reference is made to Jesus' office as our Divine Priest (Psalm 110:4), His betrayal by Judas (Psalm 41:9), His being hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4 and 109:3-5) and falsely accused by His enemies (Psalm 27:12), His suffering and death (Psalms 22 and 69), His resurrec-

tion (Psalm 16:10), and His ascension into heaven (Psalm 68:18). Notable among all these, as perhaps the most outstanding example of such detail, is Psalm 22, in which the Savior Himself speaks concerning His Great Passion and utters, a thousand years in advance, the words which He cried out from His cross of agony, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*”

While in the space allotted for this article we cannot cite *every* Old Testament prophecy of the Savior’s first visible *advent*, we don’t want to neglect the *later* prophecies in particular, those penned by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi — *rectilinear* (straight – line) prophecies pointing directly to the promised Redeemer and the circumstances surrounding His coming into the world. Although Isaiah is remembered very especially for the Fifty-Third Chapter of his prophecy, which describes in detail the *vicarious atonement* to be made by the Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb of God, for the transgressions of his people (vv. 5, 8, 11), he also wrote by inspiration of the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21) two prophecies concerning the *conception* and *birth* of the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Savior (Isaiah 43:1-3a) at His *advent* into the world. The first reads: “*Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His Name IMMANUEL*” (Isaiah 7:14) — this rectilinear prophecy of Christ’s *virgin birth* having been perfectly *fulfilled* to the letter in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4) and having been *cited* by God’s angel as irrefutable evidence that the very Jesus, conceived by the Holy Ghost in His virgin mother (Luke 1:26ff), was the long-promised Messiah, *Emmanuel*, “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:22-23), who would “*save His people from their sins*” (v. 21).

Isaiah’s second prophecy again speaks of the birth of the Christ child and identifies Him as “*the mighty God*” who would live among us and “*the Prince of Peace*,” the “*Shiloh*” promised centuries before to Judah (Genesis 49:10). Isaiah wrote: “*Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called WONDERFUL [i.e. Miracle], COUNSELOR, the MIGHTY GOD, the EVERLASTING FATHER, the PRINCE OF PEACE. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this*” (Isaiah 9:6-7). Note that the promised Messiah’s establishment of His kingdom, His kingdom of everlasting

*government and peace, of judgment and justice* lasting into eternity, would fulfill the “type” or figure of King David’s reign over the house of Israel. It would be a *gracious* Kingdom predicated on God’s justification of poor sinners freely in view of the coming Messiah’s vicarious atonement (II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:21ff.), the Kingdom that “*the zeal of the Lord of Hosts*” would surely establish according to His own eternally-decreed purpose and grace in His Son (Ephesians 1:3ff.; II Timothy 1:9).

Jeremiah, too, prophesied the *advent* of this Messiah and the establishment of His gracious Kingdom upon the “type” of David’s reign, saying: “*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous BRANCH [Cf. Zechariah 3:8b], and a KING shall reign and prosper, and shall exercise judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is His Name whereby He shall be called: THE LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jeremiah 23:5-6; cf. Romans 3:21-22). Note very especially in this prophecy the promise that “*Judah*” and “*Israel*” will be saved when the “*King*,” the Anointed One, establishes His rule, His Kingdom of Grace, in which His righteousness is imputed to His subjects as their righteousness. These words of the prophet do NOT foreshadow a general conversion of the Jews during the so-called “millennial reign of Christ on earth” before the end comes; for, as St. Paul clearly explains, it is not the *physical* Israel (“*the children of the flesh*”) that shall be saved; “*but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*” (Romans 9:8). It is only the *spiritual* Israel, true believers in Jesus Christ as their Savior, who are “*the children of God*” (Galatians 2:26), to whom His righteousness is imputed *by faith* (Romans 1:17; 3:21-22), not those who reject Him and His vicarious satisfaction in their place, not those who despise the grace of God in Christ and desire to be justified by the Law (Galatians 5:4-5). Jesus Himself tells us who shall be saved: “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16).

The Prophet Micah prophesied that the eternal Ruler, God’s Anointed One, would be born not just in *any* Bethlehem, not in Bethlehem in *Zebulun*, but in Bethlehem of *Judea*, in Bethlehem “*the fruitful*,” as that little town was known among the Jews in ancient times, in the Bethlehem where King David had been born over a thousand years before the Savior’s *advent*. Micah wrote: “*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*” (Micah 5:2) —quoted by the scribes to Herod in Matthew 2 to establish the birthplace of the “*King of the Jews*.” Of what significance can this prophecy be when so many in our day claim that matters of history, geography and science recorded in the Scriptures are *not* the inerrant Word of God? Not only does St. Matthew in the New Testament cite this verse as authoritative evidence (even to the Jewish scribes) of “*where Christ should be born*” (Matthew 2:4), but it confirms the earthly genealogy of the Savior as prophesied by other “*holy men of God*” that He would be born “*of the house and lineage of David*” (Luke 2:4) —*legally* because Joseph was Jesus’ father-of-record (Luke 3:23), and *biologically* because Mary, His virgin mother, was also descended from the House of David. Thus the identification of Jesus as God’s Messiah, the “*Son of David*” (Matthew 21:9), is confirmed; thus the Scriptures of the prophets were fulfilled; thus the promises of God Himself, “*given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16), were kept to the letter. Thus “*we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world*” (John 4:42).

And now we come to the last prophecy recorded for our comfort and assurance in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The Prophet Malachi penned God’s own first-person promise, who declared about four hundred years before the Savior’s birth: “*Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me*” (Malachi 3:1) — a clear reference to John the Baptist, the Savior’s forerunner, as the Lord Jesus Himself confirmed this to His disciples by quoting from Malachi’s prophecy in Matthew 11:10. But, for the purpose of our article, namely, to examine prophecies of the Savior’s *advent*, it is the second statement in Malachi 3:1 that demands our attention: “*And THE LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT, whom ye delight in. Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.*” When “*the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son*” (Galatians 4:4) just as He had promised. The “*Messenger of the Covenant*” had “*suddenly come to His temple,*” to His Church, to His “*Zion,*” to “*the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*” (Psalm 46:4), “*the tabernacle that shall not be taken down*” (Isaiah 33:20) because He promises that “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18).

Our Divine Prophet, the “*Messenger of the Covenant*” of God’s grace, “*who is in the bosom of the Father*” (John 1:18), declared His Father’s love for all the world (John 3:16) on the basis of the vicarious atone-

ment that He Himself would render to divine justice for the sins of all mankind. During His public ministry, He manifested Himself by word and deed as the long-promised Redeemer of the world. He perfectly fulfilled every prophecy of the Scriptures concerning Himself; and then He laid down His life as *“the Lamb of God”* (John 1:29), as *“our Pass-over”* (I Corinthians 5:7b), whose precious blood was poured out as the incorruptible Sacrifice on the Mercy Seat of God (I Peter 1:18-19), the all-sufficient *“price”* (I Corinthians 6:20) that alone could propitiate God’s justice and purchase salvation for every man. Thus *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them”* (II Corinthians 5:19). *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). The covenant of God’s grace has literally been *“text-messaged”* to us in the Holy Scriptures, in the precious Word of the Gospel, proclaimed by *“the Angel [Hebrew: “the messenger”] of the Lord,”* Jesus Himself in His holy Advent. Anticipating, therefore, with great joy His coming to us again this holy Advent-tide through Word and Sacrament, we join with the hymn-writer in singing:

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

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

—D. T. M.



# What was *Blessed* about the Virgin Mary?

*“Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”*  
—Luke 1:48

If in a discussion of religious or secular matters certain terms are used and defined *differently* by those participating in the discussion, misunderstandings can quickly arise, which if not soon corrected can lead to bitter arguments being ignited, false accusations leveled, and permanent scars inflicted. This is very often a root cause of people talking past each other, or talking around the issue while never finding the precise points of agreement or disagreement, which can lead to a great deal of frustration for all parties involved. Additionally, the whole purpose of the discussion (to communicate ideas) is greatly hindered if not completely defeated when the participants attribute different meanings to key terms. For instance, if a person applies the term “saint” to himself, *we* might understand that he is using this word in the Scriptural sense as a designation for a Christian (one who has been made holy by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ). But *a member of the Roman Catholic Church* would automatically think that such a person is an unbelievably proud, arrogant, and spiritually ignorant man for saying such a thing concerning himself. This is because the Romanist is taking the term “saint” in the way that he was wrongly taught to understand it, namely, someone whose obedience to God is so spectacular as to merit direct entrance into heaven for himself as well as providing additional merits that can be applied to others, and who in heaven can receive prayers and act as a “mediator of intercession” between God and men. Clearly defining terms at the outset could help to prevent such misunderstandings from developing.

It is also important to define terms carefully so that opposing views are not artificially reconciled by words that are understood in completely different ways by the parties involved. Though both Romanists and Lutherans will say that they believe in the doctrine of the “*real presence*” of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, the Romanists understand this in the sense of substance conversion from bread into body and from wine into blood (transubstantiation); whereas the Lutherans understand this in the Scriptural sense of Christ’s body and blood being truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine in a supernatural way (I Corinthians 10:16; 11:26–29). And though both Romanists and Lutherans

will say that they are saved by the “*grace*” of God, the Romanists define “*grace*” as the power that God bestows upon a person to do good works and merit God’s favor (*gratia infusa*), whereas the Lutherans let “*grace*” retain its Scriptural meaning as God’s undeserved love and kindness, which is not in the least bit merited by our works (Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 11:6). It is, therefore, very important *to define terms carefully* in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings—so that error can be clearly identified and refuted, and so that the truth can be clearly set forth.

Now concerning the term “*blessed*,” the Roman Catholic Church claims that when the Scriptures use this word in connection with the virgin Mary, it supports their man-made teachings of her “immaculate conception” (that she was conceived without original sin and never committed any actual sins) and that Mary should be the object of prayers as well as a kind of worship and honor that they classify as “*hyperdulia*,” which, according to the Romanists, is greater than “*dulia*” (the honor given to all the other “saints”) but inferior to “*latria*” (the honor and worship reserved for God alone). These teachings were set forth by Pope Pius IX, December 8, 1854, in a decree called “*Ineffabilis Deus*” (“Ineffable God”—the first two words of the Latin original). In this proclamation of official Roman Catholic dogma, the following is stated: “The Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces and is adorned with all gifts of the Holy Spirit. To them [the church fathers] Mary is an almost infinite treasury, an inexhaustible abyss of these gifts, to such an extent that she was never subject to the curse and was, together with her Son, the only partaker of perpetual benediction. Hence she was worthy to hear Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, exclaim: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’” (from the section titled, *The Annunciation*); again: “We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful” (from the section titled, *The Definition*); and again: “Let all the children of the Catholic Church, who are so very dear to us, hear these words of ours. With a still more ardent zeal for piety, religion and love, let them continue to venerate, invoke and pray to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin” (from the last paragraph of *Ineffabilis Deus*).

Of course we know that this document of the Roman Catholic Church must be rejected on the grounds that it introduces teachings nowhere set forth in the Bible, and that it also contradicts numerous passages of Holy Scripture (Psalm 14:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23; I Timothy 2:5). But in order to answer the question presented in the title of this article, namely, “What was *blessed* about the virgin Mary?,” it is necessary to define clearly what is meant by the term “*blessed*.” It is not enough to look up “blessed” in an English dictionary. Rather, we must draw the proper definition from the language in which the New Testament was originally written, that is, Greek. There are actually two different Greek words that are translated into English as “blessed”—the one is the verb “*eulogeo*” (literally, “to speak well of;” adjective form: “*eulogetos*”), and the other is the verb “*makarizo*” (literally, “to enlarge;” adjective form: “*makarios*”). In the New Testament we find that “*eulogeo*,” the verb, is usually applied to God, but sometimes also to men; “*eulogetos*,” the adjective, is used only with reference to God (though it can be found in the *Septuagint* applied to men); “*makarizo*,” the verb, is used only with reference to man; and “*makarios*,” the adjective, is usually applied to men, but twice also applied to God.

Some examples of the verb “*eulogeo*” being addressed to *God* can be found in Luke 2:28 and James 3:9. The only two examples of the verb “*eulogeo*” being addressed to *Mary* are found in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. There we read that both the angel Gabriel and also Elisabeth said to Mary: “**Blessed** art thou among women” (v. 28, 42). This same verb is applied also to *Abraham*, as well as to *all Christians* in common. “Surely **blessing** I will **bless** thee [Abraham], and multiplying I will multiply thee” (Hebrews 6:14). “So then they which be of faith are **blessed** with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:9). Some examples of the adjective “*eulogetos*” being applied to *God* are the following: “**Blessed** be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68); and: “Christ came, who is over all, God **blessed** for ever” (Romans 9:5). The only two examples of the adjective “*makarios*” being applied to *God* are both found in St. Paul’s first epistle to Timothy (1:11 and 6:15). This adjective, “*makarios*,” is the one that is most commonly translated as “*blessed*” in reference to man. It is attributed to *Mary* in Luke 1:45, as well as to *Christians* in general in such places as Matthew 5:3–11 (“...**blessed** are the meek...**blessed** are the merciful... **blessed** are the peacemakers...”), Luke 6:20–22, and John 20:29. The one example of the verb “*makarizo*” being addressed to *Mary* is also

from Luke chapter 1: “*From henceforth all generations shall call me **blessed***” (v. 48). This same verb is translated as “*happy*” in James 5:11, and is applied to *Christians* who endure afflictions patiently.

Now what can be learned from this brief survey of Greek terms? Two important points relating to the topic of this article present themselves. In the first place, each Greek root word for “blessed” that is applied to *Mary* in the New Testament is also applied to *Christians* in general. And secondly, that according to the way that these words are used in the Scriptures, the following general rule becomes apparent: When applied to *God*, the term “*blessed*” means that He is worthy to be worshiped, honored, and praised by His creatures; and when applied to *man*, the term “*blessed*” means that he is the happy recipient of God’s love and gracious gifts. An example of this rule can be observed in Ephesians 1:3 where we find the adjective “*eulogetos*” applied to *God as the object of our praise*, and the verb “*eulogeo*” directed toward *Christians as the objects of God’s blessings*: “**Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath **blessed** us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Because of the Romanists’ high veneration of the virgin *Mary* (as can be seen in the above quotations from *Ineffabilis Deus*), they take the meaning of “*blessed*” as it applies to *God* (being worthy of praise and worship), and apply that same meaning also to the virgin *Mary* when the Bible refers to her as “*blessed*.” But such an interpretation is revealed to be completely arbitrary when it is remembered that the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament apply the same Greek words, translated as “*blessed*,” to *all Christians in common*.

So then how are we properly to understand the term “*blessed*” with regard to the virgin *Mary*? If we keep in mind the fact that she was a sinful human being just like we are who needed a Savior just as we do (Luke 1:47), then we simply allow the term “*blessed*” to retain the meaning that this word carries when it is attributed to any other human being, namely, to be happy as the objects of God’s loving kindnesses. And what made *Mary* so “*blessed*” (happy in the reception of God’s blessings)? Simply this, *she was privileged to have been chosen by God to be the mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. What a tremendous blessing that was! It is certainly a great blessing for a woman to have a child who respects his parents, loves the Lord, and diligently strives to follow God’s Commandments in his life. But now think of how great the blessing was for *Mary* to be the only woman ever to give

birth and raise a Child who was *perfect*, who was never disobedient to His parents, who never lied, who never acted disrespectful, whose every thought, word, and action was only always pure and holy! And as it is a great blessing for us to learn about our Savior from the Bible and to know Him by faith, so it was a great blessing for Mary to be able to know her Savior so intimately and to watch Him grow from infant to manhood as “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

In considering the unique privilege that Mary enjoyed as the Mother of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it is easy for the foolish and corrupt mind of man to depart from the Scriptures and imagine that Mary’s piety must have exceeded all others (as if she were sinless or practically sinless) and to think that her condition of happiness as the object of God’s blessing must have been greater than anyone else has ever experienced. But there is a much greater blessing than simply being the mother of Jesus, and that is being His *spiritual* brother by saving faith in Him (c.f. Hebrews 2:11-12). When Mary and some other blood relatives of the Savior wanted to talk to Him, Jesus testified to the closer bond that exists between Him and His true disciples. We read in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: “*While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother*” (12:46–50). Jesus taught how the blessedness of faith exceeds the blessedness of simply being His mother also on another occasion, as this has been recorded for our learning in Luke 11:27–28: “*And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*” Yes, it was a privilege and a great blessing for Mary to be the mother of Jesus; but a far greater blessing is possessed by all those who hear the pure Word of God and keep it safe in their hearts by a true and living faith.

So even though we certainly acknowledge the virgin Mary to be “*blessed*,” as the Bible clearly states, because she was chosen to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet we also say in the words of Jesus

that, even more so, “*blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*” This blessed condition of saving faith cannot be brought about by man’s own efforts (John 1:13), but is the result of the Holy Ghost working in man’s heart (I Corinthians 12:3) to overcome his natural enmity against God (Romans 8:7). It is completely the gift, or blessing, of God that produces, sustains, and strengthens saving faith in the heart of man. And through this faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we Christians receive the forgiveness of sins and are the objects of God’s Fatherly love, so that He cares for us in all of our needs, He hears and answers our prayers, He guides and directs all things to serve our spiritual and eternal welfare, and He will finally take us to heaven when this earthly life is over. Without controversy, these blessings far exceed the blessing of being the physical mother of Christ. Let us, therefore, *bless* the Lord for His abundant grace to *us* and rejoice that He has made *us* His *blessed* children and heirs through Jesus our Savior!

—P. E. B.

### *An Advent Prayer*



*O Jesus, our Redeemer and King, as we celebrate the coming Advent season, we thy humble servants, open wide our heart to thee. Cleanse and purify it from all sin and evil desire. So rule over us that we may yield our members as instruments of righteousness to our Lord. Come with thy blessing to our various congregations. Give to our pastors’ faithfulness and grant success to all their efforts. Give to all the members of our congregations brotherly affection towards one another and a fervent zeal for the spreading of Thy kingdom of Grace on earth. Come with the riches of Thy favor to our beloved Concordia Lutheran Conference and the church at large. Guard thy disciples against all errors and falsehood and prevent all divisions and heresies. Let Thy Church ever be a shining light to all the world. Come with Thy gracious visitation to all whom Satan still holds in the bonds of unbelief and sin. And when Thou shalt appear in power and majesty, oh, let this Thy glorious advent be to us a day of rejoicing, that we may lift up our heads with gladness because our redemption draweth nigh. Amen.*

# *The Childlike Faith of Mary and Joseph in Their Savior*

*“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”*

—Luke 1:38

*“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.”*

—Matthew 1:24

What do we mean by the term “childlike faith” as used in our present theme? The term “childlike” is used here in a good sense, “in quality like a child,” and is the very opposite of childish, a negative term indicating that which is immature, puerile, or even silly. When used together with faith, “childlike” refers to the unquestioning nature of a child. As Dr. Luther explains: “In all simplicity and without any disputing, children believe that God is gracious...they live with all sincerity in faith, without the interference of reason” (Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, p.142, #416). Note the last qualification the Doctor makes. It is not that children do not have sinful flesh, or that they lack reason, but that reason has not been activated, as it were. Their faith, as a gift of God’s grace through the Gospel in Holy Baptism, enjoys a freedom from developed reason. As Dr. Luther further remarks, faith must deny and defy reason:

[The Anabaptists] argue: How can children believe, seeing that as yet they have no reasoning power? Thus they add reason to faith. To this Christ answers: This is exactly why children *can* believe better. They cannot reason. For reason is directly opposed to faith. This is why you must let reason go. It must be killed and buried in believers. ...Christ wants us to turn into veritable children if we desire to come into the kingdom of heaven. He means that, as all reasoning is, so to speak, still buried in children, so reason is also to be killed in all Christian believers. Otherwise faith has no place in them. For reason opposes faith. ...But in this matter you Christian must become a child and say: Indeed, I cannot comprehend this doctrine; but I must become a child, must let myself be carried, touched, and blessed by

Christ, and I must believe it. I must close the eyes of reason and not determine how this is possible or impossible; but I must believe and accept the pure, simple Word. The same thing is true of all other articles of faith. When heathen hear that God's natural Son became man, they say: That is impossible.—No doubt it is if reason is asked for advice. But you must let go of reason in this matter, must pay no attention to it, must entirely kill it; otherwise you will not come into the kingdom of heaven. One cannot grasp or comprehend this matter by reason. You must *believe* the article that Christ was born man in the fullness of time. You must permit yourself to be carried and led to Christ by the divine Word. Then you will partake of the kingdom of heaven. You must become children. This is the place for little children. Little children Christ carries, embraces, blesses, and says: Of such is the kingdom of heaven. If, then, I permit myself to be carried, Christ gives me His works and His merit and the kingdom of heaven." (*Ibid.*, p. 485, #1440)

Only God can work such childlike faith in us through the power of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel of grace. And, after we are so converted, the Word must constantly work on us, upholding us graciously and powerfully. "A severe struggle is required to hold to the Word in spite of what we feel and see," Dr. Luther reminds us (*Ibid.*, #1437, p.484). Scripture declares, "*We walk by faith not sight*" (II Corinthians 5:7), reminding us to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (Cf. II Corinthians 10:5). Childlike faith is defined as that God-wrought trust in God's Word by God's Word that discounts and repudiates all fleshly objections which carnal reason may offer.

How does Mary, the mother of our Lord, demonstrate such childlike faith in her Savior? Our focus text is this: "*And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*" Out of the abundance of her heart, her mouth spoke a confession of childlike faith. Remember what the heavenly messenger of God, Gabriel, had told her, his startling declaration that she would be the Mother of God Incarnate, the Mother of the long-awaited Messiah, of Jesus, the Savior of the entire ungodly world (Cf. Luke 1:26-33)! She reacted by asking how she, a virgin, could conceive and bear this Wonderful Person. When the angel explained how the operative power of the Holy Ghost was causing (even as he spoke) this miraculous conception, he reminded her that Elizabeth, too, had experienced a conception miracle, adding that "*with God nothing shall be impossible!*" What Gabriel said to her constituted the object of her childlike faith, the word she humbly trusted to be fulfilled. As Baier

explains: “Mary asks the angel who announced that the conception of the Messiah was now to occur in her, the virgin: ‘How shall this be?’ knowing that by nature it was impossible that she, not knowing a man, should nevertheless conceive and give birth. The angel agrees with Mary in this and simply teaches her to look to God’s omnipotence” (Baier-Walther, III, 29). And Dr. Franz Pieper adds the following remark: “As to the ‘laws of nature,’ it must be kept in mind that God is not bound to them, but they are bound to God, since the laws of nature are nothing else than God’s operation in and through the creatures. Cp. Genesis 1:11-12; Psalm 104:13-14” (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pp.72-73, footnote #36).

As Dr. Pieper further notes,

The Christian Church has from the beginning believed and confessed that Jesus Christ was “conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary” (Apostolic Creed). It has clung to this confession against the ancient error of Ebionites and against the modern opposition of Harnack, Crapsey, and the others. The appeal to the “laws of nature” is silenced, once and for all, by Luke 1:37: “*With God nothing shall be impossible.*” That satisfies all Christians, as it did Mary (v.38), and *should* satisfy every thinking man who believes in an almighty God and has the right conception of the “laws of nature.” (*Ibid.*, p. 72.)

Indeed, as Jeremiah declares of the only true God, Jehovah, “*There is nothing too hard for Thee!*” (Jeremiah 32:17); and the LORD Himself says, “*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there any thing too hard for Me?*” (Jeremiah 32:27). What may the omnipotent God, the almighty Lord of the universe, who reigns over all (Revelation 19:6), not effect? Dr. Luther notes, “God’s power knows no measure or limit and does things no reason can comprehend, but faith must simply believe... What God says, that He is able to do (Romans 4:21); and nothing, God says, is impossible for Him (Luke 1:37)” (Plass, *op. cit.*, p. 804, #2494). The Savior put it this way: “*With God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26).

Mary believed God’s Word to her in childlike faith—she knew herself to be the Mother of God! As Luther says, we should also believe this in simple, childlike faith! “Mary is the mother of the true, veritable God; and the Jews did not crucify only the Son of Man but the veritable Son of God. For I will have no Christ in whom I am to believe and upon whom I am to call as Savior who is a mere man. Otherwise I would go to the devil” (*Ibid.*, p. 1255, #4005).

As her magnifying hymn of praise to God clearly shows, her faith was in her Savior: “*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.*” Here is personal, saving faith in Christ Jesus wrought solely by the Gospel! Childlike, such faith clings solely to what God says even as it sings, “Jesus loves me; this I know, for the Bible tells me so!” and subjects everything to God’s Word.

In like manner, Joseph, the husband of Mary when she conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost and thus the legal (not biological) father of our Lord, demonstrates childlike faith. As it is written: “*Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife*” (Matthew 1:24). “According to Scripture, faith in Christ is based solely on God’s Word (the Gospel); the Word regarding Christ engendered the faith of Joseph (Matthew 1:20ff), Mary (Luke 1:38, 45, 2:19), as well as the faith of the shepherds (Luke 2:10-20, cp. John 6:68, esp. Romans 10:17)” (Pieper, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.115).

What Word did Joseph trust in childlike faith? The context reveals not only an encouraging explanation regarding his wife’s virgin conception of a child (“... *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost,*” Matthew 1:20) but also a direct declaration of this child’s true identity: “*Thou shalt call His Name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). In addition, the angel of the Lord explains that all this was done to fulfill direct Messianic prophecy, namely, Isaiah 7:14: “*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,’ which being interpreted is, God with us*” (Matthew 1:23).

Joseph’s childlike faith is akin to that of his wife, Mary. He, as she did, trusted what God said despite any and all objections that human reason might adduce to the contrary. Like the Roman centurion, Joseph basically said, “*Speak the word only,*” and then did exactly what God, by the agency of the angel, had bidden him to do. Childlike faith lives the Reformation credo, “SOLA SCRIPTURA” by trusting God’s perfect faithfulness in keeping His Word. Joseph knew that God cannot lie and that not one Word that God has promised would ever fail to be fulfilled (Cf. Titus 1:2; I Kings 8:56). Remember also that what God revealed to Joseph is no “run-of-the-mill” miracle, no supernatural event done before and now repeated. This was the only Savior of sinners, that wonderful God-Man, the eternal Son of God incarnate—*God with us*, literally! As with Mary, Joseph was told that the mystery kept secret from the foun-

dation of the world would now be manifested in the fullness of time through his wife, the virgin (Romans 16:25ff.; Galatians 4:4-5)! Joseph would be given the singular privilege of being the *foster-father*, as it were, the *legal* father, of God's Messiah! Childlike faith, wrought by the very object it embraces by God's grace and power, holds to that Word of God no matter how unique or amazing the promise. What Joseph did here in childlike faith was of the same kind as Abraham believing that God would raise up Isaac when there had never ever been a resurrection from the dead prior to his day (Romans 4:3ff, Hebrews 11:17-29). Do you realize what great faith a CHILDLIKE faith truly is? How could anyone dare to think that such faith is anything except a sheer gift of God's gracious Spirit through the Word alone?

Beloved reader, may God grant you childlike faith to believe all that God has promised you in Christ Jesus! In Him all the good gifts of God dwell and are distributed to us for His sake. By God's gracious power and Spirit, accept in childlike faith what God says to you in His Word: "*He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32). God grant it for Jesus' sake, our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen!

—E. J. W.



# God's Angel Proclaims the Christmas Gospel



(Martin Luther's Narrative in Verse, 1535)

"From heaven above to earth I come  
to bear good news to every home.  
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,  
whereof I now will say and sing:

"To you this night is born a Child  
of Mary, chosen virgin mild.  
This little Child of noble birth  
shall be the Joy of all the earth!

"This is the Christ, our God and Lord,  
who in all need shall aid afford.  
He will Himself your Savior be  
from all your sins to set you free.

“These are the tokens ye shall mark:  
the swaddling clothes and manger dark.  
There ye shall find the Infant laid  
by whom the heavens and earth were made.”

Now let us all with gladsome cheer  
go with the shepherds and draw near  
to see the precious Gift of God,  
who hath His own dear Son bestowed!

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled  
within my heart, that it may be  
a quiet chamber kept for Thee.

“Glory to God in highest heaven,  
who unto us His Son hath given!”  
Thus angels sang with pious mirth  
the gladsome tidings of His birth!



# Why Only a Christian Can Have a Truly Happy New Year!

*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,  
because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning;  
great is Thy faithfulness. —Lamentations 3:22-23*

The title for this article is absolutely true for one reason and for one reason alone: **Christ Jesus** and all that He has brought into the individual lives of His true believers, His dear sheep, His saints, as a marvelous result of His never-ending mercies and His great faithfulness revealed in the Scriptures. The words of this perfect, sinless Savior, who never lies, are so timely: *“Without Me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5). Without Christ Jesus and His substitutionary obedience and sacrifice for the world of sinners, there can be no true, lasting, and God-pleasing happiness and joy in 2006.

Why is this statement most certainly true? **1.** Without Christ Jesus we and all sinners would be and remain **under the wrath of God** in our life in this world, as well as in the life hereafter. There is no doubt that all people at their conception and birth are *“the children of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:3) and would continue to be such if they were not, by the grace of God, brought to receive *“the one Mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”* (I Timothy 2:5-6). According to the justice and holiness of God as set forth in the unchanging standards of His Law, it can without hesitation be said of Him: *“Thou hatest all workers of iniquity”* (Psalm 5:5). The Apostle Paul was not declaring anything other than the unvarnished truth when he wrote that *“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”* (Romans 1:18). There is no escape from this wrath of God except in and through Christ Jesus, as is so strikingly evident in the closing verse of John 3: *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* **2.** Without Christ we and all sinners would be and remain **under the curse and condemnation of God's Law**, deserving only temporal and eternal punishment for our disobedience of that Law, because of our failure to meet

all of its demands to be holy and perfect as God Himself is holy and perfect (Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48). The message of Galatians 3 is very pointed: “*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them*” (v. 10). In the Old Testament the message is the same, as we see in Deuteronomy 27:26. Is there any “way out” of this dilemma of being an outcast before God, being under His everlasting judgment, punishment, and condemnation? There is only **one** “way out” as is made so abundantly clear to us in Galatians 3 and John 3 respectively: “*Christ hath redeemed us [bought us back with a price] from the curse of the Law, **being made a curse for us**, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree*” (v. 13); “*God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is **not condemned**, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (vv.17-18).

So “*it is of the Lord’s mercies [in Christ Jesus] that we are not consumed [by God’s wrath and the curse of His Law], because His compassions [in Christ Jesus] fail not; they are new every morning [every week, every month, every year]; great is Thy faithfulness,*” as these words from Lamentations 3 wonderfully convey to us. Therefore, we “**joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11), that priceless blessing of being “at one” with God because Christ Jesus “*was delivered [into death] for our offenses, and was raised again [from the dead] for our justification*” (Romans 4:25). It is this finished work of our Savior and its blessed result of our being “*reconciled to God by the death of His Son*” (Romans 5:10) which is the subject of the “**good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people**” (Luke 2:10), just as the Christmas angels brought this same great joy to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem many centuries ago (Luke 2:13-14).

Note that this joy, flowing solely from Christ Jesus, is **great** joy because it is a result of the sure and **great reconciliation** between God and man brought about and fully accomplished by the Lord Jesus, received and enjoyed by the individual sinner through faith in Him. **Witness # 1, Second Corinthians 5**, provides this profound declaration: “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. ...For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (vv. 19, 21). **Witness #2, Romans 5**, sets before us this profound conclusion: “*Therefore, be-*

*ing justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (v. 1). What "good tidings of great joy"!!! What a contrast to the wrath of God, which we most certainly deserve for our "ungodliness and unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Our Savior wants us, through His Gospel of grace, to have true, ever-increasing, and lasting joy each year, each month, each week, and each day, even when we experience many sorrows, disappointments, chastisements, and afflictions along the way. This is most evident in His words to His disciples of all time: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

Furthermore, take note that this joy, flowing solely from Christ Jesus, is **great** joy because it is a result of the sure and **great hope of everlasting life**, which begins at the moment of conversion, continues on during our temporary stay in this world, and reaches its fullness in heaven. The closing verse of John 3 lays before us priceless comfort and a changeless warning: "He that believeth on the Son **hath** everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on Him." In stark contrast to the great and everlasting joy of the believer, we have the never-ending "torments" (Luke 16:23) of hell looming up for the unbeliever, the hypocrite (Matthew 15:8), and the professing "Christian" (i.e., not a genuine believer) who willfully persists in sin against better knowledge, without any true repentance, shame, and contrition (Hebrews 10:26; Matthew 7:21-23; II Timothy 3:5; Acts 5:1-11). No matter what the New Year brings for true believers in Jesus, they always have waiting for them "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [them]" (I Peter 1:4). On account of this living hope (I Peter 1:3) in the sure and certain expectation of everlasting life, the child of God, whether in the Old Year or the New Year, can joyfully confess: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18) in heaven, where there is "fullness of joy [and] pleasures for ever more" (Psalm 16:11).

Oh, we do not deny that the ungodly children of this world often "seem" to be happy, satisfied, and even joyful from day-to-day. But their sense of well-being is a cunning deception of Satan which leads them to despise God's grace and the real joy He imparts through the forgiveness of sins; and they end up piercing "themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10). Their joy is not God-pleasing; it is joy which is inseparably connected with "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). This worldly "joy" will **not**

continue after death or the end of the world, but will rather be turned into never-ending guilt, shame, sorrow, dismay, and hopelessness.

**But**, for the children of God, whether in 2006 or in the years to come, their God and Savior are their “*exceeding joy*” (Psalm 43:4). They can repeatedly confess, by God’s grace: “*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad*” (Psalm 126:3). As we draw ever closer to the New Year, let us take to heart and gladly follow the God-inspired counsel of St. Paul in Philippians 4: “*Rejoice **in the Lord** always, and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful [worried, 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 4:4-7).

—R. J. L.

### *A New Year’s Prayer*



*Abide with us, O Triune God, throughout the coming year. Be our guide in all perplexities, our Strength in all weakness, our ever ready Help in all troubles. Forgive us all our sins. Look down from Heaven, we beseech Thee, God of hosts; behold and visit Thy Holy Christian Church, which Thou hast chosen for*

*Thine own. Preserve to it thy Word and Sacraments, so that Thy vine may send out her boughs from sea to sea and her branches to the uttermost parts of the earth. Look graciously upon this our native land and upon all the nations of the world. Grant to all that are in authority wisdom and justice and courage so to rule that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. To Thine almighty and gracious providence we commit our nation, our churches, our families, ourselves. Abide with us with Thy grace and mercy and preserve our whole spirit and soul and body blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His name. Amen.*

## Official Notice

The *Concordia Lutheran Conference* in its **Fifty-fourth Annual Convention** assembled, passed an amendment to its *Constitution*. The amendment was adopted by *unanimous vote* of the delegates present. In order to be *enacted*, however, the amendment had to be *ratified* by at least a two-thirds majority of the member congregations (*Constitution*, Article XIII, 1). Therefore the amendment as printed below was submitted to the member-congregation in a **referendum** for their consideration and vote. (Changes are printed in italics.)

**2. Committee on Theological Education:** This committee shall consist of two pastors and two laymen. The first elected pastor shall serve as chairman. The Committee shall, in a Christian, Scriptural manner, in the name of our member-congregations *facilitate the work of* both the faculty and student body of our Seminary. It shall stand ready to render brotherly assistance whenever possible. The right to *engage qualified instructors from among our pastors and, with the consent of their respective congregations, employ them as theological professors, compensating them appropriately for their labors (Jeremiah 22:13b; Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:11)*, shall be vested in this Committee in the name of our congregations. The curricula and courses of study shall be determined by *the pastors of the Conference by mutual consent in consultation with this Committee, while* admission to the Seminary, and, generally, *the administration and coordination of the Seminary program, shall be the responsibility of the Committee itself, including its reasonable oversight and care in assessing both quality of instruction and student proficiency.* The Committee may determine its own place and time of meetings according to need. Its chairman is a member of the Board of Directors.

Now that the congregation of the Conference have considered and voted on the proposition, it is my duty as President to announce the result of the **referendum**. I am pleased to inform our congregations, as well as the public at large, that the above amendment was **ratified** by **unanimous vote** of our member-congregations and is therefore now part of our official *Constitution*. Inasmuch as the section involves not only practical but also *doctrinal* matters, we praise the Lord of the Church that He has preserved in us "*the unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3) and the *complete agreement* in His Word that such unity requires (John 8:31-32; I Corinthians 1:10; Amos 3:3; etc.). To God alone the glory!

—The Rev. Robert J. Lietz, President

For detailed information about our Conference,  
we invite you to visit our official Web Site!

## *Concordia Lutheran Conference*

**"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35**

<http://www.concordialutheranconf.com>

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# Churches in Fellowship

with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

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## **Evangelical Orthodox Lutheran Church**

### **of Yekaterinburg**

Yekaterinburg, Russia

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

P. O. Box 62

620088 Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: lutheran@66.ru

## **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**

Idama, Nigeria

**The Rev. Robinson Dodo, Pastor**

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

## **Salem Lutheran Church**

Abalama, Nigeria

**The Rev. Elison B. Agborubere, Pastor**

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

## **St. Clement's Lutheran Church**

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

**The Rev. Lucky Kaladokubo, Pastor**

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

## **St. Matthew's Lutheran Church**

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

**The Rev. Allenson Karibi Asawo, Pastor**

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

**St. Paul's Nyemoni Lutheran Cathedral**

Abonnema, Nigeria

**The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface** and

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

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

Kula, Nigeria

**The Rev. Onengiye C. Wariboko, Pastor**

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA



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# Directory of Member Congregations

## **FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

2620 Francis Street  
Jackson, MI 49203     *Telephone: (517) 787-1411*  
**Sunday School & Bible Class** ..... 9:00 a.m.  
**Worship Service**..... 10:30 a.m.  
**The REV. ROSS A. MAHAN, Pastor**  
2175 Pioneer Drive  
Jackson, MI 49201             (517) 750-3946  
**E-mail:** rmahan@acd.net

## **GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH**

4050 South Melpomene Way  
Tucson, AZ 85730     *Telephone (520) 721-7618*  
**Worship Service** ..... 9:30 a.m.  
**Sunday School & Bible Class** ..... 10:45 a.m.  
**The REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor**  
4050 South Melpomene Way  
Tucson, AZ 85730             (520) 721-7618  
**E-mail:** david.redlin@worldnet.att.net

## **PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Central Avenue at 171<sup>st</sup> Place  
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913     *Telephone: (708) 532-4288*  
**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     (708) 532-9035  
**E-mail:** pastormensing@yahoo.com  
**NOTE:** Services are also held each Sunday in our **Midland, Michigan**  
chapel at the **Midland Motor Inn**, 1815 South Saginaw Road:  
**Sunday School & Bible Class** ..... 6:30 p.m.  
**Worship Service** ..... 7:30 p.m.

## **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. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor**  
483 Tangent Street  
Lebanon, OR 97355             (541) 258-2941  
**E-mail:** m.l.natterer@comcast.net

**ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

5350 South Fountain Street  
Seattle, WA 98178 Telephone: (206) 723-1078

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 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service ..... 7:00 p.m.  
Adult Bible Class ..... 4:30 p.m.  
Adult Catechism Class ..... 8:30 p.m.

**ST. MARK'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH**

22012 S. Torrence Avenue  
Sauk Village, IL 60411 Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 8:45 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

22012 S. Torrence Avenue  
Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

E-mail: revbloedel@yahoo.com

**ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH**

420 Park Avenue  
Wilmot, SD 57279

Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 11:15 a.m.

The Rev. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor

420 Park Avenue  
Wilmot, SD 57279 (605) 938-4710

E-mail: dierking@tnics.com

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

300 North Ridgeland Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60302 Telephone: (708) 386-6773

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 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@yahoo.com

## All Praise to Thee, Eternal God

*All praise to Thee, eternal God,  
Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood,  
Dost take a manger for Thy throne,  
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.  
Hallelujah!*

*Once did the skies before Thee bow;  
A virgin's arms contain Thee now,  
While angels, who in Thee rejoice,  
Now listen for Thine infant voice.  
Hallelujah!*

*A little Child, Thou art our Guest  
That weary ones in Thee may rest;  
Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth  
That we may rise to heaven from earth.  
Hallelujah!*

*Thou comest in the darksome night  
To make us children of the light,  
To make us in the realms divine,  
Like Thine own angels, round Thee shine.  
Hallelujah!*

*All this for us Thy love hath done;  
By This to Thee our love is won;  
For this our joyful songs we raise  
And shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.  
Hallelujah!*

Martin Luther, 1524

TLH, Hymn 80