

*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.

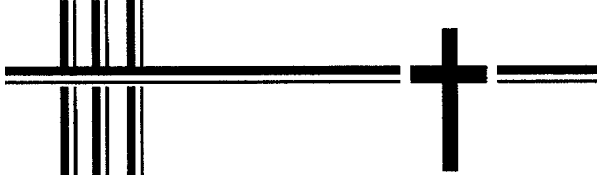
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“By grace  
are ye saved...  
not of works”

— Ephesians 2:8–9

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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.

## The Proper Relationship between Employee and Employer —According to Scripture

*“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear,  
not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”*

—I Peter 2:18

The Second Table of God’s Holy Law, summarized in the words, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39), demands of every one of us perfect love in thoughts, desires, words, and deeds to our neighbor, that is, to every one of our fellow men here in this world, by “*do[ing] good unto all men*” whenever we have the opportunity (Galatians 6:10). By God’s specific ordinance, some of these fellow men have been placed **over** us: *Our parents* in the home (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20), *our duly-constituted government* in the state (Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1), and *our superiors* in the place of employment (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22). These clear and certain Scripture passages, or *sedes doctrinae* (the “seats of doctrine”), which neither require nor permit of any interpretation whatsoever (II Peter 1:20), teach us that our obedience is part of the honor due not only to our “*parents*” under God’s Fourth Commandment, “*Honor thy father and thy mother*” (Ephesians 6:2), but also to our “*masters according to the flesh*” (Ephesians 6:5). The proper God-pleasing relationship between us and our “*masters*,” therefore, is not left to our fallible, human speculation or self-determination. Rather, God has given to us in simple words His unchanging precepts in His sure Word of Truth (Psalm 19:7b, 8b, 119:89, 130; John 17:17), the only source and norm of Christian doctrine and practice, of Christian faith and life (Ephesians 2:20; John 8:31–32); for “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (II Timothy 3:16–17). In our title-text, penned by the Apostle Peter “*not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (I Corinthians 2:13; II Peter 1:21), we read what God plainly and clearly requires in the relationship between “*servants*” and “*masters*” in the workplace, first as to their God-given DUTY and then as to their God-pleasing MOTIVATION.

It is by God’s arrangement that, when we accept work or employment from a company, our employers become our “*masters*,” those who

have been placed over us in the workplace. In this God-ordained relationship, we then, as employees, are “*servants*” who are employed to perform such labor as we are called upon to render by our employer. As our **DUTY** under the Fourth Commandment, God **REQUIRES US** as employees, those “*under the yoke*” of employment, to **honor** our employers, our superiors, “*count[ing] them worthy of all honor*” (I Timothy 6:1) and regarding them as God’s representatives. We are also to **serve** our superiors, “*with good will doing service*” (Ephesians 6:7) by gladly and cheerfully doing for them what we can. Additionally, as we read in our title-text, God requires us who are employees, that is, “*servants,*” to **obey** our superiors, “*being [Greek: and continuing to be] subject to,*” that is, being in a continual state of obedience to our “*masters according to the flesh*” in all things in which God has placed them over us (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:20). “*Servants [are] to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again*” (Titus 2:9), without back-talk and complaint, reliably giving their best effort to help their employer “to improve and protect his property and business” (Luther’s explanation of the *Seventh Commandment*) by faithfully carrying out their assigned tasks. God further requires us to **love** and to **esteem** our superiors, as our title-text indicates, “*with all fear*” –not in slavish terror, as we shall see in the next section on the proper **MOTIVATION**, but with *high respect*– reverencing them as God’s gifts and representatives to us (Ephesians 6:5–8).

In the employee-employer relationship under the Fourth Commandment, God also **FORBIDS US** who are employees to *despise* [that is, to *think little of* or to *disrespect*] our superiors by disregarding the dignity and the authority of their position over us. This is done when we provoke our employer to just anger either by outright disobedience or by wickedness in neglecting to do what God clearly requires of us in His Law as it dictates our relationship to our employer. Therefore, any kind of rebellion against our employer is a grievous sin of commission against God’s Fourth Commandment; and by not rendering honest service to our employer (II Thessalonians 3:10b), by being idle and lazy, that is, “*slothful in [our] work*” (Proverbs 18:9), we are guilty of transgressing the Fourth Commandment also by omission (James 4:17).

As for our “*masters,*” they are charged by God in the Second Table of His Law to be as concerned for the welfare of their workers as they are for their own welfare, and that they give their employees fair compensation for their labor, neither being fraudulent (James 5:4) nor oppressive (Malachi 3:5) nor withholding proper “*wages*” from their *workers*

(Jeremiah 22:13), their “*servants*” (I Peter 2:18). Additionally, an employer is to make sure that he deals *justly* with his employees, giving them fair and equal treatment (Colossians 4:1).

But what if our “*master*,” our employer, is **not** one of the “*good and gentle [ones]*,” not equitable, fair, and moderate, not gentle, considerate, reasonable and forbearing with us? What if we find our employer to be one of the “*froward [ones]*,” that is, one of the cruel, unreasonable, even tyrannical ones, one of the unscrupulous, heedless-of-what-is-just-and-right, even perverse ones in his dealings with us and other employees? This in itself does not give us just cause to be rebellious and unfaithful workers. Should we find ourselves to be dissatisfied with our working conditions, we can always seek employment elsewhere; but as long as the employer-employee relationship exists between us, the very words inspired by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21) clearly state in our title-text that the continuous action of dutiful subjection and obedience by employees is to be rendered “*not only to the good and gentle, **but also** to the froward*” (I Peter 2:18). HOWEVER, our subjection to our employers is specifically **limited**, not only by the contract of employment with the company, not only by the particular scope of the work for which we are employed, but also by the **Word of God** itself; for when “*masters*” command us to do what God in His Word forbids, OR forbid us to do what God in His Word commands, then we not only *may* but we **must** disobey them; for “*we ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29).

Having seen the God-given **DUTY** that is expected of us as employees, we now turn to the God-pleasing **MOTIVATION** for obedience to our employers. As God teaches in His Word, man by nature is spiritually blind to “*the things of the Spirit of God*” (I Corinthians 2:14), spiritually “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1), and spiritually *at enmity* with God (Romans 8:7), the imagination of whose heart is evil from his youngest days (Genesis 8:21), who “*cannot please God*” (Romans 8:8), and this already from conception (Psalm 51:5). As “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23), all are guilty before God and are under God’s just condemnation (Romans 3:19; 5:18a, 19a), deserving of eternal death in hell, for “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23a; cf. Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

For the **unbeliever**, therefore, who despises every authority that would rule over his life, including the authority of God Himself, compliance with God’s commands is not at all possible because “*the carnal mind...is not subject to the Law of God neither indeed can be*” (Romans 8:7).

Rather, the fleshly “*natural man*” (I Corinthians 2:14) must be compelled to obey and to serve his earthly superiors by the *threats* of the Law of God in its function as a curb. In the workplace, the use of disciplinary actions, compensation reductions, responsibility cutbacks, and harsh firings all help to keep some order and “outward compliance” of employees by preventing, to some extent, the coarse outbursts of rebellious behavior. Thus the natural man is motivated not “*with all [reverential] fear*” as in our title-text, but rather by dread of punishment and a fear or terror of the employer himself. Even a company’s “positive incentives” of increasing position pay and responsibilities, implementing career advancement programs, and recognizing workers with awards are still only *human* endeavors intended to regulate the relationship between employees and employers, not from any God-pleasing motive, but from the “profit motive.” Though an unbelieving employee might indeed perform a “good work” in the sight of men, since it may be beneficial or helpful to his earthly “*master*” or even to his family in the generation of additional income, it is not a good work in the sight of God; for “*without faith it is impossible to please Him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

Is man then just **left** in this state of rebellion against God and only perfunctory cooperation with his employer? No! and thanks be to God (Psalm 118:1)! For the same God also teaches in His precious Word that He is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” for their sins (II Peter 3:9). He “*will have all men to be saved*” (I Timothy 2:4) solely and graciously through Jesus Christ’s all-sufficient work of redemption for all people – “*servants*” and “*masters*” alike (Romans 3:24; 4:25; 5:8, 10; 18b, 19b). By the indictment and curse of His holy Law, God brings the sinner to his knees in contrition and in terror of punishment, so that he humbly acknowledges his sins, recognizes his lost condition, and understands his need for rescue (Jeremiah 23:29; Galatians 3:10; Acts 16:30; etc.). And by the Word of the Gospel (Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 4:15), God the Holy Spirit alone gives men a new birth by bringing them to faith in “*the Word of Reconciliation*” that “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19), so that they cling only to His mercy in Christ Jesus and have eternal life (John 3:16, 36a; Romans 6:23b). And, although “*all our righteousnesses [as Christians] are as filthy rags*” in God’s sight as far as meriting His favor, true righteousness, and justification (Isaiah 64:6), we are constrained by the love of Christ (II Corinthians 5:14) to bring forth fruits of faith in lives of reasonable service pleasing to God, “*offer[ing] up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (I Peter 2:5).

Truly good works, normed by the Law of God in its function as a rule for Christians only, the doctrine that teaches them which works they must do to lead a God-pleasing life (Psalm 119:8; 35, 105) as the fruit and evidence of their faith in Jesus, their dear Savior (Ephesians 2:10; cf. John 14:15), are *motivated* only by the Gospel, the only means whereby the Holy Ghost enables true **believers** to do them (Psalm 51:10; Ephesians 2:10).

By the grace of God, true believers in their respective workplaces, render willing subjection, diligent service, and faithful obedience to their employers as submission “*to the Lord*” and to His express will in His Word; “*for [they] serve the Lord Christ*” (Colossians 3:22–24). NOT to regard our employers “*worthy of all honor*” is to blaspheme the name of God and His doctrine (I Timothy 6:1b). Therefore, on our national Labor Day, while the unbelievers of this world credit their acquisition of wealth solely to their hand and the strength of their labor and industry (Deuteronomy 8:17), and pay tribute to the “achievements” of the American workforce in producing goods and services supposedly needed for a “higher” standard of living, we, according to the New Man of faith, humbly and daily acknowledge our utter unworthiness of any of God’s blessings (Genesis 32:10; Psalm 86:3) and confidently trust in God’s *gracious* provision of all our life’s necessities (I Peter 5:7; Matthew 6:31, 33) which He grants ordinarily through our employment, His ordained instrument of Divine Providence (Genesis 2:15; 3:17-19; I Timothy 5:8; II Thessalonians 3:10b). Motivated therefore “*by the mercies of God*” (Romans 12:1) in our New Man of faith, let us conduct ourselves over against our employers in true, reverential fear of God (I Peter 2:17), honoring Him with our lives and avoiding what displeases Him; for “*the fear of the Lord is to hate evil*” (Proverbs 8:13). Let us also “*delight in the Law of God after the inward man*” (Romans 7:22), heartily and gladly desiring to honor, to serve, to obey, and to respect highly our earthly “*masters,*” our employers, even the “*froward*” ones, for Jesus’ sake; “*for the love of Christ constraineth us*” (II Corinthians 5:14) to serve one another –both our employees and our employers (Galatians 5:13), “*not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*” (Ephesians 6:5–6), “*all to the glory of God*” (I Corinthians 10:31), not only as the fruit of saving faith in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10), but also as the evidence of our love for Him (John 14:15) who “*first loved us*” (I John 4:19)!

— **Jason A. Mabe, Seminarian**  
(Submitted through his Pastor)

## ***Salvation by Works Is Not a “Dead Issue” in Spite of the Reformation***

*“By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” —Ephesians 2:8-9*

Regarding the 31st day of October each and every year, we Lutherans gratefully declare with the Psalmist: *“This is the day which the Lord hath made! We will rejoice and be glad in it!”* (Psalm 118:24). Indeed, what a momentous privilege it is for us Christians to commemorate, with thanksgiving and praise to God, the **Reformation of the Church** under Martin Luther — not only once each year but each and every day all through the year! Sadly, that date has been stripped of its *real* significance by the world in general, so that even many of our children, from their youngest years, have learned to recognize it merely as “Halloween” — a synthesis of Romanist and pagan superstition celebrating ghosts, goblins, and gore and captivating their attention with the lure of costumes, parties and “trick-or-treat” candy. Therefore we should take special care to instruct the children concerning the *spiritual* significance of that date in history, so that they treasure **“Reformation Day”** as a *gift of God* on which we are privileged to honor His restoration of the pillars of our faith to outward Christendom through His servant Luther.

We recall from history that, four-hundred ninety-one years ago, a pious man of God, our dear Dr. Luther, in obedience to his Lord’s Word, laid his career, his reputation, his safety, and even his very life “on the line” to speak out courageously against soul-destroying errors and abuses under which God’s people had been literally *enslaved* for hundreds of years. It was on the last day of October in the year 1517 that the blows of Luther’s hammer rang out to the whole world as he nailed his *Ninety-five Theses* or statements of protest to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany — theses which, in those early years, only began to scratch the surface of the mountain of false doctrine, corruption and superstition under which God’s precious truth had been buried by the Church of Rome! Those hammer-blows were like the pounding of a great gavel, the gavel of the Holy Spirit of God Himself, to rule “out of order” the monstrous lies and crafty deceptions perpetrated against ignorant and unsuspecting sheep by shepherds claiming to represent Christ to the people, but who in reality served their own ends and the ends of their



temporal master, the Roman Pope. In the words and work of Luther, God Himself was having **His** say: “Behold, I am **against** the prophets, saith the Lord, that use **their** tongues and say ‘**He saith!**’” (Jeremiah 23:31).

And the **two great PRINCIPLES** to which Luther, by God’s grace, returned the Christian Church still stand today as the real *monuments* of the Reformation, the giant *pillars* on which the whole of Christian doctrine is based. They are, first of all, **SCRIPTURE ALONE** as the only source, standard and rule of Christian doctrine and practice, of faith and life; and secondly, **SALVATION BY GRACE**, as the free gift of God **FOR CHRIST’S SAKE**, earned and paid in full by Christ in His vicarious atonement, received **ALONE THROUGH FAITH** in God’s mercy. His searching of the Scriptures brought Luther to the inescapable conclusion that **ALL** the errors and abuses in which the church had become mired over the centuries had their *root*, *growth*, and *evil fruit* in Rome’s steadfast **refusal** to abide by these two basic principles of God’s inerrant Word.

It is the **second** of these principles, the so-called “**MATERIAL PRINCIPLE**,” to which we shall give our particular attention in this present article, as we explore why **work-righteousness** is *still today* far from being a “dead issue” in spite of the Lutheran Reformation, and why, therefore, the Holy Spirit’s words which St. Paul penned in his letter to the Ephesians some fifteen centuries before, as we have them in the title-text above, continue to stand written for OUR learning (Cf. Romans 15:4).

“**Work righteousness**,” the term by which we describe the arrogant and perverse, totally anti-scriptural and therefore false notion that man, by virtue of his own inherent goodness and merit and by his own free will and sanctified efforts, is worthy of God’s favor, is righteous in His sight, and is therefore deserving of salvation, is a **soul-destroying error** which is entrenched in the fleshly heart of man. **Work righteousness** runs completely **contrary** to what God in His holy Word says concerning man’s total depravity by nature, already since conception (Psalm 51:5). “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); “There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20); “There is none that doeth good, no, not one!” (Romans 3:12); “Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (v. 20). Even the righteousnesses of believers, measured against the perfection

that God's Law demands, are as disgustingly filthy rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6); and we could never save ourselves by works of righteousness which we perform (Titus 3:5a). And yet, "*the flesh*" dares to justify itself, even though in it "*dwelleth no good thing*" (Romans 7:18); and it challenges God to prove otherwise: "*What lack I yet?*" (Matthew 19:20). "I'm a pretty good person on balance. I'm not as bad as some people. In fact, I'm better than a lot of people who go to church every Sunday. What do you want from me?? I'm only human!"

**Work righteousness**, therefore, continues to be the *credo* of natural man, as he boasts not only of his *civic righteousness* before men — his accomplishments in society, on the job, on behalf of charitable causes, as a community leader, and as a "good" family man — but also his righteousness *before God*. A person who wants to be justified by the Law (Galatians 5:4) looks for his "well-deserved reward" someday in heaven because he was a "good person;" and he expects the praise of men in the meantime for his moral courage, upright character, and spiritual focus. **Work righteousness** is the religion of the Masonic and other lodges, of the Scouting organizations, and of those who claim to be religious but have no connection even with *outward* Christendom. It is really no different in essence from the righteousness of *Judaism* and *Islam*. It is the righteousness sought and claimed by *pagan* religions.

And, as we celebrate the **Reformation**, we dare not lose sight of the fact that **work righteousness** is *still today*, despite Luther's valiant work, a basic tenet, both in doctrine and in practice, of **Roman Catholicism**. For the Pope *still today*, through the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (1545-1563), pronounces his **curse** upon anyone who believes and professes that justification and salvation are granted by God's grace alone for Christ's sake, and are gained alone by faith in His mercy, totally apart from the works of the Law. Indeed, in addition to this proclamation and its other *official* statements "*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9), what it calls the Church's *Dogma*, Rome's *practice* proves that **work righteousness** is an integral part of its system: The benefit of its sacraments *ex opere operato* [by the mere performance of the work involved], the teaching that man can please God by the exercise of his *free will* in choosing good over evil, the notion that absolution is contingent upon the completion of works of *penance*, the granting of *indulgences* on the basis of works, and the *Mass* defined as the *sacrifice* of the body of Christ to God, by which *act* forgiveness of sins is procured "for the living and the dead."

But even **Protestantism** (for all of its outcries against Rome throughout history) has, to a great extent, permitted **work righteousness** to invade its ranks and to become part of its fabric, both in doctrine and in practice. Consider, for example, how **work righteousness** manifests itself in the “total sanctification” taught by holiness bodies, in various forms of “pietism,” in the accentuation of sanctification over (and before) justification, in “decision theology” and the exercise of free will in conversion, etc. And, sad to say, much of **Lutheranism** itself has been leavened with **work righteousness** in oftentimes subtle ways: Election in eternity *intuitu fidei* (in view of a person’s foreseen final faith); synergism before conversion seen as a “lesser resistance” to the efforts of the Holy Ghost; historical heritage stressed over purity of doctrine, and membership over true fellowship; participation in Scouting and in the Lodges; and the rejection of *objective justification* in favor of a purely subjective justification in which faith, as a work of man, is a causative factor in justification and activates it for the believer.

We cite, in addition to the ones already noted above, the following *sedes doctrinae* or Scripture prooftexts in summary: St. Paul says in verse three of Ephesians 2: “*We were by nature the children of **wrath**, even as others.*” When Adam and Eve fell into sin, “*sin entered into the world,*” the Bible tells us, “*and **death** by sin, ...so **death** passed upon **ALL men**, for that **ALL** have sinned*” (Romans 5:12). Yes, we were “by nature” spiritually blind, unable even to see the magnitude of our transgressions (Isaiah 29:18; 59:10; II Peter 1:9; Revelation 3:17) and “*the due reward of our deeds*” (Luke 23:41; Romans 6:23a); we were spiritually dead, “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1), helpless and incapable of doing anything to save ourselves, and headed for eternal death in hell as “*the wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23a); and we were enemies of God (Romans 8:7; 5:10a).

Consequently, “*no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God*” (Galatians 3:11), and salvation is “*not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:9). “*The Law is not of faith; but the man that **doeth** them shall live in them*” (Galatians 3:12). To claim righteousness by the works of the Law requires not only **performance** but **perfect** performance, “*for whosoever shall keep the **whole Law**, and yet offend in **one point**, he is guilty of **ALL***” (James 2:10). “*Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall **no flesh** be justified in His sight*” (Romans 3:20). That must stand without controversy as an **inescapable** and **indisputable FACT**, despite the efforts of the fleshly heart of man to deny it! Work righteousness before God is impossible to

achieve, and confidence in it for salvation results in the very opposite, **damnation**; for the person who looks to be justified by the Law “*is fallen from GRACE*” (Galatians 5:4), and apart from the GRACE of God **no one** can be saved.

“*But God,*” Paul writes in the verses just prior to our title-text, “*who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ*” (vv. 4-5). When we were spiritually “*dead,*” God showed us “*mercy*” [undeserved kindness] and “*love*” to make us alive again with Christ, our Savior —not because we merited it or earned it, but Paul adds: “*By GRACE ye are saved*” —**grace** being simply God’s **free gift**—“*and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (vv. 6-7).

This precious doctrine, like a golden thread, runs through the whole **Old** Testament, from the first promise of a Savior to Adam and Eve through all the other prophecies of the **Messiah** to come, the Sin-bearer, “*the Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:6). It is the story of God’s good purpose and grace, already “*before the world began*” (II Timothy 1:9), to **save** fallen mankind by the **gift** of His only-begotten Son to be man’s substitute under the Law and the payment for man’s transgressions. For it was in view of Jesus’ vicarious atonement or satisfaction of His justice that God “*reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19), that He granted **OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION** or “*blanket*” amnesty and forgiveness to all mankind, and could say of Himself already in Exodus 34: “*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*” (vv. 6-7). It was to **this** Savior that all the prophets of the Old Testament gave witness, Peter tells us in Acts 10:43, “*that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” —shall be the personal recipients of God’s forgiveness, of His **gracious** justification.

And the whole **New** Testament shows how Christ, in time, perfectly fulfilled all those prophecies, kept God’s Law flawlessly in our place, suffered and died for our offenses, “*and was raised again for our justification*” (Romans 4:25), completing the run of that golden thread right through to the end of Holy Writ. Jesus’ whole ministry here on earth was a testimony to God’s grace, even all His mighty miracles, that, as John writes toward the end of his Gospel, “*ye might believe that Jesus is the*

*Christ* [the true *Messiah*], *the Son of God*, and that, *believing, ye might have LIFE through His Name*” (John 20:31). It is this Gospel of **God’s grace** to poor sinners **for Christ’s sake** on which our whole **salvation** depends, the doctrine on which we must rest **our heart’s confidence** if we are to be saved eternally. What must WE do to **merit** it?? Nothing at all! What must we do to **receive** it? “*This is the work of God,*” says our Savior, “*that ye BELIEVE on Him whom He hath sent*” (John 6:29). And even *that* work, the faith that receives God’s gracious forgiveness, life and salvation, is “*the gift of God,*” who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

This blessed doctrine of justification and ultimately of salvation **by grace** for Christ’s sake through faith is not only the central and chief doctrine of the Christian religion; it is the **only** doctrine that gives enduring assurance and comfort to penitent sinners. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith,*” we read in our text, “*and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works.*” Poor Luther in his early days was sorely plagued by the **lack** of this assurance of salvation, for he was constantly directed by the teachings of the Roman church to **his own** efforts, to **his own** merits, to the extent to which **he made use** of God’s grace “infused” into him (as Rome still teaches today) to **earn** divine mercy. He was taught that he had to do good works deserving of God’s favor, to do penances to counterbalance sins, and even to rely on the good works of others —of particularly “holy” saints, who had “works of supererogation” (extra works “left over” from their own justification which they themselves didn’t need but could “share” with those who prayed to them). But, in spite of all his strivings, and even his monastic life as a poor, chaste, and obedient monk, he never had the assurance of justification or forgiveness UNTIL he discovered **THIS blessed doctrine** in the unmistakable words of Holy Scripture! —“*NOT of yourselves,*” our title-text tells us, “*it is the GIFT OF GOD.*” Gifts aren’t **earned** by their recipient; they’re **FREE** —“*not of works.*”

And this total separation of God’s **grace** from works of our own — either before or after the gift of faith— is made **crystal clear** in Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 11, where he shows that grace and works are diametrically opposed to one another, even according to their definition: “*If by grace,*” he says, “*then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace...*” (A gift isn’t really a “gift” if you first have to work for it.) “*...but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work*” (v. 6). (If you have to earn it, then it’s no longer a “gift”; then it’s “wages” which you deserve because of your

own labor.) —And thank God for this Scriptural distinction, my dear fellow-sinners; for we can see clearly from the “*lamp*” of God’s Word (Psalm 119:105) that “*give[s] light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*” (Luke 1:79) that we need never worry about the sufficiency of our merits for salvation. They don’t even come into the picture! “*What must I DO to be saved?*” we may ask with the jailer at Philippi. “*NOTHING!*” the Bible tells us. Just “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and thou shalt be saved.*” For salvation is GOD’S *FREE GIFT* to you, earned and completely paid for by your Savior!

But, as if that blessed assurance were not reason enough to cling to this wonderful doctrine of comfort to our trembling hearts, we see in our title-text yet a third reason, namely, that this doctrine gives all glory for our salvation *to God* and thus distinguishes the true **Christian** religion from soul-destroying religions that teach salvation by works. Paul specially stresses this point when he says: “*...not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

Religions which bind their people to meritorious works for God’s favor rob God Himself of the glory and cause men to boast of their own goodness. Instead of confessing with the Psalmist, “*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth forever*” (Psalm 118:1), they tempt their adherents to take the glory for themselves and to rely upon **justification by the Law** in the sight of God. But the Apostle warns such self-righteous glory-grabbers in his epistle to the Galatians: “*That no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God it is evident, for the just shall live by faith.*” And again, “*...Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law. Ye are fallen from grace!*”

And yet, the Roman Pope *CURSES* those who exclude meritorious works from salvation, *CURSES* those who trust **solely** in the merits of **Christ**, who rest the confidence of their hearts **alone** on **God’s mercy and grace** for *Jesus’* sake, **totally apart** from the **works of the Law**. For the so-called “Holy Father” declares in Canon 12, Session 6, of the *Council of Trent*: “If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be accursed!” And in Canon 20, the Pope *CURSES* anyone who believes that the Gospel is “a bare and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of observing the commandments.” Thus **true** Christians are officially excluded from the Pope’s church by his own decree! And

it is only in spite of the Pope and his curse and only by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel still read there *in word only* and in the baptism of infants that **any** believers exist in the Church of Rome at all!

O thank God, beloved of the Lord, that He mercifully rescued us from the Roman Antichrist, who systematically robs souls of their only hope of salvation and leaves them in despair on the road to hell! What a fearful accounting he will one day have to give at the judgment seat of Christ, whose substitute on earth he presumptuously claims to be and whose glory he takes for his own (II Thessalonians 2:3-10)! May we never take our blessed liberty from his clutches for granted by despising God's **grace** and the precious means whereby that grace is conveyed to us!

What a glorious heritage we have as children of the Reformation that by God's grace we still enjoy the blessing of His Word in its truth and purity, restored to us in the work of His servant Martin Luther! For that Word, as the **only source** and **standard** of Christian doctrine, is the very means whereby the Holy Spirit keeps us steadfast in the true faith, growing in grace, and wise unto salvation. To that end, may we ever firmly cling to the precious doctrine of **JUSTIFICATION** —by **grace**, for **Christ's sake**, through **faith in His** merits— as the central doctrine of our faith, for the abiding assurance and comfort of our penitent hearts, out of gratitude to God and to His glory alone, and as the only real basis for our lives of good works in proof of our faith, ALL to the praise of His wondrous grace, whereby we have been saved for Jesus' sake!

Sola Scriptura!    Sola gratia!    Sola fidei!

—D. T. M.



## ***Priorities: How They Should Determine Our Life's Choices***

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” —Matthew 6:33*

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ contrasts believers with the heathen in reference to *priorities*: The heathen have *carnal* priorities, and the believers have *spiritual* priorities (Matthew 6:32-33). Our priorities reveal what type of people we are: Of the world or not of the world, carnal or spiritual, unbelieving or believing.

Who we are determines how we live. Thus those “*of the world*” (John 15:19), the unbelieving children of men, are led by the sinful flesh: “*They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh*” (Romans 8:5a). They walk, or conduct themselves, “*according to the course of this world*” (Ephesians 2:2a), “*fulfilling the desires of the flesh*” (Ephesians 2:3b) and of the corrupt “*old man*” in “*deceitful lusts*” (Ephesians 4:22). Unbelievers “*love the world*” and “*the things*” therein led by “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (I John 2:15-16). Their lives are defined by the abundance of the things they possess (Luke 12:15). Their choice is to “*enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*” (Hebrews 11:25b), having hope “*in this life only*” (I Corinthians 15:19). If this sounds like the vast majority of people alive today, it is no marvel; for the final generations of the human race will be like the unbelievers of Noah’s day (cf. Matthew 24:38-39) who live only for the things of this world. Like the rich fool in Jesus’ parable (Luke 12:16-21), unbelievers seek only carnal contentment (v. 19). When an unbeliever is confronted with spiritual matters, he makes light of them and goes his way (Matthew 22:5; cf. Luke 14:18ff.), considering such matters utter foolishness, totally unable to recognize them for what they are, being carnal and blind, lacking all spiritual discernment, as it is written: “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned*” (I Corinthians 2:14).

On the other hand, those “*not of the world*” (John 15:19), genuine



Christians, are led by God's Spirit and mind "*the things of the spirit*" (Romans 8:5b). The Apostle tells the Roman believers: "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. ...Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. But if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*" (Romans 8:9, 12-14).

For the Gospel has created a "*new man*" (Ephesians 4:24) within believers at conversion, a new spiritual life. Paul writes to the Galatians: "*This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the spirit, ye are not under the law. ...And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit*" (Galatians 5:16-18, 24-25). Renewed in the spirit of his mind according to the new man (Ephesians 4:23-24), a believer is directed to live as God wills by the Holy Scriptures, the only source and norm for Christian faith and living: "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Timothy 3:16-17). A believer lives in hope of the next life, that eternal life promised him by "*God, that cannot lie*" (Titus 1:2). He seeks "*those things which are above*" (Colossians 3:2) in his new man (cf. Matthew 6:19; Luke 9:25). In the new man, a believer chooses to "*suffer affliction with the people of God*" (Hebrews 11:25a) with the spiritual understanding expressed in II Corinthians 4: "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (vv. 17-18). This is not to say that Christians do not continue to have their old Adam, the sinful flesh, to contend against. The Apostle Paul clearly confesses in Romans 7: "*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*" (vv. 22-23).

Christians face a daily, life-long battle against their flesh (Galatians

5:17). They still have the flesh, the old Adam, with his carnal desires; but they are not ruled by him, as it is written: “*For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace*” (Romans 6:14). Christians know that they cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24), cannot live with a divided heart (Hosea 10:2), cannot halt between two opinions (I Kings 18:21), cannot be double-minded (James 1:8, 4:8), but must serve their only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:10). Their service is directed by their Lord in His Word: “*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, ‘If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). The Sermon on the Mount, for example, is a kind of “service manual,” the expression of God’s Law as a rule for believers as they live out their lives to the glory of God (Matthew 5:1-7:29).

Consider how those of the world set *their priorities* based on carnal considerations only. Conformed to this world (Romans 12:2a), they set their affections on earthly things (Colossians 3:2) and are willing to gain the whole world at the loss of their immortal soul (Matthew 16:26). Their friendship with the world makes them enemies of God (James 4:4) as they worship and serve the things of the world rather than the True God (I John 2:15). In their coveting, they are idolaters (Ephesians 5:5) and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25).

An unbeliever does not recognize this obvious truth: “*As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?*” (Ecclesiastes 5:15-16). Because an unbeliever lives only for this world, he is controlled by indulgence in carnal pleasures and the worries of this temporal life (cf. Matthew 6:32a; Luke 21:34, 8:14). This is especially seen in the adverse reaction of former associates when someone of their group is converted and no longer lives as they do, as the Apostle Peter describes it: “*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*” (I Peter 4:3-4).

Christians are not to be conformed to this world but are to be trans-

formed by the renewal God works within them by the Gospel (Romans 12:2); *“for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:11-14). Rather than being led by their own deceitful lusts, Christians, in their new man, are led by the principles God has set down for them in His Word. Their **priority** above all is seeking the spiritual things of God, as the Lord Jesus says in our theme verse: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). Here, in no uncertain terms, our Savior promises to provide for all our temporal needs when we seek first the spiritual blessings: God’s Kingdom and His righteousness.

The Savior pointed out this same spiritual priority to Martha in Luke 10: *“And Jesus answered and said unto her, ‘Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her’”* (vv. 41-42). Mary had chosen to sit at Jesus’ feet to hear His Word, seeking matters of the soul, while Martha had allowed cares of this world to consume and distract her. Our chief priority is clear, as the Apostle Peter instructs us: *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious”* (I Peter 2:2-3). David of old confesses in Psalm 27: *“One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple”* (v. 4). With this as our chief priority, we shall not neglect the preaching and teaching of God’s Word in the assembly of the local congregation (Hebrews 10:25) but shall ever seek the Kingdom of God’s grace and the Righteousness of Christ in the Gospel and Sacraments.

The wisdom of God, the wisdom that makes us *“wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (II Timothy 3:15), is to be valued above all things. Solomon writes: *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her”* (Proverbs 3:13-15). In

Holy Writ the Lord tells us: “*I give you good doctrine. ...I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths*” (Proverbs 4:2a, 11).

In the Explanation of Luther’s *Small Catechism*, the question is asked: “When do we use the doctrine of the Church properly?” (Question #186, *Synodical Catechism*, 1943 Ed.). The answers reveal the proper priorities of a Christian’s life:

**We use the doctrine of the Church properly–**

**A. When we take heed to be and remain members of the invisible Church by sincere faith in the Redeemer** (II Corinthians 13:5, John 8:31-32);

**B. When we adhere to the [visible] Church [i.e. local congregation] which teaches the Word of God in all its purity** (Acts 2:42);

**C. When we do all in our power to maintain, promote, and extend this [visible] Church by prayer, personal service, and financial support** (Acts 8:4, Matthew 28:19, I Corinthians 9:14);

**D. When we avoid all false churches and all other organizations that profess a religion that is false** (Matthew 7:15, I John 4:1, Romans 16:17, II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Using the doctrine of the Church properly, as God Himself expects us to use the good doctrine that He has bestowed upon us in His Holy Word, we shall make the Godly choices in our daily lives that give glory to Him and bring spiritual benefit to ourselves and to others.

Consider your own personal faith. You well know that faith is created by the Gospel (Romans 10:17) and is sustained thereby (I Peter 1:5). This is clearly declared by the Apostle Paul, as he takes his leave of the Ephesian elders in Acts 20: “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*” (v. 32). Does the Word of God’s grace always claim the first place in your life? Do you desire to grow spiritually through the study of God’s Word? Scripture states: “*A wise man will hear and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels*” (Proverbs 1:5). Do

you “*search the Scriptures*” (John 5:39) so that you “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:18)? Do you avail yourself of the various opportunities offered by the pastor of your local congregation to learn sound doctrine? Do you, like Timothy, “*give attendance to reading ...to doctrine*” (I Timothy 4:13), and do you “*meditate upon these things*” (I Timothy 4:15a)?

**Or** has the systematic study of God’s Word essentially ceased in post-confirmation days? Have you perhaps allowed the things of this world to take up so much of your time and energy that you think that attending the divine worship service each Sunday morning is all you can “manage” to do? What has become of your Baptismal and Confirmation vow – in practical application to your actual day-to-day life? How sincerely have you kept these vows? Do you still remember the last two? —“Do you also, as a member of the true Evangelical Lutheran Church, intend to continue steadfast in the confession of this church, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?” Answer: “*I do so intend, with the help of God.*” —“Finally, do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the rule of the Divine Word, to be diligent in the use of the Means of Grace, to walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to the Triune God even unto death?” Answer: “*I do so intend, by the grace of God.*”

Examine yourself regarding your desire and actual performance in seeking the Kingdom of God’s grace and the saving righteousness of Christ in the Means of Grace. Rededicate yourself to serving the Lord with gladness in this regard for the sake of your blood-bought immortal soul! Choose what shall never be taken away from you!

A Christian’s *priorities*, based on the principles of God’s Word, will also direct him to make the right choices in every area of life; and, by the motivating and enabling power of His precious Gospel (II Corinthians 5:14), God will work in him “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). Consider, by way of illustration, some areas where choices need to be made:

What about your choice and pursuit of education and of a job? Will you choose a school and a career that will allow for regular attendance upon the Means of Grace in an orthodox Lutheran congregation and, thus, the careful feeding of your faith and watchfulness for your soul under a faithful shepherd’s leading? When you do take a particular job, and a conflict arises between *carnal* and *spiritual priorities*, will you hold fast

and refuse to compromise your soul's health? Will your job allow you to be a good steward of the gifts and talents God has given you? Will your job allow you to be a good husband and father, to render personal service to your congregation according to your particular gifts and talents, and, if a male communicant, to be an active member of the Voters' Assembly? **Or** will your chosen profession place so great a burden on your time and energy that these things will be in jeopardy? If you are a male and meet the other qualifications for such service, have you ever considered being trained for serving the Lord in the Pastoral Office? If you are a female, how does your choice affect how well you may be able to conduct yourself as a devoted wife and mother? All Christians should consider how their choices may affect their seeking of the "*one thing needful*," or whether their education and their chosen career may eventually prove to be stumbling blocks!

Another choice that people make is where to live. This is often directly related to their job. If their career is such that their choices are severely limited in terms of geography, one can readily see how difficult it may be to find work in a location where the person and his family can be regular, active members of an orthodox Lutheran congregation. How often people choose a place to live and work based only on carnal considerations: climate, economics, crime rate, cultural amenities, employment opportunities, family ties and so on! A Christian's choice *should* be based primarily on the availability of God's pure Word and Sacraments in a given area: The regular and consistent use of the Means of Grace in the fellowship and assembly of a truly orthodox Lutheran congregation (Hebrews 10:25).

At our last Concordia Lutheran Conference convention, the essay, "The Importance of Choosing and Having a Truly Christian Spouse," gave ample Scriptural proof to direct Christians in this vital area of life. The Apostle instructs us: "*Be married to whom (you) will, only in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 7:39). With the proper priority in mind, a Christian should pursue relationships in which a common Christian faith in "*the unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3) is at the center. Too often, ill-advised and carnal choices are made; and a purely *emotional* entanglement ensues without due concern for the *spiritual* welfare of oneself or of one's "love-interest." To pursue a romantic interest or to continue a romantic relationship with someone who is not of the same faith and who does not fulfill his or her promise regularly to attend services and to take adult instruction in the teachings of God's Word is to court disaster. The all-too-common hope that a person will suddenly develop a spiritual interest *af-*

*ter engagement*, that is, after the joint commitment in Holy Marriage, and hopefully *before the public wedding ceremony*, is not only a foolish delusion, but it is the setting of a sinful priority contrary to the First Commandment; and it is tempting God to expect such an outcome *apart from the Means of Grace!* And think of the consequences, should that outcome *not* materialize! How will you obey the Lord's command to raise your children in His nurture and admonition when an unbelieving spouse may obstruct your every effort? How difficult will it be even to get your family to church on Sunday and to participate with your brethren during the week? How dangerous it is to have a bad example within your own marriage as a temptation to your children to repeat your bad choice of an unbelieving spouse! Make the *Godly* choice of a **Godly** spouse! Put the *spiritual* priority **first** and **foremost** (Matthew 6:33)!

Prioritize your use of time based on what God says in His Word: "*Wherefore He saith, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.' See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5:14-16). To buy back and set aside time for the pursuit of *spiritual treasures* (Matthew 6:19-21) must be your daily concern in this evil generation. There are so many recreational time-wasting activities in modern life. The untold hours people spend with gaming, surfing the net, and watching various media is astounding. Anyone with leisure time must exercise self-control, or the hours will be fruitlessly spent without any "*redemption*" of time for the Kingdom of God whatsoever. How many turn a hobby or avocation into a virtual second vocation?! Often this becomes a selfish seeking of diversion and pleasure. Technology can be so easily misused in the service of the flesh. Many people have no idea how much time they really spend on "recreation." Christians should exercise proper moderation and seek positive and edifying things to do that promote personal *spiritual* growth, fellowship and family togetherness. If you would rather spend time, alone and isolated, watching television or playing a video game than interacting with fellow Christians in the congregation and with your family, what does that say about **you**, your *priorities* and your *attitude* about your purpose in life? Scripture admonishes us: "*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 10:24-25). We need to redeem the time particularly for one another's *spiritual* benefit, especially in these evil days as Judgment Day fast approaches.

A final application regarding priorities involves excuses for missing Divine services or Bible Class. How often are excuses given that make it appear that lesser things are really more important than the Third Commandment and the health of one's soul? This is especially seen when excuses for missing *spiritual* things would not be used for missing *temporal* things. In other words, would you expect your pastor to accept an excuse that you would never expect your boss to accept?? What "flies" on Sunday morning would not even "get off the ground" on Monday morning! What is that?! "The alarm failed to go off..." —only on Sunday mornings?? "The car wouldn't start..." —only on Sunday morning?? "We overslept..." —It better not happen on a work day or on a school day morning! It is not necessary to give more examples; everyone knows what excuses are offered. Jesus Himself cites three of them in His parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14:16-24. What about the *One Thing Needful*? What is more, yea, most important in a Christian's life? Be not deceived! It is the old sinful flesh in Satan's service (cf. Romans 7:18-24) that comes up with excuses for not nourishing the new man of faith. Such excuses do not "wash" now, and they will not count for anything when "*the Bridegroom*" comes and "*lamps*" are out of "*oil*" due to foolish priority-setting while there was still time to stock up (Matthew 25:1-13).

Ultimately it comes down to the question our Lord asked His twelve disciples in John 6: "*Will ye also go away?*" (v. 67). The answer that Simon Peter gave revealed the proper spiritual priority that ALL true disciples should have: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*" (vv. 68-69). As Christians, we have been made "*wise unto salvation*" by the Gospel (II Timothy 3:15), and we know that our faith will be preserved only the same way (I Peter 1:5). To whom shall **we** go?? Only to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life; for no one comes to the Father except by Him! (John 14:6).

May the Gospel ever motivate and empower each of us to set our life's priorities as they are set for us in Holy Writ and thus to determine our life's choices in accordance with God's will, to His glory alone, and for our own and our neighbor's *spiritual* and *eternal* welfare above all things, for Jesus' sake!

—E. J. W.





## RIGHTLY JUDGING THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

(Part One of Two Parts)

*“Judge righteous judgment.”* —John 7:24b

The above three words are a command from Jesus; they express His divine will. In short, these words are *“a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path”* (Psalm 119:105) on the important subject of proper, God-pleasing judgment. Jesus spoke these words to those who were *“angry”* with Him because He had *“made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day”* (John 7:23; the healing is recorded in John 5:5-9), to those who wanted to *“kill”* Him (John 7:19b), to those who accused Him of having *“a devil”* (v. 20a). The Savior warned those who were angry with Him when He said to them, *“Judge not according to the appearance”* (v. 24a), that they were not to keep on judging on the basis of how things appeared **to them**. They were to *“judge righteous judgment;”* their judgment was to be right, true, and God-pleasing, and not wrong, false, and sinful. The warning against wrong, false, and sinful judgment and the command to exercise right, true, and God-pleasing judgment are summarized so pointedly in Ephesians 4: *“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor”* (v. 25).

This article is the third in a series in the *Concordia Lutheran (C.L.)* on “Rightly Judging” Lutheran church bodies. These articles are not just written to “fill up space” in an issue of the *C.L.*, but they are written to identify and expose *“the leaven”* (Matthew 16:6, 12) of false doctrine (and practice) in the heterodox Lutheran church bodies, that doctrine and practice which continues to be *“contrary”* to the sound and clearly-revealed doctrine of Holy Scripture (Romans 16:17; II Timothy 3:16; Titus 1:9; John 8:31-32; I Timothy 4:16). Such *“leaven”* will, if left unchecked, infect, influence, and leaven *“the whole lump”* of Scriptural doctrine and practice (Galatians 5:9). One of the most tragic examples of *“a little leaven leaven[ing] the whole lump”* is what has shockingly happened within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, which was once an orthodox church body (for almost 100 years by the grace of God alone), but then, over 60 years ago, became, and is still today, a blatantly *heterodox* church body.

Another tragic example of *“a little leaven leaven[ing] the whole lump”*

is what has shockingly happened to the once orthodox Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (W.E.L.S.) during the past approximately 100 years. How did this once orthodox church body become a persistently *heterodox* synod? The “root” cause was a drastic, but largely unnoticed, **change** in the synod’s method of interpreting the Word of God:

- ❑ Up until the early 1900’s, the W.E.L.S., by God’s grace, let **the Scriptures interpret themselves**. It did not allow for any human “*private interpretation*” (II Peter 1:20) of God’s Word. It submissively (II Corinthians 10:5) acknowledged its doctrine and practice to be based solely upon those clear Bible passages which neither need nor permit of any interpretation. (“*It is written*” - Matthew 4:4, 7, 10, the *sedes doctrinae* or “seats of doctrine,” the bare, nude Scripture proof-passages, the “rule,” the standard, the analogy of faith). Under God’s rich blessing, this position of bearing witness to, supporting, and defending the **unchanging, Scripture doctrine and practice** was “spearheaded” by Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod’s leading dogmatician (professor of *dogmatics*, that is, Scripture doctrine or teaching) and president of their seminary from 1866 - 1908. In the first volume (four all together, plus an index volume) of his *Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*, 1909 and 1912 (printed after his death in 1908), Dr. Hoenecke left behind for us this childlike confession: “Besides Scripture we do not need any helps or any helper, exegete, interpreter, as modern theology so frequently asserts” (page 415).
- ❑ Shortly before and then following Dr. Hoenecke’s death in 1908, the **change** in the W.E.L.S. began to be evident following the arrival of three new professors for the W.E.L.S. Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, seminary: John P. Koehler (served from 1900 to 1929), August Pieper (served from 1902 to 1943), and John Schaller (served from 1908 to 1920). What was the change? **The change was that *dogmatics* was demoted, and *exegesis* was promoted.** Really? Yes, really!

What is *dogmatics*? **True, genuine, sound *dogmatics*** is the systematic presentation of the changeless doctrines or teachings of Scripture in relation to one another. The Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21) moved the Apostle Paul to write down these instructive words: “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (II Timothy 3:16). Scripture doctrine is established and supported by proof passages which are clear in and of themselves and neither need nor permit of *exegesis* or interpretation to determine what they are saying and teaching. The

divinely-inspired, divinely-produced, and divinely-given “words” (I Corinthians 2:13) say and teach what they say and teach without any human intervention whatsoever. This is **Scripture interpreting the bare, nude Scripture**, *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*, without any human involvement, without any human manipulation, and without any human interpretation which could distort or pervert the clear testimony of the Word of God. In our Savior’s three-fold response to the devil’s temptations, He used “*It is written*” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) and the bare, nude Scripture (and nothing else) following each of the three temptations. The Old Testament often used nothing but “*Thus saith the Lord*” (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) with the Lord’s bare, nude words (and nothing else) following this declaration. Truly Scriptural *dogmatics*, Bible doctrine, is as changeless as God Himself; “*for God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?*” (Numbers 23:19). The teachings of Scripture keep teaching the same thing; they leave no “wobble-room” for change, for development, for new insights, for new understanding.

Any teaching or doctrine which **opposes** or is **contrary** to the *dogmatics*, the doctrine, the teaching of **Scripture** (which is the *foundation* of saving faith, the *rule* of faith, the *standard* of faith, the *analogy* of faith, the *clear words* of God Himself which reveal what is to be taught in His Church), is **false doctrine**; it is a **lie**; it is **not** of **God**; it is to be **rejected, abhorred**, and avoided. “*If any man teach otherwise [Greek, keep on teaching differently], and consent not [Greek, does not keep on assenting] to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing **nothing** [False teachers are “bloated ignoramuses” – Francis Pieper in *Christian Dogmatics*, I, p. 136]; ... from such withdraw thyself” (I Timothy 6:3-5). “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause [Greek, keep on causing, keep on making] divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned [from the Scriptures], and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches, deceive [Greek, keep on deceiving and deluding] the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).**

So then, what is our God’s clear, revealed will concerning the *dogmatics*, the doctrine, the teaching in His Church? The answer to this question is manifested in St. Paul’s very easy-to-understand words in I Corinthians 1:10 — “*words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (2:13), words which need no interpretation for them to be understood — “*Now I be-*

*seech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **all speak the same thing**, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together [as you were united completely in the past, are still so at the present, and will continue so in the future] in the same mind and in the same judgment.”*

What is *exegesis*? **True, genuine, in-awe-of-Scripture exegesis** is the taking out of the words of Scripture only what God has clearly put into them, only what God has clearly revealed in them, only what God has clearly made known in those words (nothing more and nothing less, Deuteronomy 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19), **without any human injections, without any human opinions or conclusions, and without any human distortions**, ever remembering that these are **God’s** words, and **not our own** words to do with as we please, to satisfy our own reason, our own intellect, and our own thinking. “*No prophecy of the Scripture is of any **private** interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (II Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, true, genuine exegetes, those who carry out true, genuine *exegesis*, are to speak and write what God has spoken and written in His Holy Word, conducting themselves as the faithful mouthpieces (I Peter 4:11; Jeremiah 23:28; Acts 4:20), the faithful instruments (Luke 10:16; II Corinthians 5:20), and the faithful servants of God (I Corinthians 4:1; II Corinthians 4:5).

In sharp contrast to such true, genuine, in-awe-of-Scripture exegetes, there are those who are false, counterfeit, in-awe-of-human-wisdom “exegetes.” They are deceitful and dangerous because, giving the outward impression and appearance of being true exegetes, they publicly claim to “shed light” on Scripture by means of their own human opinions. Jesus identifies them as those who teach “*for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9). The Savior also warns of such in these words: “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; ye shall know them by their fruits*” (Matthew 7:15-16).

**True, genuine, in-awe-of-Scripture exegesis is always to be and always to remain a servant to, and never a master over the Holy Scriptures** in discovering by means of careful study the one God-intended meaning (*sensus literalis*) of those passages which are “less clear” and therefore “*hard to be understood*” (II Peter 3:16), **NOT**, however, of the passages which in and of themselves are “clear and certain” and stand as “seats of doctrine” (*sedes doctrinae*), the “*foundation*” of

faith (Ephesians 2:20). The solemn duty of the Christian exegete is to declare loudly and clearly: “*It is written*” (Matthew 4) and “*Thus saith the Lord*” (Amos 1). So that such God-pleasing exegesis will always remain a faithful servant to the Holy Scriptures, the Christian exegete properly uses, according to submissive-to-God’s-Word Biblical *hermeneutics* or rules of interpretation, **tools** in his “*study*” (II Timothy 2:15) of the words of Scripture, tools such as the **context** (both narrow and wide), the **language** in which the words were originally written (etymology, grammar, etc.), the **history** connected with the words, Scripture’s own history being quite sufficient (secular, extra-Biblical history not being required), and the **analogy of faith**, that is, the entire body of Scripture doctrine (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3b) established by the *sedes doctrinae*; for true exegesis will never conflict with the *analogy*, any more than God can conflict with God Himself or than God and His revelation to us can be at odds with one another. The proper “mind-set” (attitude) of the faithful exegete is described so strikingly, and yet so precisely, in II Corinthians 10: “*Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (v. 5).

After this insertion of the definition of and the proper place of true, genuine *dogmatics*, as well as the definition of and the proper place of true, genuine *exegesis*, we now want to repeat a previous paragraph, namely, this one:

Shortly before and then following Dr. Hoenecke’s death in 1908, the **change** began to be evident following the arrival of three new professors for the W.E.L.S. Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, seminary: John P. Koehler (served from 1900 to 1929), August Pieper (served from 1902 to 1943), and John Schaller (served from 1908 to 1920). What was the change? **The change was that *dogmatics* was demoted and *exegesis* was promoted.**

The fact and the proof of this change are supported by the following testimony:

- ✓ **Professor August Pieper** — “The Scriptures preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Therefore we want to get rid of the dogmatic authority theology entirely and immerse ourselves ever deeper in the Scriptures and pursue our study of them above all things. We know that thereby we are offering the church the best service. It has already begun to age greatly. Through new immersion in the Scriptures we can bring it

new strength, new life, new youth” (Curtis A. Jahn, Compiling Editor, *The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, N. P. H., 1997, page 91).

This is not only “double-talk;” this is sheer, complete nonsense; it is, above all, blasphemy, that is, “evil-talk” concerning **God’s** dogmatic authority theology! If a church body (W.E.L.S.) wants “to **get rid of the dogmatic authority theology entirely.**” then **all** the doctrines or teachings in God’s Word have to be thrown out. Then the Holy Ghost must be identified as a liar and a deceiver, for He is the One who moved the Apostle Paul to write down the inspired words of truth in II Timothy 3, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for DOCTRINE*” (v. 16), as well as in I Timothy 4: “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the DOCTRINE; CONTINUE IN THEM; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee*” (v. 16). Is there any passage in Scripture which instructs us “to get rid of the dogmatic authority theology entirely” (above quote from Professor A. Pieper)? What good would it do to “immerse ourselves ever deeper in the Scriptures and pursue our study of them above all things” if all the doctrines of Holy Scripture were swept aside and eliminated, such as (to mention only a few), the teachings on **the Law** (Matthew 22:36-40), on **sin** (Romans 3:20; I John 3:4; Psalm 51:5), the **Triune God** (Matthew 28:19), the **grace of God in Christ** (Romans 3:24), the **two natures** in Christ (I John 5:20; I Timothy 2:5), the **substitutionary satisfaction** of Christ to God for the world of sinners (II Corinthians 5:19, 21; Galatians 4:4-5; II Corinthians 5:15; I Timothy 2:6), God’s **objective** and **subjective justification** of sinners for Christ’s sake (II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:24, 28; 5:18-19; John 3:16-18, 36), **conversion** (John 3:3, 5-6; Ephesians 2:1-9), **sanctification** (Ephesians 2:10; John 15:1-5; James 2:26; I John 4:19), **prayer** (Psalm 50:15; Philippians 4:6-7; I John 5:14-15), **Holy Baptism** (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21), **the Lord’s Supper** (Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-29), the **invisible Church** (Ephesians 2:19-22; Luke 17:20-21; Romans 12:4-5), the **local congregation** (Matthew 18:17; Revelation 1:4; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; etc.), the **public ministry** (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3), the **second visible advent** of Christ (Acts 1:11; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 1:7); etc., etc., etc.

- ✓ **Professor John P. Koehler** — “The dominance of Dogmatics in the centuries preceding the election controversy actually put the coherent study of Scriptures largely out of business. Even where Scripture study was practiced, it bowed under the guardianship of Dame Dogmatics and her compilations so that the flow of life from the fountain

of Scripture was disturbed or even stymied” (*The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, page 92).

How could the use of dogmatics, the use of the doctrines and teachings of Scripture, even the over-use of them (if that is possible, Colossians 3:16) “actually put the coherent study of the Scriptures largely out of business”? The study of the doctrines of Scripture, especially the study of the doctrines of Law and Gospel, will actually draw a person more and more *to* the Scriptures for instruction and comfort (take, for example, Psalm 130:3-5). And, furthermore, is it not good and God-pleasing, in our study of His Word, to bow willingly to the doctrines, the teachings, of Scripture? How could such study disturb or even stymie, block, or thwart “the flow of life from the fountain of Scripture”? Such study of the doctrines of Scripture (I Timothy 4:6, 13, 16) will actually do the *opposite*; it will increase the flow of spiritual help, strength, and joy from the precious Word of God. In fact, what did the large group of newly converted believers (Acts 2) do after they were “called ...out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:10)? “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ **DOCTRINE**” (Acts 2:42). Professor Koehler, by his fruits, surely joined his fellow Wauwatosa seminary instructor, Professor A. Pieper, in showing that they were both on “the same page” in “bad-mouthing” the **doctrine** of Holy Scripture. And these two men were **seminary professors**?

- ✓ *Wisconsin Theological Quarterly* — “Every theological faculty has its particular emphasis, depending on the times and conditions in the church. Under Hoenecke we had the formative years. The great need was to make ours a truly orthodox synod, to emphasize purity of doctrine and sound Lutheran practice. By the time of Hoenecke’s death, that had been accomplished. Now the faculty [Koehler, Pieper, Schaller] saw the pendulum swinging in the other direction. They saw the danger of a dead orthodoxy in which all the right doctrines were upheld and defended against all comers, but which threatened to degenerate into a mere formal profession with the living spirit departed. The dogmatical approach threatened to take over the religious thinking. ...to say the least Dogmatics became largely an unpopular subject. ...Exegesis and Isagogics became the all-important subjects. ...Our faculty at that time stressed the historical-exegetical approach” (Vol. 60, No. 3, page 210ff.).

It was therefore not surprising that a “new Wisconsin Synod view on church and ministry” (*The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, page 92)

sprang up and was promoted, supported, defended, and taught by the three Wauwatosa seminary professors (Koehler, Pieper, and Schaller). **This “new” and different-from-Scripture “view on church and ministry” will be documented and judged righteously (John 7:24)** in a future issue of the *Concordia Lutheran*.

In the meantime, let us, in our Conference work, in our teaching, preaching, witnessing, publishing, and fellowship, by the grace of God (I Corinthians 15:10), confess with the apostle: “*We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*” (II Corinthians 13:8). This “*truth*” most certainly includes all of the doctrines of Scripture, especially the most important teaching of all, that “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19). May that “*Word of reconciliation,*” that Gospel of “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 8:9), continue to motivate us (II Corinthians 5:14), His dear “*sheep*” (John 10:27), to hear and to “*continue*” (II Timothy 3:14; John 8:31-32) to follow what He has taught us in and through His Word, petitioning Him again and again, and, at the same time, confessing to Him in the words of Psalm 25: “*Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths; lead me in Thy truth, and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day*” (vv. 4-5).

— R. J. L.

(To be continued as Part II)

## Churches in Fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

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### **Orthodox Lutheran Church of Ekaterinburg**

Ekaterinburg, Russia

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

P. O. Box 62

620088 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: lutheran@r66.ru

### **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**

Idama, Nigeria



**The Rev. Robinson Dodo, Pastor**  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

**Salem Lutheran Church**

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**The Rev. Elison B. Agborubere, Pastor**  
Thompson Compound Abalama  
Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

**St. Clement's Lutheran Church**

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**The Rev. Luckyn 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**

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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

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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

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Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 Telephone: (708) 532-4288  
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The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor  
17151 South Central Avenue  
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 (708) 532-9035  
E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

## ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Lebanon, OR 97355  
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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

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Seattle, WA 98178 Telephone: (206) 723-1078  
Sunday School & Bible Class ..... 9:00 a.m.  
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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.

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22012 Torrence Avenue

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22012 Torrence Avenue

Sauk Village, IL 60411      (708) 757-6859

**E-mail:** revbloedel@yahoo.com

### **TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

300 North Ridgeland Avenue

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**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

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## *Luther's Catechisms*

*...Luther's work  
consisted in this,*

- 1. That he brought about a general revival of the instruction in the Catechism of the ancient Church;*
- 2. That he completed it by adding the parts treating of Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper;*
- 3. That he purged its material from all manner of papal ballast;*
- 4. That he eliminated the Romish interpretation and adulteration in the interest of work-righteousness;*
- 5. That he refilled the ancient forms with their genuine Evangelical and Scriptural meaning.*

F. Bente from the *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord*