

The Concordia Lutheran



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“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

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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*" (1 Corinthians 1:10)

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.



Our Hopes for the New Year

Rest upon Our Gracious God

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. ...” —Romans 8:28-32

For most people, “Happy New Year!” is a mere wish, a kind and friendly expression of hope that no calamity, no misfortune, no grave illness or sadness will befall one’s neighbor or loved one during the year ahead. Whether things will indeed **turn out** that way is an entirely different matter, as even the most optimistic well-wisher will readily admit.

For it is simply not in his power to **deliver** on that wish! And, if asked what **will** determine a person’s happiness, success, health, and good life in the new year, the typical worldlying will shrug his shoulders or throw up his hands in want of a solid, reliable answer. “Life’s a crap-shoot,” you hear people say. “You take what you get.” Another might venture the optimistic cliché: “Look on the **bright** side! Things could be a lot **worse**!” By and large, people regard life as a sort of **gamble**; and they plainly say so when they use such *negative* expressions as: “It’s just not in the stars!” “He was dealt a bad hand.” Or *positively*, “Just lucky, I guess!” or “The odds seem to be in my favor!”

Then, of course, there are those who **imagine** that they are actually *in control* of their **own** destiny — like the man whom Jesus called a “*fool*” in Luke 12, verse 20. They think that they will make their own “happy new year” through good investments, hard work, and “clean living;” and so they plan out their future on the basis of the “leading economic indicators,” actuarial tables, and the performance of their investment portfolios! To **them**, reverses in life come as a complete shock; any unforeseen change in their “game plan” throws their whole existence into chaos and despair! And they find to their dismay that they never really were “in control”!

People in both categories are in for a mighty “rocky” new year, simply because they have no way of knowing **for sure** what life will bring. They have **no assurance**, no **real hope**, nothing to give them true **peace of mind**, as the new year approaches... just **one big question mark** to haunt them from day to day!

We **Christians**, on the other hand, can be upbeat and confident as we look forward into 2022! Why? Oh, because we have **peace** of mind and conscience, real **assurance** of happiness, and **freedom** from worry and anxiety! For the Apostle Paul shows us in our title-text that we Christians rest OUR hopes for the New Year upon our **gracious God** — because of what He has **already done** for us and because of what He promises **yet to do** for us.

Paul begins with a statement of assurance and of certainty which has been gravely twisted and misapplied by the children of this world. He says: “*We know that all things work together for good.*” People paraphrase this passage every day —people who don’t have the slightest idea where it’s from or what it’s about, who have no interest in religion or the Bible or God for that matter— and they try to **comfort** one another by saying: “It’ll all turn out for the best, you’ll see.” Sadly, their comfort is as hollow as a dried-up gourd! For the blessed assurance here in our title-text, dear to the heart of every true Christian, is **limited** —not as to its scope, but as to its beneficiaries, as the words themselves clearly show. “*We know, we [Christians] know,*” says Paul, “*that all things work together for good to them that love God,*” NOT to them that hate Him, despise Him, think they can do just as well without Him, and feel quite frankly that they don’t need Him! Unbelievers can take no comfort from this passage whatsoever, for its assurance doesn’t apply to **them at all**! The Psalmist Asaph writes, for example, that even the *seemingly prosperous* among the wicked in this world have nothing to look forward to but “*slippery places, ...destruction, [and] ...terrors!*” (Psalm 73:18-19). For **them**, it’ll all turn out for the WORST if they continue in their unbelief!

No, beloved brethren, the Lord’s Apostle very specifically **limits** the beneficiaries of this assurance to “*them that love God,*”

to them, as we shall see, who rest their hope in confident faith upon what **God has already done for them** and who “*love [Him]*” because He loved them first (I John 4:19) ...namely, to His believing children, all true Christians (Galatians 3:26). Now, what has God **already done for us** which identifies **US** as the beneficiaries of this assurance for the new year ahead and throughout our lives? Paul summarizes all of it in just a few words when He says that we Christians are “*the called according to His purpose.*” God’s **purpose** for sinful mankind is that “*all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4), for “*the Lord is not willing that **any** should **perish**, but that **all** should come to **repentance***” (II Peter 3:9). God’s earnest call goes out to **all men** in the Gospel of salvation. Sadly, however, “*many*” (Matthew 17:3b) **refuse** His gracious call, **spurn** His grace, and **reject** salvation, the Bible tells us, “*[persistently] **resist[ing]** the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 7:51), and thus are lost by their own fault. Such people keep from themselves the blessings of salvation, as well as the assurance in our title-text that “*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*”

And now, the Apostle lists in chronological detail **what** the Lord has **already done for us** to make us the heirs of everlasting life and beneficiaries of the assurance upon which our hopes for the new year rest: He “*foreknew*” us, Paul says. God looked ahead from eternity, from “*before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4), and **chose us to come to faith** (Acts 13:48b). He “*predestinated*” us “*to be conformed to the image of His Son*” and thus to be “*brethren*” together with Christ, our Elder Brother, in the “*household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19) — NOT because He saw anything good in **us**, NOT because He foresaw **our faith** and knew that we wouldn’t resist His Holy Spirit the way others would —no, He did all this “***not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began***” (II Timothy 1:9).

“*Moreover,*” Paul says, “*whom He did predestinate, them He also **called***” —called to faith by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel; “*and whom He called, them He also **justified***” —made them by faith the personal recipients of the forgiveness which He declared for all the world in Christ (II Corinthians 5:19); “*and whom He justified, them He also **glorified***.” As the “*heirs of salvation,*” we are **already now**, as “*partaker[s] of Christ’s sufferings*” by faith in Him, destined to be partakers with Him “*when His glory shall be revealed,*” Peter tells us in his first epistle (4:13); we already **now** have a “*crown*” to which we must hold fast, lest we lose it (Revelation 2:10; 3:11); we already **now** have the “*hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27), the **expectation** of having in its indescribable fulness that glory which is **even now** ours as the adopted children of our heavenly Father by faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior, having been “*prepared for [us],*” Jesus says, “*from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34). No wonder Paul writes in the 18th verse of this same chapter that “*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that **shall be revealed in us.***”

All this our gracious God and Lord has **already done for us** in testimony of His great **love** for us, as the basis of our **trust** in Him, as the foundation upon which to rest our **hopes** for the New Year and for our entire future as His dear children! All this **confirms to us**, makes us “***KNOW** that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*”—“***ALL things,***” whether they appear to be good or bad in this present time, joyous or grievous, happy or sad—“***ALL things***” will be turned into **good** for us because of what our loving Father has **already done for us** and for our salvation!

“*What shall we then say to these things?*” What is the inescapable conclusion to which we must come, also in regard to those things which He promises **yet to do for us**? “*If God be **for us**,*” [and that fact is **obvious** from what the Apostle has already shown us here in Romans 8], “*who can be **against us??***” (v. 31). With our almighty God and Lord fighting **for us**, in whom He has a special “vested interest,” what enemy, temporal or spiritual, would be so foolish as to *imagine* a victory over us as even a possibility?? Yea,

*Tho’ devils **all the world** should fill,
all eager to **devour** us,
we tremble **not**, we fear **no ill**,
they shall **not** overpower **us!***

For not only does the Lord Himself fight **for us**, but He makes **us** able to fight as well (I Timothy 6:12), to **resist the devil** steadfast in the faith (I Peter 5:9, James 4:7b), to **refuse** the enticements of worldly friends and acquaintances (Proverbs 1:10), to **do battle** with and daily **defeat** our own sinful flesh (Galatians 5:24), to **turn a deaf ear** to false

prophets and ear-tickling teachers of religion (Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:17, etc.)—all of this made possible for those who “*take unto [themselves] the whole armor of God*” (Ephesians 6:13) by faithful continuance in His Word. “*I will not fail thee nor forsake thee,*” He promises you, dear fellow-Christian (Joshua 1:5); and on that promise you can most assuredly rely as you march forward to meet the enemy as a soldier of the Savior’s cross, confident of victory!

But the Lord does not only promise to **defend** us against our **enemies** in the new year ahead and all through our life here in this world; He also promises to **provide** us with **everything we need**, blessings both temporal and spiritual, as the gifts of His precious grace. “*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us **all things**?*” (v. 32). After having “invested” in us His only-begotten Son as the ransom-price for our redemption, don’t think for one minute that the Lord would spare any further cost to secure that investment for eternity!! That simply wouldn’t make any sense at all, Paul tells us! —No, our gracious God will “freely” for Jesus’ sake “*give us all things*” **in addition to** what He has **already** given us, namely, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; faith to accept and receive those treasures; and a renewed life of righteousness as the fruit and evidence of that saving faith.

What a promise to set our minds **at ease**, as we look ahead to the new year! For even with life’s temporal uncertainties, we Christians have no cause whatever to whine and wring our hands in anxious care and worry, saying with those who have no heavenly Father: “‘*What shall we eat?*’ or ‘*What shall we drink?*’ or ‘*Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*’ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek!)...But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Jesus tells us, “and all **these things** [these “extras,” these minor “fringe benefits”] *shall be added unto you.*” (Matthew 6:31-33) So, “*cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you*” (I Peter 5:7), careth **so much** that He “*spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all!*”

“*Happy New Year!*” is no idle wish from one Christian to another. Rather, it is the expression of **firm conviction** that our gracious God and Lord will continue to shower down upon us in this coming year an **abundance** of blessings both temporal and spiritual, as He has in the past, and as He has promised to do in the future; that “***all things [will] work together for [our] good***” in accordance with His all-wise and gracious will for us; that He will mightily **defend us** from all our enemies of body and soul; and that He will generously and freely **provide us** with all that we need for our temporal and spiritual welfare here in this present life, until the glory unspeakable for which we have been *foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified* by His surpassing grace and favor is **ours** in its **fulness** in our heavenly home above!

As we thus **rest our hopes for the new year upon our gracious God and Lord** and confide in His sure promises, may each and every one of us have, in the fullest sense of the word, a truly **Happy and Blessed New Year**, for Jesus’, our Savior’s, sake!

—D. T. M.





The Epiphany of Our Savior at His Baptism

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased!”

Matthew 3:17 (and the preceding context)

When we Christians speak of the **Epiphany** our Lord, we are using a word of Greek origin meaning “appearance” or “manifestation;” and we refer initially to the appearance of Jesus in His infancy already to the **Magi**, the “*Wise Men from the East*” (Matthew 2). In fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (60:1-6), the Baby Jesus, at an age of no greater than two years — according to the time Herod had diligently inquired of the wise men (Matthew 2:7, 16) — “appeared” or “manifested Himself” to those strangers from afar as the

“*Light to lighten the Gentiles*” (Luke 2:32), the Savior of all mankind, not just the “*King of the Jews*” (Matthew 2:2). Thus we Christians celebrate that appearance on **January 6th** each year with special rejoicing because of its particular significance for **us Gentiles**, us non-Jews according to our descendancy from barbarian and heathen tribes in Europe and elsewhere. And, while most people, for whom that significance isn’t really a factor as the Christmas festival draws to a close, have already, a few days after Christmas, taken down their decorations and packed them away, many Christians deliberately keep the celebration going through **January 6th**, the “**Gentiles’ Christmas**,” or the nearest Sunday to it, in grateful recognition of Jesus’ “**Epiphany**” as the Savior of “**ALL people**,” including us Gentiles.

But the Epiphany of our Lord also has a wider significance, as we consider, for example, His **appearance** or **manifestation** to men in His public ministry, that is, when He first appeared on the scene to be **publicly recognized** as the long-promised Messiah and Savior of the world. It is that Epiphany in particular to which we give our attention in this present article, His appearance first of all “**unto His own**” (John 1:11), to the people of Israel according to the flesh (Romans 9:4-5). It was that Epiphany which the Messiah’s messenger, John the Baptist, had proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea, as he preached repentance and baptized the people in Jordan. In our title-text we stand on that river’s bank, through eyes of faith witnessing in spirit the Epiphany of our Savior at His Baptism. It is there that we see Him manifested as the **Son of Man**, our Substitute under the Law, whose mission it was to fulfill the Law in our place, and manifested as the very **Son of God**, whose fulfillment of the Law would be sufficient for our redemption. The Father’s voice from heaven and the appearance of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove constituted divine testimony of His Epiphany.

As he describes the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus’ forerunner, the Evangelist Luke tells us that Jesus was “*about thirty years old*” when He was manifested to the people and began His public ministry (Luke 3:23). Up to that time, He had lived in Nazareth to the north, “*being as was supposed the son of Joseph*,” a local carpenter, and his wife, Mary. Although they were second cousins, John and Jesus had apparently never met one another before the incident in our title-text (as we gather from St. John’s Gospel, chapter 1, verses 31 and 33); but John had nevertheless been preaching about Jesus in fulfillment of the ancient prophecies (Malachi 3:1 for example); and God Himself had told John in advance just how Jesus would be manifested or identified to him (John 1:33-34).

“*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized of Thee; and comest Thou to me??’*” Although John’s preaching was one of **repentance**, and his baptism was for the remission of **sins**, here in the words preceding our title-text John clearly recognizes Jesus as the **sinless** Son of God, who, for Himself, had absolutely no need of baptism. In fact, it was John, a sinful mortal, who felt the need to be baptized **by Jesus**! And rightly so!

But the Lord Jesus insisted upon being baptized by John **for a very special reason**: “*And Jesus answering said unto*

him, ‘Suffer it to be so now,’ —let it be done as I have asked— ‘for thus it becometh us **to fulfill all righteousness.**’” Jesus had been made “*under the law*” when He took upon Himself human flesh and blood; and, in order to be our Savior, He had to keep the whole Law perfectly to the letter as **our Substitute** —not because **He** needed to for **His own** benefit! And, after Jesus explained this purpose to John, “*then he suffered Him,*” that is, then John let Jesus be baptized by him in the Jordan River.

This manifestation of Jesus as the Substitute of sinners under the Law was absolutely **crucial**, vitally **critical** to His work of redeeming the world to God. His “*vicarious atonement*” or substitutionary payment to God for our sins, transgressions, and iniquities consisted not only in His *suffering* and *dying* in our place, as Isaiah prophesied in his fifty-third chapter and as we study it again in the upcoming season of Lent. That only paid the **penalty** of our *guilt*, as He took upon Himself our **punishment**. —But Jesus also had to gain for us perfect **righteousness** before God, so that we would be “*meet [that is **fit**] to be partakers*” (Colossians 1:12) of heavenly glory as His adopted sons and daughters! And that He could do *only* by becoming one of us —a true **man**, like you and me, “*made under the law*” (Galatians 4:4b), subject to its demands. **He** had to do what was required of **us** —not only in the case of baptism, but in the case of every single demand of God that hangs over a sinner’s head like an axe blade ready to drop when the demand is not met! For the Bible says: “*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them!*” (Galatians 3:10b). **That’s** why “*God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, **made under the Law***” so that He would be “*tempted,*” that is, *tried* or *tested* under the terms of that Law, “*in all points*” as your Substitute and mine, so that by His perfect active obedience He would earn **for us** righteousness in the sight of God (Hebrews 4:15).

And this He **had to do** because you and I could never have accomplished it for ourselves: “*We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6). “*There is none that doeth good, no, not one!*” (Romans 3:12). —Thus it behooved Christ, our Substitute “*under the Law,*” to “**fulfill all righteousness**” in our place. Yes, thus it behooved Him, it was necessary for Him, to become “*the Son of man,*” so that, as a **true man**, He might stand in our shoes, as it were, and be in duty bound to fulfill what we are unable to do.

But, fortunately for us, Jesus of Nazareth was not only “*true man born of the virgin Mary*” (Second Article), “*made of a woman, made under the law*” (Galatians 4:4). Fortunately for **you** and for **me**, Jesus of Nazareth was more than a “nice guy,” an example of goodness and piety among men, a truly “good and decent man!” Yes, my dear fellow-sinners, fortunately for **ALL of us**, individually and collectively, in the **Epiphany** of Jesus **at His baptism**, He was also manifested as the very **Son of GOD**, whose fulfillment of the law would be **sufficient** for our redemption!

We read on in our narrative: “*And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and **He saw** the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, ‘**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased!**’*”

John the Baptist **saw this** as well —not just Jesus, as we read in St. John’s Gospel, chapter one. And, by the direct prompting of God Himself, John recognized this manifestation for what it truly was —**not a hallucination, not a chance fly-by** of some wayward pigeon, **not the sighing of the wind** through the branches of nearby scrub brush (as modernists have blasphemously suggested)! But he testifies in John 1:34, “***I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.***”

And it’s a good thing that Jesus **IS** the **Son of God** and not just a mere man, not just another man among men; “*for none of **them** can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious!*” writes the Psalmist (Psalm 49:7-8). A mere **human being** could never have “*fulfilled all righteousness*” to atone for **his own** sins, much less for *anyone else’s*. But Jesus, the **Son of Man** **AND** the **Son of God**, came, as He Himself said, “*to give [His] life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45). Not just His **suffering and death**, not only the **shedding of His holy precious blood**, His **passive obedience**, constituted the sacrifice by which He redeemed the world from sin, death and the devil: It was also His **holy LIFE** —His “**active obedience**” by which He perfectly fulfilled the Law in our stead and earned righteousness for every soul of men, righteousness which avails before God and satisfies the requirements of His justice, when He says: “*Ye shall be **holy**, for **I** the Lord your God am **holy!***” (Leviticus 19:2). For “*by the obedience of **One** shall many be made righteous,*” Paul writes to the Romans chapter five (v. 19).

That **perfect righteousness** of the Son of God is *imputed* to poor, unworthy sinners, it's charged to the "plus-side" of their account with God, when they place their whole confidence in Him and in His merits alone for salvation, "*the righteousness of God*," Paul says, "*which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe* (Romans 3:22); ... to declare, I say, at this time **His righteousness**, that **He** might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (v. 26) "*To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*" (Romans 4:5).

You see, my dear readers, **the purpose** for which our Savior was *manifested* at His baptism as the **Son of Man**, "*made under the Law*" as our Substitute, AND as the **Son of God**, whose perfect fulfillment of the Law would avail before God as righteousness **for us** —the purpose of Christ's *Epiphany* at His baptism— is that "[*we*] might **believe** that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing [we] might have life through His name!*" (John 20:31).

Oh, therefore, cling to Jesus, your "**beautiful Savior, ...Son of God and Son of man**" (TLH 657), the long-promised Redeemer of the world, "*the Lord, our Righteousness*" (Jeremiah 23:6), and rely in simple childlike faith on the fact that **HIS righteousness** is **YOUR righteousness** in the sight of God, the "*garment of salvation*" (Cf. Isaiah 51:7-8) which covers your filthy rags and makes you acceptable at the wedding-feast of heaven (Matthew 22:11 ff.). For then, you can **confidently** face His **final** Epiphany and Advent as the mighty Judge of quick and dead, singing with the hymnwriter:

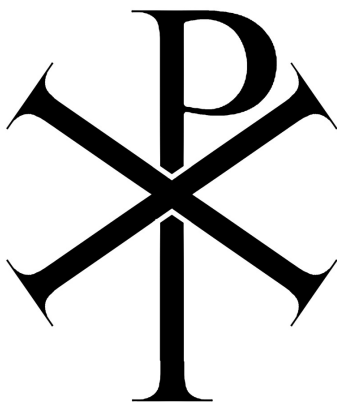
"Jesus, Thy blood and **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
my beauty are, my glorious dress,
wherein before my God I'll stand
when I shall reach the heavenly land!"

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
for who ought to my charge shall lay?
Fully through these absolved I am
from sin and fear, from guilt and shame!"

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

(TLH 371, 1,2,7)

—D. T. M.



The Manifested Messiah — Our Perfect Example in Mission Work

“I that speak unto thee am He.” —John 4:26

The holy Epiphany Season is traditionally that time on our Christian church calendar during which we focus particularly on **mission work**. Jesus, our Divine Prophet, is of course our perfect example in this effort as we witness in the Gospels His *epiphany* or manifestation of Himself to men by His preaching and by His miracles. During His public ministry here on earth in His *State of Humiliation*, He testified and demonstrated irrefutably that He is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. However, also in His *State of Exaltation* at the right hand of God, Christ CONTINUES to function as our Divine Prophet as He sends men, as incumbents of the Pastoral Office, to proclaim and to teach His Word — as His mouthpieces (Luke 10:16), as His ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20), as His stewards (I Corinthians 4:1), and as undershepherds and bishops over His local flocks (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-4).

But **mission work** is not only the task and privilege of Christian pastors. “Getting the Word out” — “*the Word of Reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19) that God “*in Christ*” —in view of, that is, in consideration of, Christ’s perfect and all-sufficient *vicarious atonement* (Isaiah 53:4-6; II Corinthians 5:21) which satisfied God’s justice with respect to sinful mankind (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2)— God reconciled the world unto Himself, no longer charging to sinners their trespasses but declaring all men righteous in His sight— getting that “*Word*” out requires no specialized theological training. But it does require, on the part of those who would spread it faithfully and sincerely, true faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as the Redeemer of the world, and as the Propitiation for the sins of all mankind. It does require childlike confidence of the heart in His merits alone for salvation and in the blessings of forgiveness and everlasting life as God’s free gift for Jesus’ sake. And it does require humble gratitude to the God of all grace for thus manifesting His love and mercy to all the world in His only-begotten Son (I John 1:9). For it is “*the love of Christ [that] constraineth us*” (II Corinthians 5:14) to speak up boldly about Him; “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*,” Jesus says (Matthew 12:34); and the Savior Himself makes confession of Him before men both the evidence and a test of true faith (Matthew 10:32). And so we ask ourselves with the hymnwriter:

“Can we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,
can we to men benighted the Lamp of Life deny??”

(TLH 495, 3)

And then we gladly answer that obviously rhetorical question with the apostles in Acts 4:20, “*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard!*” The grateful shepherds did it (Luke 2:17)! The early Christians did it (Acts 8:4)! And we too, motivated by the precious Gospel “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13), can be witnesses unto our Savior (Acts 1:8b), offering our voices, our gifts, our talents, and even our funds in the cause of Christian mission work, saying with Isaiah, “*Here am I; send ME!*” (Isaiah 6:8).



Jesus Himself is, of course, our perfect example in this noble cause; and He gives us in John chapter four, verses five through twenty-nine, in a marvelous *Epiphany* narrative, the record of *His own* personal mission work as a sort of *prototype* after which we should pattern our own efforts. ■ He shows us how to “break the ice” with a prospective mission target, opening the door, as it were, to a potentially fruitful “conversation.” ■ He shows us how to direct that conversation from the temporal to the spiritual. ■ He shows us how to “create the need” for salvation in the mind of an otherwise secure soul by showing in the mirror of God’s Law the sinner’s wretchedness in the sight of God and his helplessness to save himself. ■ He shows us how to deal effectively with objections

from those who are quite satisfied with a “religion of their own.” ■ And He shows us how to demonstrate the superiority and surety of justification by God’s grace over the futility and impossibility of justification by the Law. — But THAT is as far as our mission work can go. We “*plant*,” we “*water*,” but God gives “*the increase*” (I Corinthians 3:6).

If we want to get any mission work done, which, after all, is our **priority task** as His disciples (Acts 1:8b), we have to be up-and-doing, not just sitting back and waiting for prospects to come to **us**. Jesus was constantly “on the move” as our Good Shepherd, seeking the lost and retrieving them for His flock. Mission work is no easy job, of course, even on a one-to-one basis; and Jesus Himself, in His *State of Humiliation*, often became weary and worn out from preaching and teaching, from exhorting and beseeching. In John 4, where we find Jesus “on the road again,” *en route* from Judea to Galilee, He takes a break at noontime, sits down on the edge of Jacob’s well just outside the city of Sychar in Samaria, and waits for His disciples, who had gone into town to pick up something for lunch. Having no pitcher with which to draw water, He puts His thirst on “hold” and just rests (vv. 4-6, 8).

Soon the solitude is broken, however, as “*there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her: ‘Give me to drink’*” (v. 7). Jesus uses both His own thirst and the woman’s obvious ability to help Him out as a sort of “ice-breaker” by which to engage her in conversation— a technique that you and I can easily learn from His example as we set out to be missionaries for Him. It doesn’t require a lot of talent and special training to talk even to a stranger about the ordinary things of life, does it? And so that’s often a good place to **start**. We rather easily talk about the weather, road conditions, our children, economic conditions in our country, politics, sports, and even health situations. And we can make use of any of those things — and even many more — as starting points for a conversation that we eventually want to turn into a discussion about what is **most important** to us in our lives and what makes us **truly happy** and **content** in time and for eternity.

“*Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him: ‘How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans’*” (v. 9). The conversation is barely off the ground, and they hit a snag! And what is it, but plain old prejudice — *historical* prejudice, *social* prejudice, *ethnic* and *racial* prejudice! “You Jews think that we Samaritans are the scum of the earth, unclean, not worth a second glance —just because five-hundred years ago many of our people escaped the Babylonian Captivity, intermarried with heathen tribes round about us, and now have both a mixed race and a mixed religion. Normally speaking, you wouldn’t even touch my pitcher, much less drink out of it! And you ask *me* to pour *you* a cup of water?? What’s with you anyway?” That is exactly where the conversation stops for many people. They avoid confrontation “at any cost,” and they’d rather just go on their way than take up the challenge of engaging a person with an “attitude problem.” But is that what Jesus did?? —Is that what He did, is that what He does, in **your** case and **mine**??

Here indeed was a lost soul —a five-time loser in marriage, as we learn later on in this chapter, now living with a sixth man in an *adulterous* relationship (vv. 17-18). She was a “slut” by reputation —the women of the city had nothing to do with her, just the men (v. 28)— and her religion was a hodgepodge of truth and error, of faith and superstition, of Messianic Old Testament Christianity and plain paganism (vv. 20-26)! No one who valued his good name in the community and in the church would have anything to do with the woman! (Perhaps even we today, in our fleshly arrogance, would give such a person the “cold shoulder” and look for a more up-and-coming prospect.)

But the Lord Jesus, who, as the omniscient Son of God, knew all those things about the woman and even more, was interested in her, just as He is interested in you and me, who, by the perfect standards of God’s holy Law, are certainly no better! “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,*” the Bible tells us (Romans 3:23). “*There is NONE that doeth good, no, NOT ONE!*” (v. 12; also Ecclesiastes 7:20). Indeed, if **we** were judged according to **our** worth by nature and by the deeds **we** do, we would have more “heat” coming from God than the scorching heat of the Middle East at noon time! For the Bible says: “*The wages of sin* [what we have earned as sinners] *is death*” —everlasting death in the fire of hell! Yes, it is our **guilt**, as we see ourselves in the mirror of God’s law, that parches our spiritual throats with the searing heat of God’s anger and makes us thirst for even one drop of cooling, soothing water to relieve our anguish (cf. Luke 16:24)! And Jesus did not hesitate to show the woman her sins, to embarrass her with His knowledge of them, and to create the thirst of **guilt** in her heart!

“*Jesus answered and said unto her: ‘If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, ‘Give Me to*

*drink, 'thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have **given** thee living water'"* (John 4:10). Jesus knew just what this poor wretched sinner needed: The pure and "*living water*" of His Gospel —the good news of salvation for helpless good-for-nothings —the glad tidings of the Christmas angels that the "*Savior, Christ the Lord,*" had made peace between man and God —that by His perfect life in our place and by His innocent suffering and death in our stead, Christ paid the ransom price demanded by His father in heaven, so that God's anger is now stilled for Jesus' sake, and He has now declared His "*good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14). In other words, God has given us a **pardon**— as His free **gift**, undeserved by us. And that's how Jesus identified it to the Samaritan woman: "*The **GIFT** of GOD,*" free for the taking! "*Living water,*" life-giving, thirst-quenching water poured out by Jesus, the **Fountain of Salvation**!

But the woman was skeptical —as are so many in our world today, who mistakenly think that **they can** and somehow **must earn** their way to heaven, and that salvation is NOT "*the gift of God.*" "*The woman saith unto Him, 'Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father, Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?'"* (vv. 11-12). She was looking for the wrong water, wasn't she? She was looking for water she could **see**, water she had to **draw** with her pitcher, water from the well that Jacob **dug** by his own works and **drank out of** as the result of his own labor! —But, oh, HOW CLOSE SHE IS TO THE TRUTH when she asks Jesus: "*Art Thou greater than our father, Jacob?'"* Why, it was the patriarch, **Jacob**, who confessed to the Lord, Genesis 32:10, "*I am **not worthy** of the **least** of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant.*" **He himself** was saved **not** by his works but by the mercy of God in Christ.

*"Jesus answered and said unto her: 'Whosoever drinketh of this water [this **earthly** water] shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that **I** shall give him shall never thirst'"* (vv. 13-14). Spiritual thirst brought about by guilt before God cannot be relieved by water dug by men, drawn by men. It gives only temporary relief, false relief, as sinners look away from the mirror of God's law to themselves. But when sinners are forced to look back and face their corrupt reflection, they "*thirst again,*" Jesus says,—and again! Only the **perfect refreshment** of the **Gospel** of salvation by God's **grace**, God's **gift** in Christ, can relieve the thirst —as long as one **drinks** it and it doesn't just **look** at it — as long as one **accepts** that Gospel *by faith*, by real **confidence of the heart**. For then, no one, not even Satan himself, can any longer successfully accuse the sinner to God and bring back that awful thirst of guilt (Romans 8:1). For Jesus promised the woman of Samaria, and promises you and me: "*Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall in no wise thirst forever*" (v. 14a), the Greek original says, that is, shall not suffer **eternal** thirst, the shame and contempt and **everlasting** estrangement from God **in the fire of hell** (Cf. Matthew 25:41; Luke 16:24; Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:43-44).

And Jesus, our **Fountain** of *living water*, will not dry up on us like the wells of this world —will not let us down like the assurances of this world in which people trust day by day — the assurances of God's favor for those who live "on the level and the square" (Masonic lodges), who "do a good turn daily" (Scouting organizations) who are "downright upright" (Brian Bromberg's album) in their dealings, and who serve the "*social gospel*" of philanthropy by their humanitarian and altruistic deeds. For Jesus tells the woman concerning His precious Gospel: "*The water that I shall give him shall be in him a **well** of water [or better from the original language, "*a **fountain** of water*"] springing up into everlasting life*" (v. 14). The **perfect refreshment** for sin-parched souls will never run out (Romans 5:20-21; Psalm 118:1). **That** water is not lying stagnant, as it were, at the bottom of some hole in the ground, with a limit on how much of it can be drawn off in a period of "spiritual drought." For, while that is often the case with shallow, hand-dug wells here this world, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the eternal, unchangeable, almighty Son of God —a veritably **inexhaustible supply** of "*living water,*" as from an active **artesian** well, bubbling up and overflowing in abundance "*into everlasting life*" —a supply that will last until we have crossed over the barren wilderness of this sin-ridden world to the very gates of heaven itself!

Earthly comforts and assurances can't make and stand behind such a claim! We talk about these things every day: The value of **money** fluctuates on a daily basis, **stocks** go up and down, **companies** fail —even insurance companies— **health** declines, **friends** desert us at the drop of a hat, and the "**good times**" are gone —dried up, evaporated into thin air like a shallow pool of water in the desert! And people who cling to **such things** for comfort, and live for such things their whole life long, will find themselves with parched, burning throats when they stand one

day at death's door; and their dry, brittle voices will be unable to make one "peep" in their own defense before the judgment throne of God! That's the "**hard** news" that we need to share with people in order to make them long for something **more**, something **better**, something more **valuable** than temporal relief, something that **lasts** into eternity!

Unbelievers will not have the "*gift of God*" (cf. also Ephesians 2:8) to rely on, because they rejected it in **unbelief**; they will not have Christ's "*living water*" to quench their burning guilt, because they refused to drink of it when it was offered to them; they will not have "*everlasting life*" to look forward to, because they despised it in favor of the here-and-now. Oh, how foolish such people are who ignore the indictment of God's Law and then wantonly cast aside the free pardon offered by Him in the Gospel! And how *doubly* tragic the day of reckoning will be for those who once tasted the "*water of life*," bathed their parched souls in its blissful refreshment, rejoiced in its comfort and assurance, and then, for the sake of some carnal gain or satisfaction, or "*led away with the error of the wicked*" (II Peter 3:17) — sinful human rationalism — spued it out of their mouths, as if it had not been worth drinking in the first place! For "*unto whomsoever much is **given**,*" says Jesus, "*of him shall be **much required***" (Luke 12:48).

And how about you and me, beloved fellow-sinners, wandering yet for an undetermined time in the wilderness of this wicked and perverse world? Are our spiritual canteens filled to the top with living, life-giving, and life-sustaining water? Do we drink from them regularly to keep up our vital spiritual strength? Do we fill them up at every opportunity at the bubbling fountain of our Savior's precious Word? Are we constantly on the alert against those who would snatch those canteens from our hands and turn us on to other refreshment? Do we call out to fellow travelers and point them to the Fountain of Grace, so that they too can drink of the "*living water*" of the Savior's Gospel? — That sounds like a mighty long list of probing, personal questions, doesn't it? Sure it is! But it's the ongoing inventory we must take of ourselves every day of our lives —without let-up— as we plod along as pilgrims in a barren land on our way to the heavenly Canaan above, where our true citizenship is (Philippians 3:20), bought and paid for by our Savior and received alone by faith in Him as our Redeemer. Continuance in His precious Word of life is **crucial** to our spiritual **survival**! Sacrificing it for **any** earthly consideration is spiritual suicide, more **deadly** than tossing away a full canteen on a Death Valley crossing!

Let us therefore implore our Lord and Savior to keep the fountain of His precious grace freely bubbling **among us** in the years to come, that, holding fast to His Word, we may never thirst but find in it enduring comfort and refreshment for our souls unto everlasting life and also **share with others** its saving message, "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (II Corinthians 4:6)! To that end we pray:

*Preserve Thy Word and preaching, the truth that makes us whole,
the mirror of Thy glory, the power that saves the soul.
Oh, may this **living water**, this dew of heavenly grace,
sustain us while here living until we see Thy face!*

(TLH 264, 5)

— D. T. M.



Pondering the Sacrifices of Lent

*“He began to teach them that the Son of Man must **suffer** many things, and be **rejected** of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes, and be **killed**, and after three days **rise again**.” — Mark 8:31-38*



During the holy Epiphany season, the season in which we specially mark each year the “*manifestation*” of the Lord Jesus as the “*Light of the world*,” the long-promised Savior, we were privileged again to **witness in spirit**, to see through eyes of faith riveted upon the witness of His Word, “*His **glory**, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14), to **recognize** Him in the testimony of “*Moses and the prophets*,” **all** of whom wrote of this Messiah by inspiration of the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:43); and to **hear** with our own ears, through the mouths of Christ’s ambassadors among us, the voice of God the Father declaring: “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased! Hear ye Him!*” (Matthew 17:5).

In a very real sense, we have been “trailing along behind” Jesus and His disciples during His public *ministry of **manifestation***, following Him in the Gospel lessons read each Sunday morning and becoming with those disciples “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” (II Peter 1:16) as He demonstrated by means of His **preaching** and His **miracles** — “*by many **infallible proofs***” (Acts 1:3) — that He **IS** “*the **Christ**, the **Son of God***” (John 11:27), the long-promised **anointed Redeemer** of the world, the **Messiah**, “***God** ...manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:15). The claims of scoffers notwithstanding that these are “*cunningly devised fables*” (II Peter 1:16), deceitfully crafted mythological legends about Jesus of Nazareth, we **know** what we have **seen** and **heard**! And we can confidently declare with Peter on the basis of all this ironclad evidence, as we cling to Jesus as our Refuge, our Fortress, and our Rock: “***Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!***” (Matthew 16:16).

But the glory of Jesus’ Epiphany is about to be **dimmed**, yea, **over-shadowed**, by a pall of anguish and abuse, of spiritual torment and physical torture, of bitter suffering and cruel death, as we follow Jesus “*afar off*” (Matthew 26:58) into the holy season of Lent. For suddenly we are plunged with Jesus’ disciples from the lofty “*highs*” of **joy** and **exultation** into a valley of **disappointment**, **disbelief**, and **sadness**, as this bright **Morning Star** (Revelation 22:16) enters upon His **Great Passion**, as He willingly lays down His life for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 10:15,17)! In our title-text and in the verses following it in our Bibles, Jesus begins to teach US about the **price** of our redemption, reconciliation and salvation, as we find ourselves, with His dear but puzzled disciples, pondering the sacrifices of Lent — first of all the sacrifices by which our Savior accomplished our redemption, and then, in imitation of His sacrifice, the sacrifices by which we give evidence of our faith in Him.

We read in our title-text that Jesus “***began to teach them***” about His impending suffering and death. Up to now, Jesus had been concentrating His efforts, as we briefly reviewed His Epiphany, upon **proving** Himself to be the Son of God manifest in the flesh. The emphasis of His Epiphany message in both word and deed, in His preaching and in His miracles, was on His **person**, that is, on who He **IS**. And it had taken His disciples over a year of **constant exposure** to Jesus’ teaching to become convinced of that all-important fact, without which the sacrifice to come would have been meaningless, useless, and a symbol of failure, the suffering and death of a martyr to a lost cause! At least now, by God’s grace, “*by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17), they were convinced that Jesus was indeed “*the **Christ**, the Son of the living **God***” (Matthew 16:16). And they had “*high hopes*” for Him as the **Messiah**, who they thought (as did most of the Jews in their perverted notion of His mission) would drive out the Romans, restore the kingdom to Israel, and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem! (Acts 1:6).

But, as Jesus *“began to teach them,”* His message didn’t seem to fit their preconceived agenda. For *“He began to teach them that the Son of Man must **suffer** many things, and be **rejected** of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes, and be **killed**, and after three days **rise again**. ”* What a **bombshell** this was for them! It didn’t sound **at all** like the victorious reign they had imagined! Surely Jesus had some **choice** about going through all of that — didn’t He?? Was there no **alternative**??

No, Jesus said: *“The Son of Man **MUST** suffer.”* He had willingly taken this obligation upon Himself before the foundation of the world already. For it was essential to God’s “eternal decree of redemption,” His “decision,” as it were, to save sinful mankind by the vicarious suffering and death of His only-begotten Son, a “plan” in which Jesus, as true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, fully concurred! In order to satisfy God’s **perfect justice**, Jesus **HAD TO** take upon Himself **the guilt** of every sinner and bear in His own innocent soul and body **the punishment** which every sinner rightly deserves as *“the wages of sin”* (Romans 6:23). —Not only had this been **prophesied** of Him down through the whole Old Testament by *“all the prophets”* of God (Acts 10:43; cf. especially Isaiah 53); but the sacrifice He was to render as the Substitute of sinners was **mandatory** if all men’s sins were to be paid for in full!

The leaders of the people, who should have known better from the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, (and many of them did), would *“reject”* Jesus, deny Him as the *Messiah*, the Redeemer of Israel; and they would *“kill”* Him! This prospect was completely **unthinkable** to the disciples at this point in time and for many months to come, as they nurtured in their weak and trembling hearts a **“denial syndrome”** so **overpowering** that they forgot all about the **last item** on Jesus’ checklist, namely, that *“after three days”* He would **“rise again,”** *“...delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification”* (Romans 4:25), *“delivered”* into the hands of His enemies to die in payment for our transgressions and for the sins of all mankind, and *“raised again”* on the third day in testimony that His satisfaction of God’s justice was sufficient — a *“propitiation”* (I John 2:2) — to reconcile all men to God and to win their justification in His sight.

*“And He spake that [grim] saying **openly**,”* no longer in parables, in symbols, and in veiled pictures, but **clearly** and **plainly** with no “sugar-coating” on it. *“And Peter took Him and began to **rebuke** Him.”* —Like many Christians, whom Peter would later on, in his second epistle, call *“unlearned and unstable”* (II Peter 3:16) because of their lack of understanding and their stubborn resistance to any growth in grace and knowledge, Peter had the “nerve” to **argue** with Jesus, to **contradict** Him, yea, even to **“rebuke”** Him! — Peter “meant well,” we might assume, because he didn’t want his dear Jesus to be humiliated and tortured and slain. But Peter was far off the track! In fact, his quick mouth was a potential source of **offense** to the others! And so, *“when [Jesus] had turned about and looked on His disciples, He **rebuked** Peter, saying, ‘Get thee behind Me, **Satan**! For thou savorest not the things that be of **God**, but the things that be of **men**!’ ”* In other words, Jesus told Peter that the **devil** was using him as his mouthpiece, taking advantage of Peter’s weakness and worldly-mindedness to lay a **stumbling block** in the path of his **own Savior**, to dissuade Him from the task that lay before Him (Matthew 16:22), to try to make Jesus give up the whole idea of laying down His life for the sins of the world! **That was the devil’s agenda!!**

But Jesus would not be sidetracked from the work that lay before Him, as gruesome and as horrible and as awesome-a-sacrifice as His “great passion” was to be! And **thank God** that he **didn’t** “throw in the towel” and take Peter’s suggestion of surrender! For you and I and all mankind would still be in our sins, enemies of God, and destined for hell!

O, **ponder this immense sacrifice of our Savior**, beloved fellow-sinner; think on it well! Yea, take again this year the wonderful opportunity that may be afforded you in your local congregation to *“watch with [your Savior]”* in His bitter passion in **midweek Lenten services**, to appreciate the magnitude of His suffering in your place, and to hold His bleeding, sacred head to your breast in grateful faith and confidence that *“He was wounded for [YOUR] transgressions; [that] He was bruised for [YOUR] iniquities; [that] the chastisement of [YOUR] peace was upon Him; and [that] with His stripes [YOU] are healed!”* He paid that price, He made that sacrifice, for **YOU**! You indeed were there, as He made **YOU** the object of His sacrifice!

But the Lord Jesus here in the verses **following** our title-text also speaks of another sacrifice, not the sacrifice that **He** made, but one that **we** make —not to save ourselves, not to merit His favor, not to contribute to the price of our redemption by works of our own— but the sacrifice by which **we give evidence of our faith in Him**. *“He said unto [the people, including His disciples], ‘Whosoever will come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow Me**. ’ ”* This sacrifice doesn’t **make us** Christians; rather it is the sacrifice that **we Christians make** as the

fruit of a living and grateful faith! It consists chiefly of **self-denial** (not merely “giving up something for Lent” as a work of merit, but giving up **self-service** to serve our **Savior**, giving up what **we** want to do for what **He** wants us to do). “*For whosoever will **save** his life shall **lose** it...*” If you’re concerned about this present life and the things of this present world, if *that’s* your heart’s priority, then you’ll **lose the life eternal**! “*But whosoever shall lose his life for **My sake** and the **Gospel’s**, the same shall **save** it.*”

Sacrificing one’s temporal comfort, ease, riches, popularity and security, laying it all “on the line” for **Jesus** and for His precious **Word**, is evidence that your heart’s treasure is **NOT** the things of **this world** but the things **above**, where your hope is anchored on your Savior by faith in **His** sacrifice as the purchase-price of your salvation. “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the **whole world**, and lose his own **soul**?? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his **soul**??*” That’s the kind of **lame-brained economics** people engage in who put the things of this life ahead of the things that nurture their soul, create and sustain faith, and strengthen their ability to resist temptation. What a **shortsighted** “trade-off”!!

Such traders have a warped “sense” of the spiritual “market” judging by their “investments.” They can sit for **hours** watching television, or a sports event, or a lure in the water, or a video game; but an hour or two on Sundays (and perhaps an hour also on Wednesday evenings during Lent) to sit **at the feet of Jesus** (like Mary of Bethany) is just “too much to ask.” Bible Class for an hour or so before (or after) the worship service is such a “sacrifice” for some, such a “hardship;” but the same people can be on the road to work at 6:30 in the morning every morning, in a fishing boat by 5:30, and behind a duck blind by 4:30! —And evening classes, meetings and services don’t fare much better: People can shop in the evening, go bowling, attend a game, a match, or a race. Concerts, school events, and auto shows are no problem at night, neither is visiting friends and relatives; and **some**, I would imagine, even watch an occasional “late show” on television; but **spiritual activities** – at **NIGHT??** —We’ve **all** been such “poor traders” at some time or other, God help us! How **shortsighted** can we be, especially we who “*know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 8:9) and what **He** sacrificed for **us**??!

It’s high time to set our life’s priorities in the **right order**, says Jesus here in our text! And this is His **most urgent warning** particularly to those who **won’t** sacrifice themselves, their temporal priorities and their precious time for their Savior and for “*the Gospel’s [sake]*,” who **won’t** bear inconveniences much less real “**crosses**” for **Him** except under great protest, **but** will put themselves out and make any arrangement necessary to accommodate **the world’s** demands on them: “*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels!*” (v. 38). Notice that Jesus doesn’t **compel** sacrifices such as self-denial and cross-bearing; He doesn’t **demand** that we follow Him in order to earn or merit eternal life. But He **does expect** us, as those who have benefitted beyond measure from **His** sacrifice for **us**, to “*prove the sincerity of [our] love*” (II Corinthians 8:8), not because we **HAVE TO**, but because we **WANT TO** out of **sincere faith** in and **humble gratitude** to Him who sacrificed **Himself** as the “*Lamb of God*” to set **us** free from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, that we might be **His own**, and live under **Him** in **His** kingdom, and serve **Him** in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness!

*Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend
on whom my hopes of heaven depend??
Nay, when **I** blush, be **this** my shame,
that I no more revere His Name!*

*Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may
when I’ve **no guilt** to wash away,
no tear to wipe, **no good** to crave,
no fear to quell, **no soul** to save!*

*Till then –nor is my boasting vain–
till then I boast **a Savior slain**!
And, oh, may this **my glory** be,
that Christ is not ashamed of **me**!*

(TLH 346, 4,5,6)

— D.T.M.

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Port Harcourt, Nigeria

The Rev. Onimim Frank, Pastor

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: PH-djreal17joe@gmail.com

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. Fyneyface, Pastor

The Rev. Faith N. J. Asembo, Co-Pastor

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyneyface@yahoo.co.uk

E-Mail: faithasembo1@gmail.com



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

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

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

On the Web at

PeaceEvLutheran.com

Office Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Parsonage: (708) 532-9035

Pastor's Cell: (708) 601-3943

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

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

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Pastor's Cell: (541) 579-8861

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

Sunday School & Bible Class 4:00 p.m.

Worship Service 5:30 p.m.

Rev. Paul E. Bloedel, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

On the Web at

StLukes-CLC.com

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Pastor's Cell: (541) 579-8861

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

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

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

E-mail: d_rnensing@hotmail.com

On the Web at

StMarksEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

Pastor's Cell: (708) 655-7549

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

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

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

On the Web at

TrinityEvLutheran.com

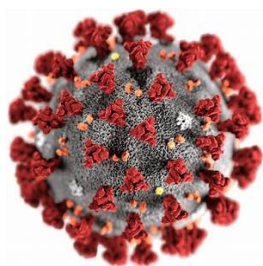
Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Parsonage: (708) 386-4145

Pastor's Cell: (708) 556-1892

(During the current pandemic, please call the respective pastors regarding **assembled** or alternative **"virtual"** services.)

Help us, Good Lord!



“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

—Philippians 4:6

Lord God, dear heavenly Father, may it please Thee according to Thy merciful providence to regard our beloved country in this time of peril as we still experience, though in decreasing measure, the threat of exposure and infection due to the virulent Coronavirus in its various forms, in particular the elderly, the frail, and the immunocompromised among us. Even as we exercise prudent measures to contain this virus and to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors from contagion by means of vaccinations and other mitigations, keep us from anxiety, depression and despair; and cause us rather, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let our requests come before Thy throne of grace, commending ourselves to Thy special fatherly goodness for Jesus’ our Savior’s sake. May it please Thee in Thine own best time and way to relieve us in this time of chastening and to calm us with regard to our concerns, granting us patience under our frustrations and a happy issue out of all our afflictions according to Thy promise that all things work together for good to them that love Thee, to them who are the called according to Thy gracious purpose. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer, our only Mediator and Advocate at Thy throne. Amen.

