

The Concordia Lutheran



“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35
“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

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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 Ascension Comfort in the Savior's

THREEFOLD OFFICE

as He Sits on the Right Hand of God

*“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them,
He was received up into heaven
and sat on the right hand of God.” —Mark 16:19*

Have you ever stood outside and peered up into the seemingly endless blue sky, trying to imagine the awesome sight of the dear Savior ascending up, up, up into the heavens, until a passing cloud hid Him from view? How unspeakably *wonderful* it must have been for the disciples to behold that event with their very own eyes! Yes, how wonderful—and, at the same time, how troubling to them in their fleshly weakness— to see Jesus leaving them, even *for a time* (John 16:16), and not to expect His visible presence among them for who knows how long!

We too as frail and trembling sheep of our Good Shepherd, often find ourselves in spirit standing with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, “*gazing*,” as it were, “*up into heaven*” (Acts 1:11), wondering how long it will be before He comes again to take **us** home, wishing at times that He were here right now, *visibly* to **teach** us, to **strengthen** us, and to **protect** us as we wend our way through the wilderness of this world on the road to heaven.

But then those two angels on the mount ask US, as they asked the Apostles: “*Why stand ye gazing up into heaven??*” And, as we ponder their question, looking for some reason to justify our wistfulness and melancholy, **Jesus’ own words** echo in our ears, assuring us of His **continual presence** (though unseen with our frail eyes of flesh): “*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20b). Yes, He’s **with us** —not just “in spirit” as those claim who dare to confine the omnipresent Son of God to the local habitation of the heavens above, but— personally and effectively, also according to His *human nature*, to “guide us by [His] hand to our fatherland” (TLH 410, 1). In the Gospel for Ascension Day, this assurance is very specially ours, as we direct our gaze out of the “blue” and into the Holy Scriptures, to see with eyes of faith our ascended Savior sitting on the right hand of His Father. For there, at the place of supreme honor and glory, the exalted Christ, also according to His *human nature*, **rules and fills all things** with divine power and majesty, functioning as our **Prophet**, as our **Priest**, and as our **King** —all for OUR benefit as the heirs of everlasting life.

In Mark 16:15, we read: “*And He said unto them, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.’*” Here Jesus, who came into the world to be our divine **Prophet**, “*like unto [Moses]*” (Deuteronomy 18:15), a preacher of “*good tidings*” (Isaiah 61:1) unto the meek, unto the brokenhearted, and unto the captives bound in sin’s prison (as the prophets of the Old Testament described Him), is about to ascend into heaven. Had He **finished** His work as our **Prophet**?? Surely He had revealed Himself by word and deed (through His preaching and His miracles) to be the long-promised Savior of the world, that we might believe and be saved. But now He makes provision to **continue** in that office as our **Prophet** by sending out His Apostles (and in turn also others) to preach the Gospel of salvation in His Name—to be “*witnesses unto [Him]*” (Acts 1:8) “*among all nations*” (Mark 13:10) in keeping with God’s sincere desire that “*all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4).

He told His disciples first of all WHO is to go: “*Go YE*,” He says to them, “[*all of you who are My disciples*].” But wasn’t He speaking just to them, to the eleven? How do we know that this is a general mission command or “Great Commission” which extends also to **us today**? First of all, because the eleven could not have fulfilled this task by themselves, preaching to “*every creature*” of “*all nations*” of **all times**. Jesus told them, “*This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matthew 24:14). And secondly, because He had made it abundantly clear that the confession of His Name before men is the solemn **duty** and high **privilege** of every Christian and a fruit of saving faith in Him (Matthew 10:32). That makes His “Great Commission” both universal and timeless, as far as His *disciples*, His *true believers*, are concerned.

But our heavenly Prophet not only made this a general mission command. He also set up a specific office in the church, the **OFFICE of proclaiming, of preaching and teaching**, the Word of Life, not INSTEAD OF individual Christian witnessing, but ON BEHALF OF all the people in the local congregation. For Paul writes to the Ephesians (4:11) that the ascended Savior “gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some **pastors and teachers**,”...for the *upbuilding of His body, the Church*. To the incumbents of this specific office — to ALL such “pastors and teachers,” Paul writes through his instructions to Timothy: “**Preach the Word**...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4:2ff.).

Moreover, our exalted Prophet is very specific, not merely about who is to preach, and to whom the preaching is to be directed; but He **stipulates in detail WHAT is to be preached**. He says: “**Preach the Gospel to every creature**” (Mark 16:15). The so-called “fundamentalists” try to show from these words that only “the Gospel” in the **narrower sense** is to be preached (the “Good News” of our salvation in Jesus Christ), to the exclusion of the rest of Scripture. But look at Jesus’ own words in verse 16: “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” —pure Gospel— “**BUT he that believeth not shall be damned**” —the sternest Law in all its fierceness, to be proclaimed “to every creature,” to all men — even to believers because of their flesh (Romans 7:18ff.), but particularly to those who recognize in themselves no sin, no shame, no unworthiness in the sight of God, who need to be shown their sins, who need to acknowledge their sins, in order for the Gospel to have any value for them at all. And in Matthew 28, where Jesus’ “Great Commission” is also stated, He says: “Teaching them to observe **all things** whatsoever I have commanded you” (v. 20a).

Thus Jesus, our ascended Lord, continues to exercise His office as our Divine **Prophet** through the witness of individual Christians as they speak “the oracles of God” (I Peter 4:11), as well as by “pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11b), the incumbents of the **pastoral office** of the local congregation, as they shun not to declare to their sheep “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), that which **they need** for their faith, as well as that which **they need** for their life here on earth in **proof** of their faith, “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15b), that is, rightly distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel, “that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

But our ascension hope and comfort is further assured and sealed to us by our Savior’s continuing office as our Divine **Priest**, who pleads for us before the throne of His heavenly Father. We read in our title-text, in verse 19 of the Ascension Gospel: “So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.” The fact that God the Father exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20) is evidence once again that He had found Jesus’ redemptive work the all-sufficient price to pay for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2), and that He had accepted it for the reconciliation of the world unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19). **That much** of His high-priestly work Jesus had “accomplished” (John 19:30) already when He died on the cross, namely, that He had kept the whole Law of God perfectly in our place, as our Substitute, and that He had rendered Himself the perfect Sacrifice for the sins of the world. “Wherefore,” Paul writes to the Philippians, “[for that very reason], God also hath highly exalted Him” (2:9). That blessed fact of what He had already done is, in and of itself, a source of great comfort to us Christians, as we consider the Savior’s ascension into heaven.

But, when we examine in addition the wonderful high-priestly function that Jesus **CONTINUES TO PERFORM** on our behalf, seated at His Father’s side, our Ascension joy is complete! For having fully satisfied His Father’s justice in our place, Jesus now **intercedes** or pleads for us before His throne, as the writer to the Hebrews states so plainly: “Christ... entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God **for us**” (9:24), to be our defense lawyer, our “Advocate with the Father” (I John 2:1), to plead our case at the bar of divine justice. For He and He alone is qualified to “approach the bench” on our behalf, as our Substitute having fulfilled all of God’s requirements, having rendered satisfaction for our transgressions, and having paid the “ultimate price” of our redemption “not with corruptible things as silver and gold” (I Peter 1:18) but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death (Luther). Thus, in His “closing argument” as it were, Jesus states: “By **one offering** [I] have perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14) “[so that now, dressed in the robe of My righteousness which they have received by faith, these clients of Mine are partakers of the benefits of My redemptive work, stand acquitted of all their transgressions, and are righteous in Thy sight. They are Thine own adopted children by faith in Me and heirs of everlasting life. Who shall lay anything to their charge? Thou Thyself hast justified them!”] —With an attorney like that, who has the “ear” of the Chief Justice of heaven and earth, is it any wonder that, by the faith created in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, we are able confidently to *lay hold* upon and thus to *receive personally* the forgiveness and righteousness which God, in eternity already, granted to the whole world for Christ’s sake, and to *be sure* of the inheritance that is ours as His saints? Such indeed is Ascension comfort “that fadeth not away” (I Peter 1:4), “sure and steadfast,” like an anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19)!

But we have yet a third comfort that is ours because our exalted and ascended Savior is even now sitting at the right hand of God; for we read at the conclusion of the Ascension Gospel, Mark 16:20: “*And they went forth and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word** with signs following.*” Not only was He **with them**, as He promised, but He did even better than that: He “***work[ed]** with them,*” exercising His power as the exalted “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (Revelation 19:16) to prosper their preaching, to guide them, and to protect them. The very fact that Jesus **has** this power in His **KINGLY office** is stated by Him in the last chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel as the REASON why He is sending them forth to preach and to teach; for He says there: “*All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye **THEREFORE** and teach [that is, make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them... [and] teaching them*” (Matthew 28:18-20). What an incentive that should be also to **us** to go forth to **do His work**, not fearing the slightest difficulty, setback, or sacrifice; for we can confidently do so, enabled by **His power**, “*the Lord working [also] with [us]*” to accomplish what **He** pleases, and to see His Word “*prosper in the thing whereto [He] sent it*” (Isaiah 55:11).

And notice that our Savior’s **kingly power** is not limited to mere words, for He mightily “*confirmed the Word with **signs following***” —with miracles to back up what had been preached and taught, similar to the miracles He Himself did during His public ministry here on earth as witness to His Messiahship. As we read in the last part of the Ascension Gospel, Jesus said He would give *believers* special powers and abilities to cast out devils, to heal the sick, to speak foreign languages spontaneously without first having to study them, and to be immune to the bites of venomous snakes and to ingested poisons. Indeed, Luke tells us in Acts 2:43 that “***many** wonders and signs were done by the **apostles**.*” However, not all believers had these special gifts, even in those early days; for St. Paul writes to the Corinthians in his first epistle: “*Are **all** apostles? Are **all** prophets? Are **all** teachers? Are **all** WORKERS OF MIRACLES??* (12:29) ...*There are **diversities** of gifts, but the same Spirit, ...who divides [those gifts] to every man **severally** [differently] as **He** will*” (12:4-11).

Today we have neither the Savior’s promise nor the need for such special or extraordinary gifts to back up our proclamation of the Word; for we now have both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, God’s complete revelation to man, in our very own hands, which is so **clear**, so **powerful**, so **efficacious** in and of itself that no miracle is needed to **supplement** it OR to **implement** it OR to give it **greater authority** than it already has. “*If ye continue in **My Word**,*” says Jesus, “***then** are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the **truth**, and the truth shall make you **free***” (John 8:31-32). And Paul adds: “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for **it is the power of God unto salvation** to everyone that believeth*” (Romans 1:16).

Let us therefore never forget that, thanks to our exalted and ascended King and Savior, we have nothing to fear as we go forth to do His bidding. For **all things**, even the massive powers of this world, are all under His almighty control; and He manipulates them in the interest of His church (Ephesians 1:22). Therefore, when we are engaged in HIS WORK, whatever our several tasks may be in His kingdom, we are **not alone**, we are **not powerless**, and we are **not helpless**. For “*[we] can do **all things** through Christ, which strengtheneth [us]*” (Philippians 4:13), through our almighty **King**, who assures us: “***All power** is given unto **Me** in heaven and in earth. Go ye **THEREFORE** and [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe **all things** whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, **I am with you alway**, even unto the end of the world. Amen!*” (Matthew 28:18-20).

May that sure and certain promise of His **abiding presence** be the culmination of our Ascension comfort and joy, as we cling in humble, childlike confidence to Christ, our exalted Savior, our **Prophet**, our **Priest**, and our **King**, and as we look forward with happy anticipation even now to the fulfillment of **another parting promise** upon which we should firmly rely: “*I go to prepare a place **for you**, ...that where I am, there **ye** may be also*” (John 14:2-3).

—D. T. M.



The Manifestation of the Spirit in the Kingdom of Grace

*“The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink,
but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” — Romans 14:17*

It never ceases to amaze us (and well it should continue to amaze ALL of us!) that the third great festival of the church year—the **Feast of the Holy Spirit**—receives such a “dribble” of attention, even from many professing Christians, compared to **Christmas** (the feast of God the **Father**) and **Easter** (the feast of God the **Son**). Why, even the **world** celebrates Christmas—*socially* and above all *materially*—as a “major holiday”! The general public ignorantly sings of “peace on earth” and “good will toward men” without the slightest idea of what those expressions really mean! And the only Christmas bells that matter are the cash register bells (or “beeps” *nowadays*) which signal a successful holiday season for the economy. —The world’s celebration of Easter is just about as bad, with barely a *whisper* about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; but flowers, candy, bunnies and colored eggs are everywhere as symbols of “renewed life” ...whatever that means apart from God’s gracious forgiveness of the world’s sins for Jesus’ sake and the Holy Ghost’s regeneration of spiritually dead souls to a new life of faith.



But **Pentecost** doesn’t even turn a head or cause an eye to blink among the children of this world! There’s no **money** in it! There are no **presents** to give and receive! Nobody throws a “**Pentecost Party**”! “The festival of **what??**” people ask. To be sure, “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,*” Paul writes to the Corinthians (I, 2:14). The Holy Spirit is truly an **elusive** Spirit to most people—not because He has no interest in them, but because they persistently resist His earnest, sincere efforts to work in them repentance for their sins and to convert them to saving faith in their Redeemer!

But the saddest fact of all is that many **Christians**, who owe their very faith and sanctified life to the Holy Spirit of God, are **oblivious** to His festival! It would be safe to say that many Christians got up on Pentecost Sunday morning and neglected to wish one another a “Happy Pentecost Day.” Many more forgot entirely about Pentecost Day, until perhaps they noticed the red stole and red paraments commonly displayed in the House of God, and that jogged their memory. And a far greater number even than *that* have no idea of what Pentecost is *all about*! Now **that’s SAD!** For the work of God’s Holy Spirit permeates and manifests itself in **every single facet** of a Christian’s life and in **every single condition** which the grace of God creates for poor sinners to make and to keep them His children and heirs of everlasting life! Therefore to sharpen our focus upon the third person of the Holy Trinity and His work for our salvation, we have chosen the simple title-text above to illustrate and to instruct us concerning the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Kingdom of Grace.

To divert our thinking away from the external trappings with which so many churches concern themselves nowadays—size in numbers, grandiose structures, social programs and limitless finances—St. Paul says at the outset: “*The kingdom of God is **not** meat and drink.*” The Lord Jesus told Pontius Pilate: “*My kingdom is **not** of this **world**;*” its mission is **not** an earthly one; its message points it subjects heavenward; its success is not tied to worldly endeavors; its life is spiritual instead of temporal. Its citizens do not empower its King; it is *He* who empowers *them*. “*Eating and drinking*” is not what the church of Jesus Christ is all about, in spite of the trend, especially in our day and time, to measure a congregation’s success, a church-body’s success, yea, an individual Christian’s success, in terms of **externals**—in terms of what the eye can see, the ear can hear, the tongue can taste, and the hand can spend. “**Wrong!**” says the Apostle. God’s Kingdom is a **spiritual** kingdom in which **the Spirit of God** is active in every facet of its operation and in the heart of every one of its subjects.

The first facet of God's kingdom is "*righteousness*," Paul tells us, not external or civic righteousness that one might try to **earn** by the works of the Law, as if that might gain for us favor in the sight of God, but the "*righteousness of God*" which **Jesus earned for us** as our Substitute when He perfectly fulfilled the Law in our place and suffered the penalty of our guilt. And His heavenly Father, who was completely satisfied with Jesus' *vicarious atonement*, for **His** sake "*reconcil[ed] the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (II Corinthians 5:19a). Because of Jesus' redemptive work, God **forgave** the sins of *the whole world* and **declared all men righteous** as a unilateral, forensic act of pure grace and mercy to poor, lost and condemned sinners—to you and me—so that, by faith in **that** forgiveness, by confidence in **Christ's** righteousness that **God** imputed to **us**, we might be His adopted children and heirs of everlasting life! (Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:26).

What role does the **Holy Ghost** play in this imputation of Jesus' righteousness to poor sinners? "[He] hath committed unto us the **Word of reconciliation**," Paul writes to the Corinthians (II Corinthians 5:19b), the proclamation of God's forgiveness and His declaration of righteousness, the **Word** of the Gospel. That "*Word of reconciliation*," given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is the very means whereby the Spirit of God creates in our hearts the **faith** or **confidence** which lays hold on God's forgiveness and the righteousness that Christ earned for every soul of man and receives those blessings as our own. Thus, it is by the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts that God's **objective** justification becomes **subjective** (or personal) justification; and, as Paul writes in Romans chapter 3, "*the righteousness of God which is [received] by faith of [i.e.in] Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*" (v. 22).

Thus, my beloved fellow-sinners and, by God's grace, believers in this precious Gospel, it is the **Holy Ghost** who manifested to us God's forgiveness and Christ's "*righteousness*" imputed to sinners in the first place, and who brought us to that saving faith by which we received that priceless blessing as our own and became members of God's gracious Kingdom.

Now, writes Paul in chapter 5 of this epistle (v. 1): "*Being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "*The kingdom of God is...**peace**,*" we read in our title-text, **peace of conscience** which we sinners now enjoy by faith in Jesus, because, instead of being clothed in our own "*filthy rags righteousness*" in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6) and being His **enemies** (Romans 5:10), we are clad "*in the garments of salvation*" (Isaiah 61:10), in "*Jesus' blood and righteousness*" (TLH 371, 1) which covers all our sins and makes us **acceptable to God**. Since "*no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*" (I Corinthians 12:3b) since it is the Holy Ghost who works in our hearts the faith which reaches out to receive and cling to the gift of God's forgiveness, the "*peace with God*" that we now enjoy **we have** as the manifestation of the Spirit in the Kingdom of God's grace, the blessed **result** of His operation within our hearts through the Gospel.

And that "*peace of God which passeth all understanding*" (Philippians 4:7) then **produces peace among the brethren**, "*the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3) as the **fruit of faith** and **evidence** of our membership in "*the Kingdom of God.*" In his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls "*peace*" among Christian brethren "*the fruit of the Spirit*" (5:22), and he adds: "*if we live in the Spirit*"—if we have become spiritually alive by faith in Jesus as our Savior, by faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit—"*let us also walk in the Spirit*" (v. 25) with His "external testimony" evident in our everyday lives of sanctification, "*bearing witness*" that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16), members of His gracious Kingdom here on earth, and heirs of glory everlasting in heaven!

And then, as a result of all these blessings wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul reminds us yet that "*the kingdom of God is... **joy in the Holy Ghost.***" How can it be otherwise in us who have been **justified** by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith; who **enjoy** "*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" as the result of our justification; and who **endeavor**, by His grace, to "*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" among our dear brethren —all because of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts? Let's face it, we have a lot to be joyful **about!**!

Our "*joy in the Holy Ghost*," **joy created by Him, strengthened by Him, and maintained by Him** through the Gospel and the Holy Sacraments, is first and foremost **joy of the heart** because of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation which have been offered, given and sealed to us by our Holy Comforter. Thus our hearts sing with David in Psalm 51: "*Take not Thy **Holy Spirit** from me! Restore unto me the **joy of Thy salvation**, and uphold me with **Thy free Spirit!***" (vv. 11-12). —"*Joy in the Holy Ghost*" is not only present joy, as our hearts are lightened from the burden of our sins, but future joy, as we look forward in **hope** —that is, in sure anticipation— "*to the glory that shall be revealed in us*" when the Kingdom of Grace becomes the Kingdom of Glory in heaven!

But “*joy in the Holy Ghost*” should not just be hidden in our hearts! It should be **evident** in our lives as sanctified children of God, citizens of His blessed Kingdom of Grace, and perpetual targets of the Holy Spirit’s work by means of the Gospel to **keep us** in the saving faith “*unto the end*” (Mark 13:13). Joy in the Lord, “*joy in the Holy Ghost*,” should be oozing out of every pore in abundance as the “external witness” of the Spirit that we are heirs of everlasting life! We should **rejoice** in the Lord, that is, **show forth** our joy in songs of praise, with a happy Christian disposition, with cheerful service in His Kingdom among us, and in enthusiastic testimony concerning what great things He hath done for us, “*whereof we are glad*,” says the Psalmist (126:3)!

The **Day of Pentecost**: For us Christians a day of **rejoicing** “*in the Holy Ghost*” that we are by grace members of the Kingdom of God by His operation within our hearts, personally justified by faith and recipients of Christ’s perfect righteousness to cover all our sins, at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith in His blood, and joyful beyond words because of “*the glory that shall be revealed in us*” (I Peter 5:1b)!! Well do we join the beloved Lutheran poet, Paul Gerhardt, in praying:

Thy gift is **joy**, O Spirit;
 Thou wouldst not have us pine.
 In darkest hours Thy comfort
 doth ever brightly shine!
 And, oh, how oft Thy voice
 doth shed its sweetness o’er me
 and opens heaven before me
 and bids my heart rejoice!

(TLH 228, 5 adapted)

*“Now the God of hope fill **you** with all **joy** and **peace** in believing,
 that ye may abound in **hope** through the power of the Holy Ghost!”* (Romans 15:13).

—D. T. M.



The Doctrine of the Trinity

in the Glory of its Practical Significance to Us

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.”*

— II Corinthians 13:14

We ask in our *Catechism* (Q/A 29): “When do men have other gods” in violation of the First Commandment? This is NOT a question whereby we seek to be divisive, by which we try to alienate others, or one which we answer with a “superior air” of religious snobbery —as if we, **of ourselves**, are “spiritual” enough to recognize the **true** God, while everyone else worships **idols**! No, it’s not that **at all**! As a matter of fact, there’s nothing “personal” involved —no subjective judgments, no groundless condemnations, no ego-trips, no vendettas whatsoever! On the contrary, the question is a completely **objective** one, arising from God’s own demand that **He alone** be *worshipped*, that **He alone** be *recognized*, that **He alone** be *glorified* as the **only true and living God**— and that all the rest be acknowledged as “*idols*” (Psalm 96:5; 115:3-8), that is, plain “*nothings*” in this world (I Corinthians 8:4)! God has the right to make such clear-cut distinctions; and He has the right to insist that we make them as well!

*“I am the Lord; **that** is My Name. And My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images,”* He declares in no uncertain terms in Isaiah 42, verse 8. And so the Psalmist draws the following contrast: “**OUR** God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands” (115:3-4). That certainly settles the matter (as far as **Holy Scripture** is concerned) regarding those who worship any **creature** as God —be it a creature of man’s making or even one of God’s own making! That’s **IDOLATRY** plain and simple!

But, we also state without reservation on the basis of Scripture that “men have other gods when they believe in a god who is not the **Triune God**” (Q/A 29, B); and that includes not only Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, pagans of all kinds, and “**Unitarians**” (as being the opposite of “**Trinitarians**”), but also the Jews (who deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God), as well as the so-called “Witnesses of Jehovah,” who claim that Jesus was Jehovah’s first creature, the Mormons, who teach that Adam is God, practitioners of “Christian Science” (which is neither Christian nor scientific), the Masonic and other similar lodges, and even the Scouting organizations, all of whom steadfastly **DENY** that “**the only true God is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine being or essence**” (Cat. Q/A 26). And, sadly, it includes many denominations that identify themselves as “*Christian*” nowadays and, at the very same time, **deny** the doctrine of the Trinity —either in their **teaching** or in their **practice**! The objective fact-of-the-matter is simply this: ALL **antitrinitarians** are guilty of **idolatry**; and they **deny** the universal, Christian faith, “which faith,” as we confess in the words of the *Athanasian Creed*, “except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall *perish everlastingly*.”

Now, in our present article in celebration of the **Feast of the Holy Trinity**, we have before us as our title-text the “Apostolic Benediction,” a text of Holy Scripture, penned by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which not only sets forth the Doctrine of the Trinity as an abstract mystery (which it admittedly IS for us poor thickwitted mortals), but a comforting text which teaches the Doctrine of the Trinity in the glory of its practical significance to us.

In bestowing upon the Corinthians and upon Christians of all times the benediction of the Triune God, the Apostle Paul identifies distinctive gifts from the three distinct persons of God, and yet, inseparably-related gifts from the indivisible Trinitarian Godhead.

*"The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ"* is first mentioned simply because, for us Christians, salvation *in* Christ Jesus **is** (or certainly **should be**) always uppermost in our minds; for **without it** we would surely "perish everlastingly." This salvation is ours solely as a **gift**, merited and paid for by "*the Lord Jesus Christ*," "...not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death" (Luther). Without His **vicarious** (or *substitutionary*) **atonement** for the sins of the world, there wouldn't be any "**grace...that bringeth salvation**" (Titus 2:11). Paul writes to the Ephesians, chapter 5, that Christ "*hath given **Himself for us** an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor*" (v. 2) to appease God's just wrath against sinners, to give God's justice a perfect "scapegoat" in Himself, and to provide for every sinner that "*robe of righteousness*," "*the garments of salvation*" (Isaiah 61:10), the only suitable "*wedding garment*" (Matthew 22:11) in which he can appear before God's throne and be accounted worthy of everlasting life! That **was always** and **still is** "*the grace*," that is, the **gift**, "*of the Lord Jesus Christ*" to poor undeserving sinners like you and me—with "no strings attached"—the gift that is ours by faith in His blood, totally apart from any works or merits on our part to earn it!

*"...and the **love** of God*," that great love for vile, rebellious and flagrantly-disobedient mortals that moved God in eternity already (before He ever created man on the face of the earth) to devise a plan to save sinners by the death of His Son. In this *essential internal act* known as the "eternal decree of redemption" ALL the persons of the Godhead concurred; but in the implementation of that plan, the **Father's** love was specially manifested; for John writes in his first epistle, chapter 4: "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*" THAT'S a love that only a **Father** can bestow upon His dear children, a love **so great** that He made the ultimate sacrifice to "*manifest*" it, to make it known to poor sinners. It was a love **so great** that He took out the full brunt of His just anger upon "*His only-begotten Son*" so "*that we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Galatians 4:5), be reconciled unto Him "*by the death of His Son*," Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10), and "*be made heirs*" (Titus 3:7) —joint-heirs with Christ, our Elder Brother (Romans 8:29b), of the mansions of everlasting joy and bliss in our "*Father's house*" in heaven (John 14:2)! "*Behold, what manner of **love** the **Father** hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the **sons of God!***" (I John 3:1).

*"...and the **communion** of the Holy Ghost*," His **fellowship**, that is, His **union with** and **indwelling in** US! Those who deny the person of the Holy Ghost do so in an astounding combination of ignorance and arrogance; for only a **personal being** can establish a "relationship" between Himself and someone else! Into this wonderful "*communion*" of peace and comfort and joy and hope the Holy Ghost graciously **enfolds us**, as He creates saving faith in our hearts, as He works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, as He sanctifies us by renewing our hearts so that we can be fruitful in every good work, and finally, as He keeps us in the true faith unto life everlasting. In and through the precious Means of Grace, the Word and Sacraments, the Holy Ghost **calls us**, **works in us**, **enlightens us**, **comforts us**, **sanctifies us**, **grants us** "*peace with God*" by faith in the forgiveness of sins (Romans 5:1), and, in short, **imparts** to us all the blessings of Christ's redemption.

Of what greater **practical significance** could these singular, distinctive gifts **be** —these distinctive gifts from the three distinct persons of the Triune God?! For "*the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the **love** of God, and the **communion** of the Holy Ghost*" are, all three, **indispensable** for our salvation. And so, we zealously **cherish** and gratefully **accept** by faith these precious gifts bestowed upon us in this Apostolic Benediction!

But these gifts do not exist **apart** from one another, as if in a sort of vacuum surrounding *each person* of the Trinity. For the Scriptures clearly tell us: "*The Lord, our God, is **ONE** Lord*" (Deuteronomy 6:4) and "*There is none other God but **ONE***" (I Corinthians 8:4). Thus, these otherwise **distinctive** gifts are intimately **related** one to another in the **indivisible** and **eternal** Godhead, so that they are not the exclusive gift of **one** person or the other, but are all together "*the gift of **GOD***," of our gracious, loving, and comforting **Triune** God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And so we confess, for example, regarding the **justification** of the world, the **objective forgiveness** proclaimed for all sinners of all time: "***God** was, in **Christ**, reconciling the world unto Himself...and hath committed unto us **the Word of reconciliation***" (II Corinthians 5:19), penned by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And as to our victory over death and the grave: "*Thanks be to **God**, which giveth us the victory **through our Lord Jesus Christ!***" (I Corinthians 15:57). The **Father** "*predestinated us unto the adoption of children **by Jesus Christ** to Himself*" (Ephesians 1:5). And "*the communion*" or fellowship spoken of in our title-text as being "*of the **Holy Ghost***" is described in other places as being of the Father and of the Son as well. Jesus says, for example, in John 14: "*If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and **we** will come and make **our** abode with him*" (v. 23). And again: "*I am in*

*My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (v. 20)... “But the Comforter, which is the **Holy Ghost**, whom the **Father** will send in **My Name**, He shall teach you all things” (v. 26), yea, says Jesus, “that **He** may abide with you forever” (v. 16).*

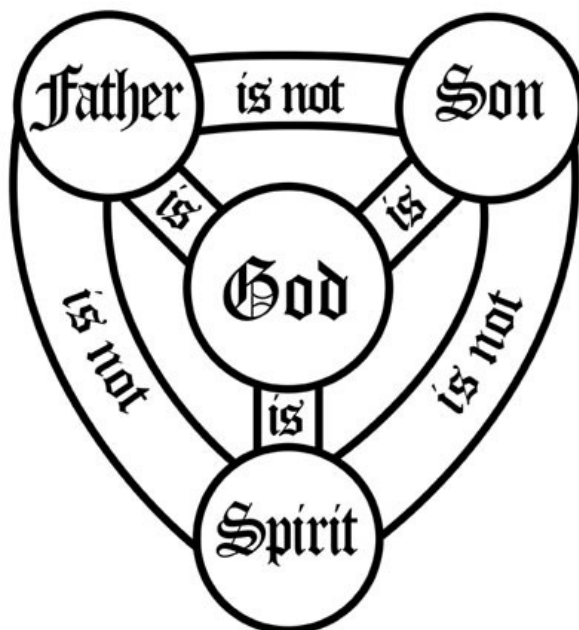
Very properly, then, as we receive **the doctrine of the Holy Trinity** by faith in God’s revelation of Himself to us in His precious Word, we see all three persons working **conjointly** in the Godhead to accomplish His will, namely, the salvation of sinners, so that the redemption of the world does not belong to any **one person exclusively!** “[God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). — What truth? The blessed truth that God loved the world in Christ Jesus, who “gave **Himself** a ransom for all” (v. 6), “that whosoever believeth in **Him** should NOT perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The **Father** in love provided the sacrifice of His Son as His gift to all the world; the **Son** offered Himself in love as the gift that purchased our redemption by satisfying God’s justice; and, by means of the Gospel, the **Holy Ghost** works in us the faith whereby we accept the gift, cling to the merits of Christ, and rejoice in having been saved by grace! What a wonderful plan of salvation was devised in eternity and carried out in time for us poor sinners by our merciful, gracious, and loving Triune God!

And the wonderful **conclusion** to it all is the **blessing** which this benediction **bestows**, namely, that **all the benefits of redemption** merited and earned by the Son, declared and imputed to us by the Father, and imparted and sealed to us by the Holy Ghost through the Means of Grace, shall “*be with you all!*” When we by faith in Christ Jesus **hold fast** to the promise of everlasting life published to all men in the Gospel, yea, when we “*hear [His] voice*” and “*follow [Him]*” (John 10:27), “*grow[ing] in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior*” (II Peter 3:18), Jesus says of us for our comfort and assurance: “*No [one] shall pluck them out of My hand!*” (John 10:27-28). Indeed, not even **Satan himself** shall prevail against His Church! (Matthew 16:18). Therefore,

*All blessing, honor, thanks and praise
to Father, Son, and Spirit,
the GOD that saved us by His grace—
All glory to HIS merit!
—O Triune God in heaven above,
who hast revealed Thy saving love,
Thy blessed Name be hallowed!*

(TLH 377, 10)

— D. T. M.



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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

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SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria

The Rev. Bateinm Bestman, Pastor

Thompson Compound Abalama Abalama,

Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobele Aaron, Pastor

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(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

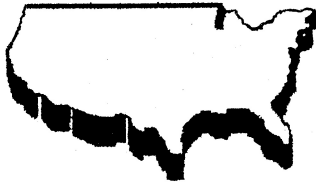
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The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

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Parsonage: (708) 532-9035

Pastor's Cell: (708) 601-3943

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

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The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Pastor's Cell: (206) 579-8861

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

Worship Service 5:30 p.m.

The 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: (206) 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

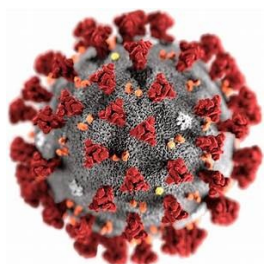
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Pastor's Cell: (708) 556-1892

(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, we thank Thee that, according to Thy merciful providence, Thou hast regarded our beloved country in this time of peril and hast permitted our society to open up to a great extent as we experience far fewer infections with the Coronavirus due to natural and acquired immunity and successful inoculations with effective vaccines. Even as we still exercise prudent measures to contain this virus and to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors from contagion, 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 comfort us in this period of chastening and to protect us from harm and danger, granting us meanwhile patience under adversity 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.

