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Vol. LXII

November—December 2018

Nos. 11-12



“God sent
forth His
Son”

— Galatians 4:4





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Vol. LXII November-December 2018 Nos. 11-12

Official Organ of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

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

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

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

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

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To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

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To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

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

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

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True Thanksgiving — More than Just Talk!

“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.” And He said unto him: “Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” — Luke 17:17-19

It has been said that *gratitude* or *thankfulness* is a uniquely human emotion; and yet, when we look about in this sin-defiled and depraved world, we see precious little of it in evidence anywhere! For man by nature refuses to credit anyone but himself for the advantages he enjoys, and boasts of his own self-sufficiency, saying, “*My power and the might of **mine** hand hath gotten me this wealth*” (Deuteronomy 8:17). “I don’t NEED anybody! And I don’t OWE anybody either!” Among sinful men, true gratitude suffers all but annihilation at the hands of its chief enemy: **Selfishness** —and all the other “self”-concepts which *feed* it— self-interest, self-reliance, self-concern, and self-righteousness. For selfishness is a fruit of man’s sinful flesh which serves Satan in his evil design to destroy the whole human race forever! Yes, selfishness is a vicious form of **idolatry** in which man makes himself his own god. Paul writes to the Romans (1:20b-22) that those who elevate themselves to that lofty pedestal “*are **without excuse**, 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. Professing themselves to be wise, **they became fools!***”

On the other hand, those who by God’s grace recognize in themselves, “*that is, in [their] flesh, ...no good thing*” (Romans 7:18) that could merit His favor and gain them His blessings, those who rely not on themselves but on Jesus Christ and on His precious blood and perfect righteousness for salvation, such “converted” souls “*have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,*” the Bible says (Galatians 5:24), and by God’s grace now “*live...unto **Him** which died for them and rose again*” (II Corinthians 5:15). And they cry out with the Apostle in humble **gratitude** for their salvation: “*Thanks be unto **God** for His unspeakable Gift!*” (II Corinthians 9:15).

Indeed, we see in Jesus’ encounter with the ten lepers, **all of whom** He

miraculously healed in the very same way, that only one of them was thankful to the Savior and showed gratitude to God, which Jesus Himself identified as a manifest fruit of saving faith. Still today, it is painfully obvious that true gratitude to God is sorely lacking among many who enjoy His blessings in abundance but thanklessly take them for granted. But, by the grace of God, as was the case with the tenth leper, gratitude is clearly evident in those who trust in Jesus and sincerely appreciate God's mercy and grace to poor, undeserving sinners.

The leprosy of which the ten were healed is still today a serious and dreaded, chronic and highly infectious disease; and, in spite of the great progress of medical science in arresting it, leprosy is still very common in many parts of the world; and its scars and effects cannot be reversed. If not caught in the very early stages, leprosy wastes and deforms parts of the body, particularly the extremities and facial features, so that fingers and toes, ears and noses begin to decay on the body and finally fall off. In an untreated patient, the deterioration progresses, affecting also the voice; and the person eventually dies a horrible death. —The disease was so dreaded in early times that the Lord Himself commanded lepers to be quarantined and to identify themselves to others “*afar off*” already by crying “Unclean, unclean!” These Old Testament laws and restrictions are recorded in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14.

Ten such lepers met Jesus “*as He entered into a certain village, ...and they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’*” In their hopeless condition, they turned to **Jesus**, whose wondrous miracles of healing had become the talk of the country; and they begged His compassion and help. Whether their cry was one of faith in Him as the Messiah of God we are not told —for NINE of them at any rate. Only the tenth leper was identified by Jesus Himself as having “*faith*” in Him. But Jesus did not always make faith a **pre-condition** for helping people, as so many of the *charismatics* do today. For we know that the **chief purpose** of His miracles was to show that He was truly the Son of God and the Savior of the world, “*to the intent [they] may believe*” on Him (John 11:15).

And so, “*when He saw them, He said unto them, ‘Go show yourselves unto the priests,’*” [in other words, ‘Go to the priests in accordance with God's regulation in Leviticus 14, and have them **re-examine** your condition.’] “*And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed.*” They no doubt believed in Jesus' ability to heal them because they didn't argue with His order, neither did they demand immediate healing

BEFORE going to the priests. And “*as they went,*” as they turned and started out on their way to see the priests, the dreaded disease suddenly **disappeared**, and they were completely **healed**! It was as if they had never had the horrible plague and suffered its damaging deformities in the first place!!

And yet, in spite of this miraculous cure of the incurable, yes, in spite of the fact that Jesus had, in a very real sense, given back life to the “walking dead,” ONLY ONE OUT OF THE TEN turned back to thank Him—a **Samaritan** of all people! “*And Jesus answering said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger!’*” this “alien from the commonwealth of Israel and stranger from the covenants of promise,” as Paul describes those who are outside the kingdom of God’s grace (Ephesians 2:12).

What about those nine? Why didn’t they return to thank the Savior?? They were **Jews**, who had been received into the kingdom of God’s grace by the Old Testament sacrament of *circumcision*; they were heirs of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promise of the **Savior to come**! They were members of the true visible church at that time, the custodian of the *Oracles of God* (Romans 3:2), “*Moses and the Prophets*” (Luke 16:29, 31), the Messianic Gospel of salvation! How was it that they, of all people, showed **no gratitude whatever** for the Lord’s gracious blessings—yea, even for this highly visible and obviously beneficial blessing of **healing**??

Those nine were just like their forefathers down through the whole Old Testament, who received the Lord’s blessings in abundance, blessings both temporal and spiritual, but showed **no appreciation** for them whatever! The Children of Israel were, by and large, selfish and ungrateful—good at receiving, at taking, and at insisting on God’s gifts, but oh so **neglectful** in rendering Him due **thanks** for His mercy!! Instead of opening their mouths to praise Him, they murmured and complained, flagrantly disobeyed His Commandments, and spurned His longsuffering mercy and grace to them! And the Lord had to tell them through His Prophet Isaiah, “*The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but **Israel** doth not know! **My people** doth not consider!*” (Isaiah 1:3). But the saddest fact of all was that they had rejected **Him** and His **grace**, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, particularly in chapter 4, and that their callous ingratitude was just an outward sign of their **unbelief** (v. 11; cf. also 3:19)! For the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:21 calls unthankfulness a heathen trait, certainly not characteristic of Christians!

And right here is where you and I have to take a good look at ourselves to see how much **we** appreciate God's manifold blessings to **us**! For aren't **we** unthankful and ungrateful too?? Don't **we** often receive not only His temporal but particularly His spiritual blessings to us without rendering Him due thanks and praise?? O, let us be **warned** by the ingratitude of those nine ungrateful lepers! For anyone who is **deliberately** thankless and inappreciative of the Lord's blessings, especially of His gift of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, such a person is **no Christian**!! But even though we find ourselves, in the weakness of our sinful flesh, not as grateful as we **should** be, not as thankful as we **ought to** be for God's "*unspeakable Gift*" of Christ, our Savior, and the truth of His precious Word, we dare not despair; but we **should rather** make appropriate use of the time of grace remaining to us by sincerely repenting of our ingratitude and indifference toward His merciful and gracious blessings, and by "*tak[ing] heed, lest [we] fall*" (I Corinthians 10:12) into the soul-destroying pathways of selfishness, self-righteousness, and pride and callously forget our need for a Savior and who that Savior is!

But now, as our positive example of truly Christian gratitude and thanksgiving, let us examine the actions of the tenth leper who was healed by Jesus to see how *gratitude to God* is **clearly evident** in those who trust in Him and sincerely appreciate His mercy and grace to poor undeserving sinners. The tenth leper, "*when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving His thanks; and he was a Samaritan.*"

As we noted before, this Samaritan was a spiritual "*stranger*," deprived of the full truth of God's Word in a *heterodox* communion and thus held back from the full enjoyment of the Lord's blessings. And yet, by the "fortunate inconsistency" that there can indeed be true believers in heterodox churches, people who by God's grace personally reject the soul-destroying errors of the false prophets who are their teachers and cling in faith to **Jesus** —yes, by the smallest vestige of the pure Gospel, the Holy Spirit of God had worked **faith** in the Samaritan's heart, faith which Jesus Himself acknowledged, saying: "*Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.*"

And, though weak and poorly nourished, his was a **living** faith, which showed itself in the fruit of **true gratitude** to his dear Savior — gratitude not only of the heart, but of the lips and actions. For he first of all "*turned back*," went out-of-his-way, as it were, and took special

time and effort to show his **deep appreciation** to Jesus for His blessings. This in itself is an example to us, who often find ourselves so “busy” that we seem to have no time for Jesus, no time to turn away from our daily routine to serve Him and His dear church in ways which both we and others can SEE! —And then, with his newly-restored and strengthened vocal cords, he **glorified God** “*with a loud voice.*” He didn’t just mumble and sing his praises halfheartedly, as even some Christians do in the hymns, liturgy and prayers of the divine services of God’s House; but he was so joyful, so thankful, so overflowing with gratitude to God, that he just couldn’t keep quiet! And the Lord’s Psalmist exhorts **us** to do the **same** in **our** worship of praise and thanksgiving, saying: “*O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things! ...Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth! Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise!*” (Psalm 98).

Think of it, we New Testament Christians have so much to be thankful for in the fulfillment of all God’s promises to us, for our election to eternal life, for our conversion to faith by the Holy Ghost through the precious Means of Grace, for our preservation in the faith, and for our sanctification of life, all by those same means! —And don’t forget all the advantages **we** have as members of our precious Conference, which the poor Samaritan lacked, **our** advantages as members of an **orthodox fellowship**: God’s Word in its truth and purity, both in doctrine and in practice; pastors who nourish us diligently and faithfully in that Word and “*watch for [our] souls*” (Hebrews 13:17), the Holy Sacraments administered according to Christ’s own institution; and the “*good and pleasant*” (Psalm 133:1) fellowship we enjoy with likeminded brethren, kept in the true “*unity of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 4:3)! These are blessings of priceless value, blessings to **get excited about** and to **be thankful for**! —People scream and yell in delight and shout for joy at the chance to play games on television for mere money and earthly prizes! Can we do LESS out of gratitude for treasures that endure forever??

And this Samaritan also “*fell down on his face at [Jesus’] feet giving Him thanks.*” He threw himself down before Jesus as His willing and humble **servant**, ready to back up his words with **deeds** of loving and grateful service. There is also where you and I should take this tenth leper for our example, abounding more and more in our cheerful willingness, in our eagerness even, to back up our “thanksgiving” with “**thanksgiving**” in deeds of Christian personal service to our Savior and His dear church —not only when things **NEED** to be done, but also in volunteering our time, effort, possessions, facilities, and energies to be

of grateful service **routinely** to Him and to one another —so that more than one-out-of-ten of us is an **obviously-grateful** recipient of His blessings! And let us perform that service “*not with eye-service as men-pleasers,*” Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:6, “*but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God **from the heart,***” out of gratitude to Him who first loved us, gave Himself a ransom for our sins, saved us by His grace and cleansed us from the leprosy of our sins with His holy, precious blood, and made us heirs with Him of everlasting life in heaven. Should we not therefore also sing with “gusto” in the words of the hymnwriter, exhorting one another to grateful thanksgiving for His abiding blessings:

*Now thank we all our God
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom His world rejoices;
who from our mother’s arms
hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today!*

(TLH 36, 1)

— D. T. M.



True Preparation for Christ's Advent

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”

—Matthew 3:3

When John the Baptist began his public ministry, a great deal of excitement was generated around the speculation that he might be the long-awaited Messiah (the Christ). And while he made it clear, over and over again, that he was *not* the Messiah (Luke 3:15–16; John 1:19–27; 3:28), John’s work was very closely connected to the work of Christ, as had been foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. By inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Prophet Isaiah wrote: *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it’”* (40:3–5; compare with Luke 3:4–6). Through the Prophet Malachi the Lord declared: *“Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me”* (3:1; compare with Mark 1:2). And in the last two verses of Malachi, which are also the last two verses of the Old Testament, we find this prophecy: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers”* (4:5–6; compare with Luke 1:17). Though he was not a resurrected or reincarnated Elijah (John 1:21), John the Baptist did come *“in the spirit and power of Elias”* (Luke 1:17), and was the *“Elijah”* foretold in Malachi 4:5–6, as Jesus says in Matthew 11:13–14.

Since it was the divinely-appointed mission of John the Baptist to prepare the people for the ministry of Christ, and since the Lord praised the way that John carried out that work (Matthew 11:9–11), we can certainly learn important lessons from what the Bible tells us about how John prepared the people for the Messiah, and then apply those lessons to our own preparations as we look forward to celebrating Christ’s coming into the world as a baby in Bethlehem during the Advent/Christmas season.

Both in Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 40:4) and in New Testament fulfillment (Luke 3:5), the preparatory work of John the Baptist was figuratively described as including: 1) raising valleys, 2) lowering mountains and hills, and 3) smoothing and straightening places that were rough and crooked. The *raising of valleys* is usually regarded as the preaching the **Gospel** to the contrite—thus raising up with the promises of God’s grace those who are low and despondent in recognition of their sinful unworthiness (cf. Psalm 51). John did this when he identified Jesus as “*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29) and when he proclaimed “*the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*” (Mark 1:4). The *lowering of mountains and hills* is usually understood as the preaching of the **Law** (as a **mirror**) to the proud and self-righteous—thus demolishing their high estimation of themselves and humbling them before the Lord. John did this when he told the Pharisees and Sadducees: “*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ...The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire*” (Matthew 3:7, 10). The *smoothing of rough places* and the *straightening of crooked places* is normally taken as the use of the **Law** (as a **rule**) for the penitent—thus directing them to turn from their old fleshly ways and walk in newness of life out of love for the Savior. John did this when he spoke to the people about bringing forth fruits of faith that would demonstrate the sincerity of their repentance (Luke 3:8–14). In short, the work of John the Baptist consisted of powerful **Law and Gospel preaching**. John’s ultimate goal was to direct the people to Christ as their Savior (proclaiming the *Gospel* to them); but to prepare them for that, the *Law* first needed to be thoroughly applied.

We Lutherans know well that the proper preparation for the *Gospel* comes through the proper understanding of God’s holy *Law*. “*The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*” (Galatians 3:24). So then preparing ourselves for the joyous, Gospel-centered celebration of Christ’s first visible advent during the Advent/Christmas season, it is important that we take to heart what the Law of God says to each one of us—how the Law so thoroughly exposes our deep sinfulness, clearly testifies to the punishment that we deserve (eternal hell-fire), and unequivocally declares our complete inability to save ourselves by our own efforts, works, or merits. “*We know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His*

sight” (Romans 3:19–20). The heart that has been thus properly prepared by the Law will know that there is no hope of salvation in the Law; and then the Gospel’s declaration of free and total forgiveness through Jesus’ blood and righteousness can be rightly appreciated and received as the sweetest, most valuable message in all the world. And that is what makes the focus upon Jesus’ birth at Christmas time such a joyous celebration for Christians!

When the Law of God has been thoroughly understood, then Christ can rightly be seen as the only Helper for man’s most serious need, the need for forgiveness—for Christ is the only Savior of sinful mankind. Sadly, Jesus was not readily accepted as the Redeemer of the world by so many of the Jews of His day because He was not the kind of Messiah that they thought they really needed the most. Being deceived by their work-righteous religious leaders, and chafing under the oppression of the Roman government, the unbelieving Jews thought that they could attain heaven by their own works (Matthew 19:16–20) and wanted the Messiah to be an *earthly* king (John 6:14–15) who would put food in their bellies (John 6:26). Similarly, the modernists of today believe that the key to having a good relationship with God and gaining entrance into heaven is to be “a good person.” Hence, they look to Jesus only as a great man, a moralist, a courageous promoter of self-sacrificing love who left an example for all people to follow so that they may attain God’s favor through their own works of love. It is, therefore, crucial to understand from the Law of God that we sinful human beings are completely unable to save ourselves, or even to contribute in the least bit to our own salvation; and that if we would be judged on the basis of God’s Law, we would all fall under the curse of everlasting damnation. “*As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them*” (Galatians 3:10).

Thankfully, “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13). Yes, the eternal Son of God came into the world as a true human being; and, as our Substitute, He perfectly fulfilled God’s Law and suffered in our place the pains of damnation—“*the curse of the Law*” that we deserve by our sins. Thus Christ fully atoned for the sins of all mankind; and through faith in Him, we receive the forgiveness of all our sins and everlasting salvation in heaven. It is that *Gospel* of God’s great love for us in Christ (*not the Law*) that moves us to love the Lord in return.

And yet there is an important connection between the Law working effectively as a mirror and the love that is produced by the Gospel. Explaining why those who felt their sinful unworthiness were more eager for the Savior's mercy than the self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus said: "*They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick*" (Mark 2:17). If a person does not recognize his sickness, then the physician's offer of healing will sound unimportant and unnecessary. But after the mirror of God's Law has revealed just how serious and deadly our spiritual sickness truly is, then the total and complete healing wrought for us by our *spiritual* Physician can rightly be appreciated. Accordingly, if we consider ourselves to be basically "good people," as the Pharisees considered themselves to be, then the saving work of Jesus will hold little value for us. But if we regard ourselves to be *the chief of sinners*, as the Apostle Paul considered himself to be, then the grace of God in Christ will be most precious to us (I Timothy 1:12–17)!

Jesus emphasized that same point in His words to Simon the Pharisee, as this is recorded in Luke chapter 7, where we read: "*Jesus answering said unto him, 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.' And he saith, 'Master, say on.'* *'There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most?'* *Simon answered and said, 'I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most.'* *And He said unto him, 'Thou hast rightly judged. ...To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little'"* (vv. 40–43, 47). It is the *Law* that shows us how great our spiritual debt to the Lord is—a debt that is so immense and heavy that there is no way that we could ever satisfy it. When that debt is rightly recognized for what it is, then the Gospel's promise of complete forgiveness of that debt will fill the penitent sinner with love and gratitude toward his gracious Lord, which will also then cause fruits of love (good works) to abound (vv. 44–46).

After the *Law* has done its work as a *mirror*, and after the *Gospel* has been received in a believing heart through the gracious and powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, then it is important for the Christian to have the *Law* as a *rule* applied to his life—being instructed in the way that the Lord wants him to put his love and gratitude to the Savior into practice through the performance of God-pleasing works (I John 4:19; 5:3). John the Baptist did this very thing when he applied the Law directly to the lives of those who came to hear him preach, telling them: "*'Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.'* *...And the people asked him, saying, 'What*

*shall we do then?’ He answereth and saith unto them, ‘He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.’ Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, ‘Master, what shall we do?’ And he said unto them, ‘Exact no more than that which is appointed you.’ And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ And he said unto them, ‘Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages’” (Luke 3:8, 10–14). Note: When the Law of God is thus used as a *rule*, it can also at the same time serve as a *mirror*, since the Christians’ best efforts to follow the Law will always come up short of that perfect standard because of their sinful flesh (Cf. Romans 7:14–25).*

As John the Baptist properly applied Law and Gospel in his work of preparing the way for the Lord Jesus, we should in like manner apply Law and Gospel to ourselves for a profitable celebration of Christ’s advent (His coming in the flesh as our Redeemer). May we always accurately see our sinful, wretched condition in the mirror of God’s Law, truly rejoice in the Advent-Gospel of God’s grace—*“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (I Timothy 1:15)—and seek to show forth His praises in our lives (I Peter 2:9) as we await His second visible advent in glory on the Last Day (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Ye sons of men, oh hearken;
 your heart and mind prepare.
 to hail th’ Almighty Savior,
 O sinners, be your care.
 He who of grace alone
 our Life and Light was given,
 the promised Lord from heaven,
 unto our world is shown.

Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus;
 turn not from me aside;
 and grant that I receive Thee
 this blessed Advent-tide.
 From stall and manger low
 come Thou to dwell within me;
 loud praises will I sing Thee
 and forth Thy glory show. Amen.

(TLH 75, vv. 1, 4)

—P. E. B.

The Names of the Christchild from Isaiah's Prophecy

"For unto us a child is born..." —Isaiah 9:6

In "A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism — a Handbook of Christian Doctrine" (St. Louis: C.P.H., 1943), under the Second Article of the Apostle's Creed, we have this question: "Why do you believe that Jesus Christ is true God?" The answer begins with: "I believe that Jesus Christ is true God because the Scriptures ascribe to Him — A. *Divine Names* (I John 5:20; John 20:28; Matthew 17:5; Romans 9:5)." It may be noted that the four proof texts cited are all taken from the New Testament. Each one is a powerful testimony to the fact that our Savior is true, essential God. An excellent text *not* cited occurs very early in the New Testament Canon order: "*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). That very first divine name ascribed to the Savior is quoted as "*spoken of the Lord by the prophet*" (Matthew 1:22) in **Isaiah 7:14**. A few chapters after this prophetic text, the Lord speaks again of the coming Messiah with *five* Divine Names! It is upon this text that we are concentrating our study as we consider the names of the Christchild from Isaiah's prophecy, "*For 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, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*" (9:6).

In the original Hebrew the first word is "*a child*." What is so important about "*a child*" that the emphasis is so direct and pointed, riveting the reader's attention? This is revealed as the identity of the child is proclaimed. The first fact is simple: "*Unto us a child is born*." The prophecy is so sure that it is spoken as having already occurred! The next phrase speaks the same way: "*Unto us a son is given*." Mark well that the child, a son, is born "*unto us*," given "*unto us*." The child is not simply a gracious gift to two people or to a family, but to **us**. Does this refer to the Jews only? No. As a matter of fact, only a few verses earlier the prophet speaks to the sad spiritual condition of the Jews as a "*people*," a condition which certainly applies to the Gentiles also: "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell*

in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isaiah 9:2). Matthew records this text as a direct fulfillment of the Lord's prophetic ministry (4:12-16). Matthew summarizes what Jesus proclaimed in bringing light to all: "*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'*" (4:17). Moreover, Simeon calls the Christchild "[God's] salvation... *prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles*" (Luke 2:31-32). The enlightenment which the Savior brought is needed by all men, Jews and Gentiles alike. As Gentiles, we are described as those who walk "*in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*" (Ephesians 4:17c-18).

The child, a son, is given "*unto us,*" all human beings, the entire sinful, fallen race! In Him "*the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*" (Titus 2:11). For the child is given to the totally undeserving, those entirely guilty before God: "*Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ...For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:19, 23). "*The fulness of the time was come*" (Galatians 4:4), some 700 years after this prophecy, in David's ancestral home — the little town of Bethlehem. David's Son and David's Lord (Cf. Matthew 22:42-46) is born in time, an event which divides human history (B.C. and A.D.). His office is designated by the phrase "*and the government shall be upon His shoulder.*" What government? The first verse after our title-text contains the answer: "*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 forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this*" (v. 7). His is an everlasting rule, established with judgment and with justice, upon the zealous work of the Lord of Hosts, as a kingdom of peace, forever and ever! It is the fulfillment of God's promise to David (II Samuel 7:12-17), as the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary: "*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke 1:31-33). This is the very kingdom the Lord proclaimed in all His preaching regarding repentance and faith. This also fulfilled a

direct prophecy of the work of the Messiah in the establishing of His spiritual kingdom (Isaiah 61:1ff.) as He said in the synagogue in Nazareth: “*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.’ And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, ‘This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears’”* (Luke 4:18-21). His kingdom of grace leads to a kingdom of glory everlasting, entirely a gift wrought for sinners by Himself, a child, a son, who bears the entire burden on His shoulder. He does it all as the God-Man, David’s Son and David’s Lord.

The names He is given are given to us to use as names which God Himself reveals in His inerrant Word. His Names are descriptive of His office and work, as well as His theanthropic Person (God-Man). *“His name shall be called Wonderful.”* He is a wonder, a miracle; and He is full of wonders. He Himself **is** a wonder: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (I Timothy 3:16a). *“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9). He is also full of wonders, for He is God, *“who alone doeth great wonders; for His mercy endureth for ever”* (Psalm 136:4). He is full of miracles which confirm His Word as signs (cf. Mark 16:20) and which manifest forth the divine glory of God’s only-begotten Son incarnate (cf. John 1:14, 2:11) to serve the Gospel (cf. John 20:30-31).

His name is also *Counsellor*. The root of this word means “to deliberate, to lay a scheme, to form a design, including also the purpose of doing anything; it implies reflection, skill and wisdom” (Wilson’s *Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 98). Isaiah asks: *“Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?”* (40:13-14). Right before the Apostle quotes this text from Isaiah 40, he declares: *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”* (Romans 11:33). Yes, *“the Lord of hosts...is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working”* (Isaiah 28:29). In Christ *“are hid all the treasures of wisdom and*

knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), as was foretold: “*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*” (Isaiah 11:2). He fulfills the eternal purpose and plan of the Holy Trinity, using His omniscient wisdom in direct application to achieve the goal as the “*Author and Finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2). His Word stands ever “*able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15). The Savior offers direct counsel to the specific needs of every sinner. For example, He directs the Laodiceans: “*I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see*” (Revelation 3:18). He offers such counsel “*because He knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man*” (John 2:24c-25). He employs His perfect wisdom and omniscience for the salvation of mankind.

His Name is “*the Mighty God*.” This is not an honorific title. This is not hyperbole. This is **fact**. As cited above (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), Jesus is “*God with us*,” “*Emmanuel*.” This enables Him to do His Work: To render obedience sufficient for all men (Romans 5:19), to ransom all from sin with a sacrifice of sufficient worth (Mark 10:45), and to defeat both death (II Timothy 1:10) and Satan (Hebrews 2:14) for us (I Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:33-39). Yes, “*He is able also to save them to the uttermost that came unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them*” (Hebrews 7:25). “*The Mighty God*,” the Lord of glory, died for us, shedding His blood to pay the full price of our redemption: “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*” (I John 1:7b). “*And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2).

He is “*the Everlasting Father*.” This name should not be abused to erase the proper distinction of the *persons* in the Holy Trinity. The Son of God is not the *person* of the Father, although one in essence, for He is the Only-Begotten *Son* of the Father. The name here given brings out several key characteristics of the Messiah: He is “*everlasting*,” according to His divine nature. He is the “*high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity*” (Isaiah 57:15; cf. John 1:1-3). In His saving work He is a Father to sinners: “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him*” (Psalm 103:13). This merciful action reveals Him as our Redeemer: “*Doubtless Thou art our Father. Though*

Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting” (Isaiah 63:16).

Finally, we come to the Name “*the Prince of Peace.*” He not only preached the Gospel of Peace. His work was all about bringing “*peace on earth, good will toward men*” (Luke 2:14). The price of peace was costly, a price He alone could pay. And pay it He did, in full; “*for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight*” (Colossians 1:19-22). This name bears out His work: “*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, 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. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

Our Savior sets up His rule as Prince in the heart by His Word of Peace, the Gospel, whereby God works saving faith in sinners: “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Romans 5:1-2). The Gospel of Peace is the good news of the gracious salvation which the Prince of Peace wrought with His own blood: “*But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*” (Romans 5:8-11). This peace cost sinners nothing. It is a gift paid for by the Prince: “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission*

of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:23-28).

The names given to us by God for His Messiah here in Isaiah 9:6 are objectively true. Even if no one believed that this child, conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, this son sent from God, is what these names declare, all of it would remain true: *“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid! Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is written: ‘That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings and mightest overcome when Thou art judged’” (Romans 3:3-4).*

Do you receive these names, as they are given, to the saving of your soul, by the grace and power of God alone? May God move you ever to confess from genuine, God-wrought, Gospel-faith in the heart what Peter did so long ago: *“Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69).*

—E. J. W.



Amending Our Sinful Life in the New Year

“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 3:13-14

As we look back on the year 2018, each of us, according to the New Man within us, will humbly confess to God with Jacob of old: *“I am not worthy of the **least** of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant!”* (Genesis 32:10). For, in spite of our many sins and shortcomings by which we transgressed His holy Law and earned for ourselves His righteous wrath and displeasure, God in His mercy for Jesus’ our Savior’s sake never failed to open His gracious hand to us anew every morning with innumerable blessings both temporal and spiritual. And yet, because of our sinful flesh, even we, who are His adopted children by faith in His Son, returned Him evil for good at every turn: Neglect for His faithfulness, indifference for His grace, and ingratitude for His bountiful goodness! As we review that miserable track record, we penitently thank God, that where our sin abounded, His grace to us much more abounded, so that, as we cling alone to Jesus’ perfect merits as our Substitute under the Law, we have the Lord’s own assurance that our sins have been forgiven and that all our filthiness is covered by our Savior’s righteousness.

Moreover, as we look ahead to the new year before us, *“the love of Christ [constrains] us”* with the help of His Holy Spirit to want to amend our sinful life and, out of gratitude for His grace, to live ever better *“unto Him which died for us and rose again.”* This sincere desire on our part is NOT what worldly people commonly refer to as a “New Year’s resolution,” however; for the best-intentioned resolutions of unbelievers to “straighten out their lives” and “get right with God” are doomed to failure from the outset! Why?? Because *“they that are in the flesh cannot please God,”* the Bible tells us (Romans 8:8), and *“without faith it is impossible to please Him”* (Hebrews 11:6). Not only is their immediate future here in this world headed for disappoint-

ment, regret, and even despair, but their real, long-term future after this present life is over will be one of everlasting shame, contempt and punishment in hell!

For us Christians, however, even short-term resolves have their proper place, PROVIDED that they express our earnest intention, with the aid of God's Holy Spirit, to bring forth "*fruits meet for repentance*" in our lives as fruit and evidence of our faith to the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus. For such short-term "resolutions" stem from our **first and foremost concern** —concern for our **eternal** welfare. And, in the title-text of our article, the Apostle Paul addresses that **long-term** concern and the resolve that flows from it, not only at the turn of the year, but every day of our lives, namely, our *Christian* resolve: To strive onward to our *heavenly* goal. We carry out this earnest resolve by "*forgetting those things which are behind*" and by "*reaching forth unto those things which are before.*"

Paul writes in the verse just before our title-text: "*Not as though I had already **attained**, either were already **perfect**...*" Even this apostle of the Lord Jesus, with his heroic faith, his self-sacrificing life under the direst persecution, and his diligent service of love, both to his Lord and to his fellow-Christians— even the **Apostle Paul** had to confess that he had neither laid hold yet on the ultimate prize of his Christian race, nor was he at all perfect in his life of sanctification. And who of us would be so bold as to claim our level of sanctification to have equaled that which, by the grace of God, Paul achieved in his life as Jesus' apostle?? No, we recognize with Paul that our sins of the past have **held us back** like weighted shoes in our race for the heavenly prize that awaits us. Our sins of commission, whereby we have *done* that which in His holy Law our God *forbids*, and our sins of omission, whereby we have *neglected to do* those things which He *requires* of us —ALL these manifold transgressions are the product of our ***old sinful flesh*** which clings to us like a monkey on our back and "*wars against*" our New Man of faith, seeking to bring him down! Thus Paul says of himself in Romans chapter 7: "*The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. ...O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!?*"

Furthermore, our progress in sanctification of life, our steady headway in the race that is set before us, has been severely hurt and hampered by **lack of growth** in the past. Just as a marathon runner nourishes his body with proper food and then exercises it regularly to tone it up for

the rigors of competition, so we Christians *are to take care to nourish and exercise our souls* for our spiritual race and for our ongoing battle against Satan, who seeks constantly to trip us up along the way and to rob us of our prize! —Yet, with Paul, we freely admit that our spiritual conditioning is far from perfect, that we are far from being ideally **fit**-for-survival in this life-and-death struggle! For we have not permitted the Lord's Word to dwell in us as richly as we should have (Colossians 3:16), having often relegated it to some secondary place on our list of life's priorities; and we have not grown as we could have in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, as the Apostle Peter exhorts us to do (II Peter 3:18). And so our Christian life and conduct shows weaknesses and gaps and scars which prevent us from walking in the *Spirit* as we should (Galatians 5:16, 25), from bringing forth abundantly the *fruit* that we should (John 15:8), and from letting our light of faith *shine* before men as we should (Matthew 5:16), as a beacon to the glory of God.

*“Not as though I ...were already **perfect**,”* says Paul. There is almost nothing as damaging in athletic competition as over-confidence, or, as in the case of our **Christian race**, self-confidence and pride. And yet our flesh just **loves** to vaunt itself and ascribe to itself strength of faith, steadfastness, knowledge, yea, even perfection! And so we desperately need to hear the warning voice of our spiritual “Coach,” the Lord Himself, through His Apostle, saying: *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he **fall**!”* And Paul writes to the Galatians, chapter six: *“If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”*

Now all these things that in the past have hindered our growth in sanctification, have held us back like weighted shoes in our Christian race *“for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,”* —our many sins and shortcomings first of all, our lack of spiritual growth, and our fleshly over-confidence in our personal steadfastness— ALL these things we are to *“forget,”* the apostle instructs us. And how can we do that? How can we truly *“forget those things which are **behind**”*? Why, God in heaven, for Jesus' sake, has Himself already **forgiven them** and has cast them into the depths of the sea. Yes, the Lord has put all our sins behind **His** back and has **forgotten them**; for He assures us through the Prophet Jeremiah: *“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* (31:34). And the Apostle Paul, as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, urges **us** to do likewise, leaving us his own example; for he writes in verse 13 of our title-text: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have **apprehended** [that is, **laid hold** on the prize],*

but this one thing I do: Forgetting those things which are behind..." O, may God by His Holy Spirit enable us, because of His perfect forgiveness of all our sins of the past, to put them now behind us by SINCERE REPENTANCE, surely not just sweeping them "under the rug" as if they were "no big deal" in the first place, but throwing them off as useless "dead weight" which we abhor and want to be rid of, so that we can continue our Christian race unhindered!

But now the Apostle points out that merely "*forgetting*" the sins of the past is not sufficient for the attainment of the prize. We ought ever to be "*reaching forth unto those things which are before*," he tells us. "*I follow after*," he writes in verse 12, "*if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*." That word "apprehend" means simply to "grab hold of" something. As we run our Christian race, so that we may one day *lay our hands on* the prize of our **salvation** (for which purpose the Lord Jesus *laid His precious hands on us* and snatched us from the very jaws of Satan and from everlasting death), we are to "*follow after*," that is, we are compelled by His great love, in true faith, to follow in Jesus' steps on the road to heaven. Now, as we noted before, we can never achieve perfection in this endeavor, even though the Lord requires it of us, saying, "*Be ye therefore perfect!*" But that is certainly no excuse for falling short of the mark! On the contrary, we are to "*follow after*" as does a little child who tags along behind his father through drifts of snow. His little feet on his short legs cannot possibly match his father's stride, and he often stumbles and falls; but, if he is not to be left behind, he must continue to strive on and on, after being set back on his feet by his dear daddy, to fit his little boots into the prints ahead of him. "*For even hereunto were ye called*," writes Peter in his first Epistle, "*because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps*" (v. 21).

And that "following after" is no easy task. It takes fervent, zealous effort on the Christian's part, by God's enabling grace alone, to take up our crosses, whatever they may be, and follow our Lord Jesus, to achieve real progress, real steps forward in sanctification. As you, therefore, "*reach forth*," stretch forward as a runner does when nearing the finish line in a race, never forget who it is that enables you so to run; for the Bible tells you: "*It is GOD which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). Make it, therefore, your constant prayer that the Lord grant you a rich measure of His grace, that you continue your race without faltering, "*reaching forth unto those things which are before*," those promised blessings which still lie ahead for you as a Christian, not

becoming “weary in well-doing,” but rather “*abounding more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment*” based on His precious Word alone, and abounding also in love and good works toward your Lord, His precious Church, and one another; “*for in due season,*” writes the Apostle, “*we shall reap, if we faint not.*”

“*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,*” Paul tells us. We must sprint onward, unrelenting, toward the finish-line that is even now before our very eyes; for the prize is already held out to us, having been purchased and won for us by our dear Savior, our Champion, our Hero, and our faithful Coach. Earthly runners press on to obtain a “*corruptible crown,*” Paul writes to the Corinthians (I, 9:25), a mere wreath or garland of olive leaves (the customary reward in those days); and that victor’s wreath soon dried up and crumbled away, leaving only memories of the prize. But **OUR prize**, laid up for us in the heavens, is incorruptible, “*a crown of glory that fadeth not away*” (I Peter 5:4). —And even though we must “*follow after,*” “*press toward the mark,*” and “*reach forth unto those things which are before*” with conscious effort and zealous work, nevertheless (unlike earthly prizes which are earned in competition), that “*crown of life*” is a reward of God’s PURE GRACE in Christ Jesus, which we merely “*apprehend*” or lay hold on **by faith** in our Savior. Boasting and pride are excluded when we “*finally overcome and obtain the victory*” (Luther); for our victory is really the victory of **Jesus**, “*who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” —And the Lord Jesus Himself, speaking through the Apostle John in the Book of the Revelation, adds concerning our own sharing of His glory as “*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:*” “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.*”

Oh, what a **prize**, what a **goal**! There can be no higher reward! This is the glorious future that awaits us by God’s wondrous grace in Christ Jesus —not a future of uncertainty and doubt, not a future of failure and despair (such as the children of this world have to face each and every day of their lives in spite of their “New Year’s resolutions”)! And as we now get a “fresh start,” as it were, in our **race** as Christians, spurred on by the exhortations of God’s Holy Word and motivated **ONLY** by the love of Christ which purchased our inheritance, let us remember our resolve, our Christian “resolution” for this New Year of 2019, namely, by His grace to **strive onward to our heavenly goal**, by “*forgetting*

*those things which are **behind**,” and by “reaching forth unto those things which are **before**.” Yea, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto **Jesus**, the Author and Finisher of our faith!” (Hebrews 12:1-2).*

May He graciously grant to each and every one of us such happy, yea, unspeakably joyful anticipation of His **abiding blessings**, “*not by works of righteousness which **WE** have done, but according to **His mercy**”* (Titus 3:5) which endureth forever in and through His Son, so that, **by confidence in His merits alone**, we may “*apprehend*” or lay hold on the precious “*prize*” of His grace, both in the New Year now upon us, and in all eternity, for His blessed Name’s sake!

—D. T. M.

Mission Appeal for our Brethren from Afar at Christmastime

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

— I John 4:11

Christmas is the special time when we remember, take note of, and focus on **God’s unearned, unmerited, and undeserved love toward us sinners and toward the whole world of sinners when He “sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [the complete ransom, the total payment] for our sins”** (I John 4:9-10), “*that whosoever believeth in Him [the Son of God, Christ Jesus] should not perish, but have everlasting life. For 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 [Christ Jesus] is **not condemned**, but he that believeth not is **condemned already** because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John 3:16b-18).

At Christmas, we also remember, take note of, and focus on **God’s “great” faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23) in keeping all of His promises**, especially those promises which, in the Old Testament, pointed to

the certain promised coming of “*her Seed*” (Genesis 3:15; see also Isaiah 7:14), pointed to the certain promised coming of the “*Seed*” of Abraham (Genesis 22:18a), that One “*Seed*,” Christ (Galatians 3:16), who would bring blessings to “*all the nations of the earth*” (Genesis 22:18b), which would include and has most certainly included each of us. Those blessings **have come** to us and to “*the whole world*” (I John 2:2) of sinners because of God’s first, never-changing, ever certain promise of a Savior in Genesis 3:15, following the tragic fall into “*sin*” (Romans 5:12), and those blessings **continue to come** to us and to all other sinners because “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing [not charging] their trespasses unto them. ... For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin [Christ was sinless], that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [in Christ]*” (II Corinthians 5:19a and 21). So, it remains everlastingly true: “*Neither is there salvation in any other [than Christ Jesus], for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

Yes indeed: Christmas reveals to us again and again that “*all the promises of God in Him [in the Son of God, Christ Jesus] are ‘Yea’ [Yes], and in Him [in Christ Jesus] ‘Amen!’*” (II Corinthians 1:20a). When God makes promises, He always keeps them; He is a faithful God; He always does what He says He will do, whether immediately or at some future time. “*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them [to set them free] that were under the Law [under “the curse of the Law” – Galatians 3:13]*” (Galatians 4:4-5a). Ponder what God had the Prophet Isaiah write down by “*inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16) in Isaiah 9: “*For 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, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*” (v. 6). When God makes a promise, that promise, as far as God is concerned, is already carried out; it is already fulfilled, even though, in time, that fulfillment is not yet evident. God has always been and will always remain “*a God of truth and without iniquity*” (Deuteronomy 32:4b). What a great, daily, and priceless blessing this is for us, “*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26), as we trust in, rely upon, and confide in those sure promises of God, “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:29).

Now, “*beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one an-*

other” (I John 4:11). On account of God’s great love in Christ Jesus toward us and toward the whole world, we must, according to our “*new man*” (Ephesians 4:24), in great gratitude for that love of God in Christ Jesus toward us and toward all, share and show that love with and to others, “*especially unto them who are of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10b).

This coming Christmas is an “*opportunity*” (Galatians 6:10a) for us, in thanks to our God for His perfect love toward us in Christ Jesus, to remember, in “*love*” (John 13:34), to “*serve*” (Galatians 5:13b) our dear brethren from afar in **RUSSIA** with our prayers (Philippians 4:6a), our correspondence, and our gifts, as we are able (II Corinthians 8:12). Following are the very latest updates from Pastor Roman G. Schurganoff:

- As a result of the mugging (II Timothy 3:12) suffered by Pastor Schurganoff last year, much dental work is completed and some dental work is still on-going. Four teeth have been repaired and crowns put on them. He got an infection in his mouth, and anti-inflammatory therapy was needed to take care of that infection. One implant has been completed, but another implant is scheduled for the future.
- Of the \$7,000.00 which our Conference congregations sent to him for his dental and medical expenses, approximately \$4,000.00 was paid out as of October 12.
- It is estimated that the cost for the remaining dental work will be in the area of \$2,000.00.
- Brother Schurganoff’s collarbone was broken due to the mugging. Due to the fact that this collarbone, in its healing, was very poorly fused, making it difficult at times for him to use his right hand, his doctor has told him that surgery on that collarbone may be required; but the doctor is hoping that such surgery can be avoided. He was scheduled to have a visit with this doctor at the end of October to decide what has to be done or what does not have to be done.
- In summary, Pastor Schurganoff wrote on October 12: “I think that the money that was sent to me from the Conference should be enough for all the necessary further procedures. I will let you know if there will be any additional costs.”

Let us continue to go “*boldly unto the throne of grace*” (Hebrews 4:16) with our prayers and our “*requests*” (Philippians 4:6b) for Pastor Schurganoff, for his family, and for his congregation. We also urge you

to correspond with him by e-mail or by “snail mail” (the addresses are in the back of *The Concordia Lutheran*). If you are able and desire to send him a special Christmas gift, you may send your gift through your own congregation or through a bank-to-bank transfer, presently set up at Peace, Oak Forest. For the bank-to-bank transfer, there is a regular transfer fee of \$50.00, plus a separate fee of \$37.00 for the “intermediate” bank in Moscow. “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*” (I John 4:11).

This coming Christmas is also an “*opportunity*” (Galatians 6:10a) for us, in thanks to our God for His perfect love toward us in Christ Jesus, to remember, in “*love*” (John 13:34), to “*serve*” (Galatians 5:13b) our dear brethren from afar in **NIGERIA** with our prayers (Philippians 4:6a), our correspondence, and our gifts, as we are able (II Corinthians 8:12). Following are the very latest updates from Pastor Nimi Fyneyface:

- He wrote on September 10: “My wife is passing through [some] very rough health challenges. The latest is her heart, which is getting weak and causing her to breathe abnormally. So, after the latest test result, she was referred to Lagos University Teaching Hospital for heart specialist to check her, but the cost is not what we can afford. She is on medication now till we can make it to Lagos. Please continue to remember her in your prayers. My wife’s sickness has made me forget my goiter. It is still there.”

- The staff at the Lagos Hospital want Mrs. Fyneyface to stay for two weeks. The cost for this two week stay (involving both Pastor and Mrs. Fyneyface) is approximately \$3,000.00 (which would cover plane fare, lodging, food, all tests, and doctor’s fee).

- Pastor and Mrs. Timothy Aaron’s two-month old daughter died from a fever on September 16. Before this, they had five still-born babies. Pastor Aaron’s e-mail address is:

- Pastor Aaron is the pastor of St. Clement’s Lutheran Church, Elem-Sangama, Nigeria. We urge you to remember him and his wife, Esther, in your prayers, praying that God would continue to comfort them with His promise in Romans 8:28, and, if it is His gracious and good will, to give them another child. Would you also consider sending them an e-mail (at the above address)?

- Another of the FLCN (Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations – Nigeria) pastors, Rev. Innocent Karibo, has an e-mail address: . As some of

our readers may know, Pastor Karibo and six of his members were kidnapped some weeks ago by unknown assailants but, by God's grace, were released without harm after only several days. We thank and praise our gracious God for His mighty protection of His believing children (Psalm 91:11-12)!

■ Seven of the eleven FLCN pastors have had to get part-time jobs to support their families (I Timothy 5:8), due to receiving only partial salary from their impoverished congregations as a result of how the Nigerian economy and violence have affected the employment of their members. We pray that this condition does not long persist among them, so that, according to God's ordinance, "*they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel*" (I Corinthians 9:14).

Let us also continue to go "*boldly unto the throne of grace*" (Hebrews 4:16) with our prayers and our "*requests*" (Philippians 4:6b) for Mrs. Fyneface's heart problem, for the covering of the expenses for going to her heart specialist at Lagos, for Pastor Fyneface's goiter, for the comforting of Pastor and Mrs. Aaron at the loss of their children, for all the other FLCN pastors, and for all of the FLCN congregations. We also urge you to correspond with those who have e-mail addresses (Pastor Fyneface's is in the back of *The Concordia Lutheran*). If you are able and desire to send a special Christmas gift for the needs of these faraway brethren in Nigeria, you may send your gift through your congregation or through a bank-to-bank transfer account set up at Trinity, Oak Park. For the bank-to-bank transfer, there is a regular transfer fee of \$50.00.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. ...Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:14, 16-18). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11).

— R. J. L.

Churches in Fellowship

ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG

Ekaterinburg, Russia

The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor

P. O. Box 27

620039 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: Schurganoff@mail.ru

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria

The Rev. Innocent Karibo, Pastor

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria

The Rev. Balaiyi Thompson and The Rev. Bateinm Bestman, Pastors

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobele Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Kula, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S NYEMONI LUTHERAN CATHEDRAL

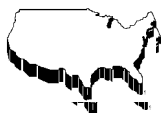
Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface, Pastor

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyeface@yahoo.co.uk



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4090 S. Melpomene Way, Tucson, AZ 85730

On the Web at:

GoodShepherdLutheranChurchTucson.com

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

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

Telephone (520) 721-7618

The Rev. DANIEL P. MENSING, Pastor

8464 East Wildcat Drive, Tucson, AZ 85730

Pastor: (520) 448-8694

E-mail: goodshepherdlutherantucson@gmail.com

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

On the Web at:

PeaceEvLutheran.com

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

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 532-4288

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

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

Pastor: (708) 532-9035

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

Pastor's Cell: (708) 601-3943

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

Pastor: (541) 258-2941

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

On the Web at:

StLukes-CLC.com

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

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 - 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118

Pastor: (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 EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

On the Web at:

StMarksEvLutheran.com

Worship Service 3:30 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:45 p.m.

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

Pastor: (708) 655-7549

E-mail: d_mensing@hotmail.com

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

On the Web at:

TrinityEvLutheran.com

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

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

Pastor: (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

Let us all with gladsome voice
praise the God of heaven,
who, to bid our hearts rejoice,
His own Son hath given!

To this vale of tears He come
here to serve in sadness,
that with Him in heaven's fair homes
we may reign in gladness

We are rich, for He was poor!
Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore
here on earth and yonder!

O Lord Christ, our Savior dear,
be Thou ever near us!
grant us now a glad New Year!
Amen, Jesus, hear us!

— TLH 97