

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

Vol. LXVI

November-December 2022

Nos. 11-12





"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

Vol. LXVI

November – December 2022

Nos. 11–12

Official Organ of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

The Concordia Lutheran Editor.

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

Book and Tract Editor

The Rev. David J. Mensing
22012 Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411

Lay Member

Mr. Jason A. Mabe
6249 El Morro Lane
Oak Forest, IL 60452

Address subscriptions, renewals and remittances to:
Scriptural Publications, 17151 S. Central Avenue,
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913. A special notice of
expiration will be inserted in the issue which
terminates your subscription.

Officers of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

PRESIDENT:

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

VICE PRESIDENT:

The Rev. Paul E. Bloedel
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, Oregon 97355

SECRETARY:

The Rev. David J. Mensing
22012 Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411

TREASURER:

Mr. Robert G. Bloedel
10017 – 61st Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98178

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.

Commemorating Luther's Birth – November 10, 1483



One often hears the claim that, if Martin Luther were alive today, yea, if he were able to come back from the grave, if only for a short time, to see how far the world has come in over five-hundred years since October 31, 1517, he would indeed be pleased — particularly with the growth of the Lutheran Church, the survival of Protestantism, and even many “reforms” that have been adopted by the Church of Rome. Nothing could be further from the truth, however; and anyone even remotely acquainted with Luther’s work, his uncompromising stand on the Word of God, and his disdain for selling out the truth for the sake of temporal peace and tranquility, should know better than to suggest such a thing. On the contrary, Dr. Luther would be filled with disgust and revulsion at the “Babylonian” conditions in our world today!

If Luther were alive today, what indeed would he see? In spite of technological temporal advances (most of which would no doubt stagger the Reformer’s imagination); in spite of vast improvement in the overall standard of living, particularly in so-called “western” societies, with better nutrition, advanced health care, and affluent housing for most people; and in spite of the fact that people in general are better educated today and therefore better able to read, study, and understand the Holy Scriptures, “*which are able to make [them] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15) — in spite of all these temporal strides forward, there has in reality been NO PROGRESS made at all! “*The wickedness of man (is) great in the earth,*” (Genesis 6:5); it is still “*corrupt before God*” and “*filled with violence*” (vv. 11 and 13) as it was in the days of Noah, in the days of Sodom, in the days of Rome’s legendary decadence, and in the days of Medieval Europe, so that, on balance, human civilization is steadily on the *decline*, heading down the broad and easy “*road that leadeth to destruction*” (Matthew 7:13). Indeed, by all objective indications, according to the description Jesus Himself makes of conditions to be expected just before the end of the world (Luke 17:26-30), we are today living in the last times; and the Day of Judgment cannot be far off. With this assessment, Luther would surely agree were he alive today!

In outward Christendom, conditions are not much different from those in the world at large. For so-called “improvements” are nothing but a skin-deep mask beneath which there are festering sores, putrefaction and the rigor of death to see and to smell at the mere touch of a spiritual surgeon’s scalpel as he tries the spirits, marks errorists, and incisively probes with the Word of God. It wouldn’t take Luther long at all to cut through the fair-sounding speeches, platforms and programs of today’s church-bodies and to distinguish between fact and fancy, truth and error, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. And it would be painful for him to hear the vaunted claim in Protestantism today that “Luther’s work of reformation” made all those sects, their varying positions and their freedom to interpret Scripture subjectively a “viable alternative” to Roman Catholicism! He, of course, did nothing of the kind! Luther had to deal primarily with the Papists and Anabaptists in his time, as well as with those who fomented controversy after controversy in the fledgling “Lutheran” movement. But *today*, he would have a much broader proliferation of error to battle, over a field of almost countless sects, denominations and church-bodies, *in addition to* the soul-destroying errors of Rome (which have not diminished in the slightest but have only increased in number since the Council of Trent). Would Luther call that “progress”? Would he indeed be pleased with what he saw today? Decidedly not!

But surely Luther would be gratified at the success enjoyed by “Lutheranism” today, wouldn’t he? The latest figures indicate that there are 104 million Lutherans worldwide (www.numberof.net)! Think of those *numbers*! And yet, as Luther himself would be quick to point out, they are just numbers! They actually say nothing at all about genuine Lutheranism based on Scripture alone, the “*formal principle*” of the Reformation. In fact, it’s no secret nowadays that many so-called “Lutheran” pastors deny the most basic, fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: The inerrancy, immutability and infallibility of the verbally-inspired Holy Scriptures; the deity of Christ; His vicarious atonement; His bodily resurrection from the dead and the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day; and objective justification. “Lutheran” theological professors are permitted to attack with impunity such doctrines as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Creation of the world by God in six normal twenty-four-hour days, and the Real Presence of the Savior’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. To many “Lutherans,” the killing of unborn children should be a mother’s prerogative; homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle which should not be condemned — even in pastors; women should be eligible for the public ministry; and pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are perfectly acceptable as the personal expression of “love,” provided that couples are encouraged to practice “safe sex.” How

about *transgenderism* on the part of those who are dissatisfied with the gender “assigned” to them by God at their conception and birth (Romans 9:20). Would Luther join the ranks of those “enlightened” modernists who dare to bear his name and hold all these (and many other aberrations) to be “progress” in the church? The reader can intelligently answer that question in the negative without any help from this writer!

And what would the dear Dr. Luther see in the so called “conservative” Lutheran bodies today? Certainly much of the above in pockets or enclaves of liberalism, benignly ignored by many, tolerated by most, dealt with according to sound doctrinal discipline by practically no one! Some of the staunch “conservatives” protest, write articles and letters to editors, and even speak out at free conferences and conventions; but their words, “full of sound and fury,” signify “nothing” (Shakespeare) but so much hot air and harmless paperwork generated by smoking computers. When push comes to shove and the Lord through the Apostle Paul says “*Avoid them*” (Romans 16:17), they choose to avoid *Him* instead, to “keep protesting,” and thus to serve not *His* cause but their own belly, deceiving the hearts of simple fellow-Christians into believing that they are really orthodox (v. 18)! Would Luther see through the sham of conservatism today? By God’s grace, Luther was not the fool that so many so-called “conservatives” try to take US for! Luther took to task not just the priests of his day who taught their people nothing (cf. his introduction to the *Small Catechism*) but also the poor ignorant laymen who were led about by the nose by those whom they trusted to be stalwart soldiers of the cross, laymen who themselves, still today, are without excuse for tolerating limp washrags in their pulpits, but who can be pitied for not having the Christian fortitude to depose them!

If Luther were alive today, what would he see in the theological training programs maintained by so-called “Lutheran” colleges and seminaries? Surely the miserable preparation of candidates for the Ministry nowadays accounts for much of the problem described thus far; for younger pastors in particular are, for want of a better word, ignorant of Christian doctrine. They are unable succinctly and clearly to state “*the first principles of the oracles of God*” (Hebrews 5:12), even the rudimentary doctrines of Holy Scripture, quote the proof-texts upon which they have been established, and apply them consistently in their practice. Many are so “*unskillful in the Word of Righteousness*” by reason of non-use that they are incapable of discerning good and evil (vv. 13-14). Is it any wonder that they are “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:14) when the storms of controversy begin to blow? Theological students nowadays “major” in scholarly branches of study — history, languages, sociology, psychology, counseling, higher textual criticism, and philosophy — but can’t recite the *Enchiridion* (Small Catechism) word-for-word, nor give simple definitions or brief explanations of such basic concepts as Justification, Christ’s State of Humiliation, the communication of attributes, the Savior’s Vicarious Atonement, the Church — visible and invisible, the Doctrine of Election, and Christian Church Discipline. Religious unionism, selective fellowship, and separatism are such foggy notions that many frankly admit their inadequacy to deal with them. “Dogmatics” is “out;” “eisegesis” is “in.” Preaching the Law is to be avoided as “unloving;” and yet the Gospel is to be appreciated and cherished without the Law and the knowledge of sin that *it* imparts! Would Luther find such a state of affairs an “improvement” or “progress” in the making of theologians? Need we even ask?

Luther is credited with translating the Holy Scriptures into the language of his people, so that they could read them, understand them, learn them, discuss them, quote them and meditate in them. Today we have so many translations in English alone that we are compelled to ask: “Which translation are you using?” Just about every home has a Bible in it nowadays; and Bible societies make sure that every hotel and motel room has one. But the people’s knowledge of the Scriptures is so abysmal by and large that one would suspect little or no contact with the Bible at all! What is going on here? Luther would know — he saw it coming already when he penned those prophetic lines:

“The Word they still shall let remain,
And not a thank have for it!”

Sadly, many in our own midst, contrary to what we would like to think, have far too much apathy for Bible study, Bible classes, Bible reading in their homes, Bible discussions in the family circle and with the brethren, and Bible USE on a day-today basis. Many have the idea that their pastors will take care of their spiritual growth FOR them! Luther would see *that too* if he were alive today. He would not be *surprised* (since the flesh in Satan’s service always seeks to weaken our knowledge, our confidence, and our strength); but he would be greatly *disappointed*, considering the precious heritage of grace we have as “children of the Reformation” in the Holy Scriptures. Do we actually want to follow so many others down the road of ignorance, complacency, apathy, and finally contempt for the pure doctrines of God’s holy Word? God forbid! Therefore the Apostle Peter beseeches us in his second Epistle, chapter three: “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error*

of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (vv. 17 and 18).

If Luther were alive today, and we can thank God that he is not here to witness these distressing conditions but is safe in the arms of his Savior, “*which is far better*” (Philippians 1:23), what would he say to these things? Luther wrote so much about all these matters in sermons, exhortations, commentaries and confessions, that we could never cull just one quotation typical of what his attitude would be. But suffice it for the purpose of our little article to cite a few pertinent lines from his *Preface to the Small Catechism*, lines which only indicate that “history repeats itself” when the sinful heart of man, when the Old Adam within us Christians, writes the script. Luther wrote:

To all faithful and Godly pastors and preachers: Grace, Mercy, and Peace in Jesus Christ our Lord:

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced me and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian Doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Help, dear God! What manifold misery I beheld! The common people have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and alas, many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless all claim to be Christians, baptized, and enjoying the Holy Sacraments; and yet they can’t so much as say the Lord’s Prayer, nor the Creed, nor the Ten Commandments! They live like common cattle and irrational hogs! And yet, now that the Gospel has been restored to them [and they know that they’re not saved by their works anymore], they think they can do as they please and have learned to abuse their newfound liberty like experts! O ye Bishops, what will you ever be able to answer Christ for your shameful neglect of your people and for never having for a moment really discharged your office as pastors?

Therefore I beg you for God’s sake, you who are pastors or preachers, take your office to heart for a change, have pity upon your people who have been entrusted to you, and help us teach them the Catechism... And those of you who are so unskilled in teaching doctrine that you don’t know these things yourselves, take these simple pages and teach them to your people word-for-word in a uniform, standard format, so that they don’t get confused along the way.”

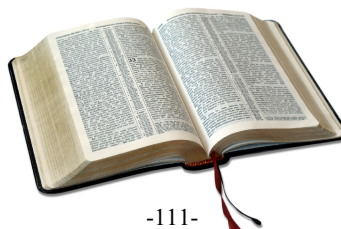
(Freely translated from the original German.)

If Luther were alive today, he would find things not a whole lot improved over what he had found on his visits to the German villages and towns in 1529 — maybe even somewhat worse, considering the wondrous benefits we Lutherans enjoy as heirs of the Reformation. And what he stated above could well be said also today to those pastors who do everything in their congregations but teach and preach the Word of God in its purity! Paul writes to Timothy what we pastors should be doing for our people: “*Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure [i.e. tolerate] sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears*” (II Timothy 4:2-3). That time is NOW! People generally won’t stand for sound doctrine anymore. And they want lots of teachers who will tickle their ears, telling them what they WANT to hear, rather than what they OUGHT to hear for their own soul’s welfare! May we, dearly-beloved brethren, never tire of the pure doctrine of God’s precious Word which He has in mercy preserved to us in our little Conference — scorned by men for its small size, derided for its doctrine, chided for its faithful practice. Let them say and do what they may! “They can harm us none!” Christ hath for us the battle won! “The kingdom ours remaineth!” That is indeed our legacy if we “*hold fast the form of sound words*” (II Timothy 1:13) and “*earnestly contend for the faith*” (Jude 3). If Luther were alive today, that would be his unrelenting plea and fervent exhortation as we see the Day approaching. May God grant it to all of us for Jesus’ sake!

Lord, help us ever to retain
the Catechism’s doctrine plain,
as Luther taught the Word of Truth
in simple style to tender youth. (TLH 288, 1)

In every season, every place,
may we regard Thy Word of Grace,
until, when life’s brief day is past,
we reach eternal joy at last. (TLH 7, 3)

— D. T. M.



Remembering to Give Thanks unto the Lord

*“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord
and to sing praises unto Thy Name, O Most High;
to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning,
and Thy faithfulness every night.” — Psalm 92:1-2*

It is a sad fact of life and a reflection of the perverse times in which we are living that people by-and-large are, more than ever before, interested in **themselves**, in what **they want**, in what they can **get**, and in **how quickly** and with the **least effort possible** they can **satisfy** their own **selfish ends**. The “goals” they set for themselves and for their families are, for the most part, **economic** goals; for they are **determined** to have always **more** of “*the meat which perisheth*” (John 6:27) on their life’s plate and to be materially “better off” **next** year than they were **this** year. And, coupled with that Mammon-driven appetite is, particularly in our **prosperous country**, a deplorable **lack of gratitude** for just about **anything at all**! The word “thanks,” **common** in just about every other country in the world, is fast fading from everyday American English, not just as a polite form of **courtesy** and **etiquette**, but even as an expression of **genuine appreciation** for a service rendered, a favor done, a gift received, a kind word uttered, or a compliment offered. “Why **thank** a person for what you have **coming** or for what he **owes** you as part of the service you’re **paying for**??” That’s the prevailing attitude; and it’s sad indeed to see and hear even many **Christians** caught up in it, as if they didn’t know better!

And when people are so ungrateful to other **people**, think of what that means in terms of their gratitude to **God**! “God doesn’t draw my paycheck, pay on my mortgage, and make my investments! **I** do!” — “**My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth**,” they say with the wicked in Deuteronomy 8:17. —Further on in the psalm chosen as the title-text of our article, the Holy Writer calls such people “**brutish**”—no better than the **animals**, who at least lick the hand of their masters who feed them— and “**fools**” who don’t have the common sense to recognize the source of their daily bread! That’s not surprising, however, given the rank ingratitude with which they treat their **fellow men** here in this world; for the Apostle John writes in his first epistle chapter 4: “*He that loveth not his brother whom he **hath** seen, how **can** he love **God**, whom he hath **not** seen??*” (v. 20).

As we observe again our national **Day of Thanksgiving** here in the United States, a day on which precious little thanks is being rendered to **anybody**, much less to **God**, it behooves us to consider the admonition of the Lord’s Psalmist just under the title of our article, as he points us in the **very opposite direction** from the ways of the **world** and shows us that it is **GOOD** for us Christians to show forth on a daily basis our gratitude to **GOD** — first of all, our “**thanksgiving**” for all His benefits, particularly His “**lovingkindness**” to us poor undeserving sinners; and likewise also our “**praises**” for His mercy and grace, His “**faithfulness**” to us in the covenant of His precious Gospel.

“It is a **GOOD** thing to give thanks unto the Lord,” the Psalmist writes. What makes it a “**good thing**” anyway?? What makes it more than just a perfunctory courtesy which we can exercise or **not** exercise as we choose? —**GOD** says so in His Holy Law, for starters! “*Thou **SHALT love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind!*” Thus reads the summary of our duty to God (Matthew 22:37); and in full accord with Holy Scripture in all those passages which require thanksgiving to Him, we confess with Luther concerning the use of God’s Name: “We **should** fear and love God that we may ... call upon [His Name] in every trouble, pray, praise, and **give thanks**.”

But a “good work in the sight of God” is **much more** than a mere act that **appears** to conform with the **letter** of the **Law**. For the Bible says: “*There is none that doeth good, no, not one!*” And so, a mere recitation of thanks to God as an **outward act** is not the “**good thing**” of which the Psalmist speaks in our text, as if an **unbeliever**, an **unconverted sinner**, could perform it! For “*they that are in the flesh cannot please God*,” Paul writes to the Romans (8:8); and in Hebrews 11:1 we read: “*Without faith, it is impossible to please Him*.” Even the “**righteousnesses**” of Christians are as filthy rags the in God’s sight because of their **imperfection**, and because **no good work** (even on the part of a **Christian**) counts before God to **merit** his favor.

What makes it “*a **good thing** to give thanks unto the Lord*” is the fact that the thanksgiving redounds solely to the glory of God, and in not to any credit of our own. It is His work alone that we are **converted to faith** in Christ Jesus as our Savior. It is His work alone that we **humbly recognize our unworthiness** of all his blessings. It is His work alone that we **appreciate** with sincere gratitude all that He has done for us. And it is His work alone that we are **willing and able to express that gratitude** by “*giving **thanks** unto the Lord*,” thanks that is **due** Him for all His “*lovingkindness*” in bestowing upon us so richly from day to day His matchless benefits, which we never deserve at His hand (Genesis 32:10).

Moreover, brethren, (and let us mark this well here in our title-text), “*it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord*” not only in our **hearts** (as some would like to imagine), but **openly** and **demonstrably** in clearly **tangible ways**. The Psalmist exhorts us to “*show forth (the Lord’s) lovingkindness*” —as a **testimony to others**, not of how grateful we are, but of how lovingkind **He** is. The prophet Isaiah writes: “*I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord... according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.*” And the Lord Jesus says in Matthew chapter 12 verse 34: “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,*” so that, with the Apostles, we must confess: “*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20). That’s one of the chief reasons we gather in the House of God on Thanksgiving Day, as we “*enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise!*” —a tiny minority among our countrymen and even among professing Christians on the day specially set aside for that purpose each year! “*Where are the nine??*” Jesus asked that leper in the Gospel lesson for Thanksgiving Day, Luke 17:11-19. The majority never bothered to return to say “thanks” for the Savior’s “*lovingkindness*” to them!

But OUR **thanksgiving** should be even **more demonstrable** than mere **words**! OUR thanksgiving should be a veritable “*thanksgiving*,” as we “*let [our] light shine before man that they may see [our] good works, and glorify —not us, but— [our] Father which is in heaven.*” Do we “*show forth*” our gratitude to God by what we do from day to day, “*living unto Him who died for us and rose again?*” (II Corinthians 5:15). If not, then perhaps our **works** are belying our **lips**, and we need quickly and sincerely to repent of our ingratitude, lest, continuing in such contradictory ways, we become those who call Him “*Lord, Lord*” but “*do not the things which [He says]*” from believing and grateful hearts (Luke 6:46)!

Now, all of what has been said thus far pertains to our gratitude for **both temporal and spiritual** blessings, **both of which** flow from the Lord’s “*lovingkindness*” to us and to all men for Jesus’ sake, and “*for all which it is (our) duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him*” (Luther) ... “*with hearts and hands and voices*” (TLH 36, 1).

But there is SPECIAL praise to be rendered particularly for the Lord’s **mercy** and **grace** toward our **souls** in all those things which He has done for our salvation! The Psalmist writes: “*It is a good thing...to sing praises unto Thy name, O most high,*” ... “*to show forth... Thy faithfulness...*”

“*Singing praises*” is not an **optional mode of worship**, as some people in their ignorance would like to think, as if only **good and talented musicians** are expected to sing unto the Lord. For no such artificial limitation is placed on **singing** to Him, any more than on **thanking** Him! Not only here in our text, but in many other passages, the Lord exhorts His Christian people to “*sing*” unto Him, regardless of the musical quality of their voices. This is why the Lord’s church is a **singing** church, and why God’s people love to gather together in His house to “*sing praises unto [His] Name.*” Why is **singing** so **special**?? Oh, it is because, as so many of the passages clearly show, **singing** is a form of communication that comes from **deep within** the **spirit** of a person, “*from the heart*” so to speak. A person can mumble when he **speaks**; he can even be quite detached and uninvolved while in a **conversation** and still be **heard**; but “*singing praises*” is an emotional exercise involving “*joy*” and “*gladness*” and “*exultation*” and “*pleasantness*” and “*wholeheartedness*” and “*glory*” and a “*joyful noise!*”

And that is very particularly why the Lord refers to **singing** as the “*praise*” that **His Christian people** render unto Him for His mercy and grace to poor sinners, for the covenant of the gospel of salvation, and for God’s faithfulness to that covenant in rescuing us from “*our enemies*” and from “*all that hate us*” (Luke 1:71) —the devil, the world and our flesh! And let’s face it, brethren, we have a lot to sing about in that regard. —By God’s grace, we Lutheran Christians in particular have such a **treasure-house of hymns** as our **heritage** which makes our singing **easy** —hymns, **all** of which are based upon passages of **Holy Scripture** and teach or confess some Biblical truth— unlike so many songs, even **religious** songs, that express subjective sentimentality and “*feelings*” and nothing more. “*It is [indeed]*”

a good thing to sing praises” unto the Lord, “and to show forth [His] lovingkindness and [His] faithfulness” to poor sinners in His plan of salvation:

*“He saw me ruined in the fall, yet loved me notwithstanding all! He saved me from my lost estate! His lovingkindness, oh, how great! ...When I was Satan’s easy prey, and deep in debt and bondage lay, He paid His life for my discharge! His lovingkindness, oh, how large! ...Awake, my soul, from sin’s malaise, and **sing** thy great Redeemer’s praise! He justly claims **a song** from thee: His lovingkindness, oh how free!” (TLH 340, adapted.)*

O, my dear fellow-sinners, fellow-redeemed, fellow-hearers of our Savior’s Word through His blessed Psalmist, the “singer of the old Testament,” especially on Thanksgiving Day, as we ponder anew all the **blessings** we have received at the Lord’s gracious hand, all His **lovingkindnesses** to us poor undeserving creatures, and His **faithfulness** to His promises in the precious Gospel, which by His grace we still have in its truth and purity, let each one of us ask his own heart with David: “*What shall **I** render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward **me**?*” (Psalm 116:12). And let us then, one and all, **resolve**, with the help of His Holy Spirit, henceforth to render Him **due thanksgiving and praise** in accordance with His will —not because we have to, but because we eagerly want to— and not just on Thanksgiving Day, not just on Sundays in the worship services of His House, not just at hymn-sings which we may arrange in or own congregations, but every day of our lives in our homes and along our way, as we work and as we play; for “*it is a **GOOD THING** to **give thanks** unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High; to show forth Thy **lovingkindness** in the morning, and Thy **faithfulness** every night!*”

Hallelujah! Let praises ring!
Unto our Triune God we sing!
Blest be His Name forever!
With angel hosts, let us adore
and sing His praises more and more
for all His grace and favor!
Singing, ringing:
“Holy, holy, God is holy; spread the story
of our God, the Lord of glory!”
(TLH 23, 4)

— D. T. M.



Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant

*“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even **the Messenger of the Covenant**, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” —Malachi 3:1*

The first part of Malachi chapter three, verse 1, reads: “Behold, I will send **My messenger**, and he shall prepare the way before Me.” As we are reminded each year at this time in the Gospel Lesson for the *Third Sunday in Advent*, Matthew 11:2-10, those words are a rectilinear, that is, a direct prophecy of the appearance of **John the Baptist** as our Savior’s forerunner or “advance-man,” who would prepare His way before Him in the hearts of the people. This clear reference to John and his preaching is confirmed also in Mark 1:2-4; and the specific content of John’s preaching of repentance and remission of sins was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) and was referred to as having been fulfilled by John particularly in Luke’s Gospel account, chapter three, verses 2-18. Moreover, when John’s birth was announced to the aged priest, Zacharias, as he ministered in the Temple, the angel Gabriel spoke of John’s work as the Messiah’s “way-preparer,” namely, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17); and, at the time of the child’s birth, Zacharias was moved by the Holy Ghost to sing of that blessed work, saying: “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord **to prepare His ways**; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high [the Messiah] hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79).

The word “messenger” in Hebrew is pronounced [mah•LACH] —the word that is frequently used of God’s “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) who carried **messages** to His people, the word that is therefore often translated “angel” throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus, both the name of the prophet who foretold the coming of John the Baptist AND the name of John himself in that prophecy are “My messenger” or “**Malachi**” [m’•lah •CHEE], God’s own messengers to His people: The prophet to God’s people about four hundred years *before* the Messiah’s birth, AND the forerunner who prepared the way before Him just thirty years *after* His birth, as He was about to enter upon His public ministry.

But, in our Advent celebration of John the Baptist as the Savior’s forerunner and promised “messenger,” we often lose sight of the **SECOND** “messenger” spoken of by Malachi in his third chapter, verse one, “even **the Messenger of the Covenant**, whom ye delight in....” Who is this “Messenger”? The Prophet Malachi says: “**THE LORD**, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even **the Messenger of the Covenant**, whom ye delight in; behold, **HE shall come**, saith the Lord of hosts.” This was the long-promised **Messiah** Himself, whom God’s people sought and longed for, in whom they “delighted,” whom they eagerly awaited and expected. Note the true parallel language (not only in words but in context) between the following direct prophecies:

*“Behold, **the Lord** your God **will come** with strong hand, and His arm shall **rule** for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:10-11);*

*“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart: Be strong, fear not; behold, **your God will come** with vengeance. even God with a recompense; **He will come and save you**” (Isaiah 35:3-4);*

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and **a King** shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth; and this is His Name whereby He shall be called: **The Lord, our Righteousness**” (Jeremiah 23:5-6);*

*“And it shall be said in that day, ‘Lo, this is **our God**; we have **waited for Him**, and **He will save us**. This is **the Lord**; we have **waited for Him**; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation’” (Isaiah 25:9);*

*“Look upon **Zion**, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a **tabernacle that shall not be taken down**...; but there **the glorious Lord** will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams...; **the Lord is our king; He will save us**” (Isaiah 33:20-22);*

*“In **thy Seed** [Cf. Galatians 3:16] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18);*

*“So shall He sprinkle **many nations**; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider. ...**the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all**... He is brought as **a lamb** to the slaughter; ...**for the transgression of my people was He stricken**” (Selected verses from Isaiah 52 and 53);*

and, of course, many other wonderful Messianic prophecies of the Savior to come.

*“The **Messenger [Angel] of the Covenant**” or “the **Angel of the Lord**” [mah • LACH • ah • doh • NAI], as He is often called in the Old Testament, the eternal Son of God before His incarnation, appeared to men as a special “*messenger*” particularly of God’s gracious promises and blessings. We read of that name, for example, in Genesis 22:11-18 where He appeared to Abraham, who was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to the Lord. Isaac was spared, a ram caught in a thicket was sacrificed in his stead, and the Angel of the Lord repeated to Abraham the promise of the Savior-to-come. As the Great and Gracious Deliverer of His people, the Angel’s messages often centered on that very thing. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called him to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 3:2); He appeared to Gideon and chose him to deliver Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6:12ff.); He appeared to the parents of Samson, who would deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (Judges 13). “*The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them,*” writes the Psalmist (34:7).*

But particularly in the New Testament, when “*the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son*” (Galatians 4:4) just as He had promised. The “*Messenger of the Covenant*” **had** “*suddenly come to His temple,*” to His Church, to His “*Zion,*” to the “*tabernacle that shall not be taken down.*” Our **Divine Prophet**, the “*Messenger of the Covenant*” of God’s grace, “*who is in the bosom of the Father*” (John 1:18), declared His Father’s love for all the world (John 3:16) on the basis of the vicarious atonement that He Himself would render to divine justice for the sins of all mankind. During His public ministry, He manifested Himself by word and deed as the long-promised Redeemer of the world; He perfectly fulfilled every prophecy of the Scriptures concerning Himself; and then He laid down His life as “*the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29), as “*our Passover*” (I Corinthians 5:7b), whose precious blood was poured out as the incorruptible Sacrifice (I Peter 1:18-19), the all-sufficient “*price*” (I Corinthians 6:20) that alone could propitiate God’s justice and purchase salvation for every man. Thus “*God was **in Christ** reconciling **the world** unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19). “*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

Those who reject Him as their Redeemer and seek salvation apart from Him are, as were the Ephesians before their conversion, “*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12). Only CHRIST JESUS, “*the Messenger of the Covenant,*” still proclaims “*the word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b) as our exalted Divine Prophet, as He sends men to preach the everlasting Gospel of peace to them that are “*afar off*”—those who still are “*strangers from the covenants of promise*”—“*and to them that [are] nigh*” (Ephesians 2:17)—even to **us** who have known “*the grace of God that bringeth salvation*” (Titus 2:11) and are by faith members of “*the church, which is His body*” (Ephesians 1:22-23), His “*Temple*” (I Corinthians 3:16-17; II Corinthians 6:16), “*the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*” (Psalm 46:4), “*the tabernacle that shall not be taken down*” (Isaiah 33:20) because He promises that “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18).

*“Hear ye **Him!**” (Matthew 17:5), hear “**the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.**” Behold, He **HAS COME**, “*and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b), “*the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*” (Acts 20:32).*

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” —Jude 24-25

—D. T. M.

The Significance of Our Savior's Name

*“Thou shalt call His name **Jesus**, for He shall save His people from their sins.”*

— Matthew 1:21

As we celebrate anew at Christmas time the birth of our precious Savior, it behooves us to “ponder in our mind God’s wondrous love in **saving** lost mankind” (*TLH* 84, 5). And, while we cannot treat in this brief article the entire doctrinal subject of *soteriology* — the doctrine of **salvation** — the title-text above summarizes in few words the **PURPOSE** of Jesus’ coming into the world on that first Christmas night, both in **the name itself**, which was first mentioned by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:31) “*before He was conceived in the womb*” (Luke 2:21), and in **the conjunction “for,”** which in the Greek (as well as in English and most other languages) expresses **purpose** and answers the question “Why?” The name **Jesus** is, in fact, only one of many names given to our Savior and recorded in the Scriptures — actually, in point of time, the last name given to Him as He made His appearance on earth to undertake and to accomplish **the work** which, in eternity already, His Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). Jesus said, for example, in his discourse with Nicodemus in John chapter 3: “*For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be **saved***” (v. 17). Thus, “*when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to **redeem** them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (Galatians 4:4-5).

“*Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,*” writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy (I Timothy 3:16). The **incarnation** of the Son of God is an unfathomable “*mystery,*” not only that God the Father would even **do** such a thing as to offer up His only-begotten Son to be the “*propitiation*” of the world’s sins (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2), the sacrifice of sufficient value to satisfy His justice and thus to make it possible for Him to “*reconcil[e] the world unto Himself*” (II Corinthians 5:19), but that He would manifest Him “*in the flesh*” and cause Him in His *state of humiliation* to assume our flesh and blood in all lowliness, to place Himself “*under the Law*” as our Substitute, to fulfill the Law’s requirements perfectly in the stead of all mankind, and to bear the guilt and punishment of the sins of the world in His own sinless soul and body as the *Redeemer* and **Savior** of men.

In the opening verses of John’s Gospel we read concerning this amazing mystery of the incarnation of “**the Word**,” the eternal Son of God: “*In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word was **made flesh** and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1-3, 14). We briefly summarize this Christmas mystery in the words of the Nicene Creed, as we confess: “[I believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds: God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and **for our salvation** came down from heaven, and was **incarnate** by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and **was made man**.”

Before the eternal Son of the Father, “*the Word*” (John 1:1), effected the *personal union* in the fulness of time “by taking the manhood into God” in His incarnation (Athanasian Creed) by the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), He was manifested to men throughout the Old Testament era by several **Divine Names** which identified Him not only according to His person but also according to His work, of which we would mention just a few. He is frequently called “*the Angel of the Lord*” — particularly when divine names, attributes and worship are ascribed to this special “*Messenger*” [“Angel,” *mah-LACH* in Hebrew, meaning “messenger”]. Note, for example, how “*the Angel of the Lord*” appeared to Hagar in Genesis 16; “*and she called the name of **the Lord** that spake unto her, ‘**Thou God** seest me’ ...*” (vv. 7-13). — “*The angel of the Lord*” stopped Abraham from killing his son, Isaac, saying: “*Now I know that thou fearest **God**, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from **Me***” (Genesis 22:12). Also, in verses 15 and 16, the same “*Angel of the Lord*” identifies Himself as “**the Lord**.” — “*The Angel of the Lord*” appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) and identified Himself as “*the **God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*” (v. 6), the “*I am*” (v. 14), **Jehovah**. — And one last example: In Psalm 34:7, “*the Angel of the Lord*” is said to deliver them that “**fear Him**,” such fear not to be rendered to mere created angels (Revelation 19:10) but to God only (Matthew 4:10). — He is also called “*the Messenger* [or angel, *mah-LACH*] of the **Covenant**” (Malachi 3:1), “**the Lord**” whom His people sought by faith in the **Gospel-covenant** promises of the Messiah to come, who would “*suddenly come to His temple,*” according to His prophetic office to **manifest Himself** as the Redeemer and **Savior** of the world, and according to His priestly office to **make good** on that covenant by **doing** what was necessary to **be** the Redeemer and **Savior** of the world.

And finally, there are many other Divine Names ascribed to the Son of God, the promised **Savior**, in the Old Testament Scriptures: The “*Redeemer*” (Job 19:25), the “*Holy One of Israel*,” “*Redeemer*” and “*Savior*” (Isaiah 41:14; 43:1-3; 11, among still other locations); the “*Lamb [led] to the slaughter*” and “*My righteous Servant*” (Isaiah 53); “*Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14) — “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:23); the “*Righteous Branch*” out of David’s lineage and “*a King*” (Jeremiah 23:5); “*the Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:6); God’s “*Anointed*” [*Messiah*] (Psalm 45:7; cf. Acts 10:38 and Hebrews 1:9; Isaiah 61:1; cf. Luke 4:18; and Acts 4:27); and all those wonderful names ascribed to Him in that beloved Christmas prophecy, Isaiah 9:6 — “*Wonderful*,” “*Counselor*,” “*the mighty God*,” “*the everlasting Father*,” and “*the Prince of Peace*” (cf. “*Shiloh*” in Genesis 49:10).

But the name given to Him by God to **exalt** Him for **His work** as the **SAVIOR** of the world (“*Wherefore* — for which reasons — *God also hath highly exalted Him...*”), the “*name which is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9-10), is “**Jesus**,” the name announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel “*before He was conceived in the womb*” (Luke 2:21), the name by which *she* was to call Him (Luke 1:31), the name by which also *Joseph* was to call Him according to our title-text (Matthew 1:21), the name officially given to Him on the day of His circumcision (Luke 2:21), the name by which He was known throughout His public ministry (Luke 17:13), and the name under which He was crucified as a malefactor among malefactors (John 19:18-19). This name was commonly “*given among men*” (Acts 4:12) in those days — and is still commonly given to babies today, particularly among Latin American peoples. **Jesus**, pronounced [*yay-ZOOS*] in Greek, and [*hay-ZOOS*] in Spanish, means “rescuer,” “deliverer,” “savior.”

Jesus is the New Testament Greek equivalent of the very popular Hebrew name among the Jews then and now, **Joshua** (or **Yeshua**), meaning “**Jehovah is salvation**.” The reader will no doubt remember from Old Testament Bible history that “**Joshua, the son of Nun**” (Exodus 33:11), a faithful, Godfearing young man who served Moses in the wilderness as an assistant (Numbers 11:28), was one of the **twelve spies** sent by God’s command to investigate the Promised Land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1ff.). And he was one of only two spies who brought back a favorable report, who stood together confident of God’s promises, and who urged the people to go into the land and possess it. The other was “**Caleb, the son of Jephunneh**” (Numbers 13:6; 14:24, 30.) It was when the people rebelled against Moses and Aaron and blasphemed the Lord, accusing Him of treachery and deceit and malevolence in bringing them out into the wilderness to die, that the Lord extended the time of their wandering by *forty years* (Numbers chapter 14) — when they could have possessed the land *immediately*, had they only trusted God’s promises. As it turned out according to the Lord’s declaration, only Caleb and Joshua, of all the adults that left Egypt in the Exodus, were permitted to enter the Promised Land at the conclusion of the forty years. Even Moses and Aaron died before the conquest of Canaan.

The point of this historical digression is to show the remarkable connection not only between the names **Joshua** and **Jesus** — both meaning “**Jehovah is Salvation**, the Deliverer, the Savior” — but also between the calling and work of **Joshua** and **Jesus** as “deliverers” or “saviors” of God’s people. The names are virtually **the same**, as noted above; and this is strikingly apparent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 8, where the holy writer states concerning **Joshua**, who led God’s people into the peaceful rest of the Promised Land of Canaan: “*If Jesus* [i.e. *Joshua*, the son of Nun] *had given them rest* [real, lasting and permanent *rest* for their *souls*], *then would he not afterward have spoken of another day*,” the day of *everlasting* peace and rest for all true believers in the *heavenly* Promised Land, into which **Jesus Christ** (**Jesus**, the **Messiah**) has already entered as our “*Forerunner*” (Hebrews 6:18-20).

Joshua “*saved*” **his** people, the temporal Israel, the seed of Abraham *according to the flesh* (cf. Romans 9:3), “*the children of the flesh*” (Romans 9:8) — believers and unbelievers alike — from their **trials**, **tribulations**, and seemingly endless **wanderings** in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula [the *Wilderness of Sin* (Exodus 16:1; 17:1); the *Wilderness of Paran* (Numbers 12:16; 13:3, 26), and the *Wilderness of Zin* (Numbers 13:21; 20:1; 27:14)] by “*delivering*” them safe and sound across the Jordan River into the Promised Land of Canaan. **Joshua’s** mission was primarily a temporal mission, and, at that, also a temporary mission; for the Children of Israel were not to have the Land of Canaan as their permanent possession. [Note that the expression “*forever*” in connection with the physical possession of Palestine by Israel as their heritage (cf. Exodus 32:13; II Chronicles 20:7) is also properly translated “for a long time.” Not only were the **Ten Tribes** of the Northern Kingdom disinherited of the land in the Assyrian Captivity, so that no trace of them thenceforth was ever found, not even by the most skilled anthropologists; but the very “*scepter*” (the self-governance) also “*depart[ed] from Judah*” (Genesis 49:10) in the course of time, and Palestine became the colonial spoil of one heathen government after another; and it is still today a fractured land, much smaller than it once was and politically divided, only *claimed* but never wholly *established* as the undisputed heritage of ANY one people.

“**Jesus**,” said the angel to Joseph, would “*save His people from their SINS*” (Matthew 1:21, our title-text). “*Neither*

is there **salvation** in any other; for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men whereby we must be **SAVED**" (Acts 4:12). —As noted above, the names **Joshua** and **Yeshua (Jesus)** mean "**Jehovah is salvation.**" Gabriel said to Mary: "*That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the **Son of God***" (Luke 1:35; cf. vv. 32-33). The angel said to the shepherds of Bethlehem: "*Unto you is born this day in the City of David a **Savior**, which is **Christ** [the **Messiah**], the **Lord** [**Jehovah** Himself]!" (Luke 2:11). "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, **He also Himself** likewise took part of the same, that through death **He** might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and **deliver THEM** [all sinful mankind] who, through fear of death [“the wages of **sin**” (Romans 6:23)], were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15) — bondage to sin, death, and Satan. “**Jehovah**,” in the person of Jesus Christ, “**is salvation.**” “For **He** shall **save** His people from their **sins.**”**

Jesus’ mission, unlike that of Joshua, was a **spiritual** mission, and, at that, also an **effective** and **permanent** mission of delivering “His people from their sins” and from everlasting death into “everlasting (eternal) life” (John 3:16; 10:28) in the promised land of **heaven**. According to Scripture, however, we properly distinguish two specific uses of the word “save” with respect to Christ’s work as our “Savior.” — God, in the fulness of time, sent His Son “to **redeem** them that were under the Law” (Galatians 4:5), the “**guilty world**” of unrighteous, ungodly people (Romans 3:19) — the “**all**” for whom Christ “**died**” (II Corinthians 5:15), for whom He rendered to God His **propitiatory** vicarious atonement (I John 2:2; Romans 3:25) in His **active** (Romans 5:18-19) and **passive** (I Peter 2:24a; cf. Isaiah 53) obedience, “that **the world** through Him might be **saved**” (John 3:17). Christ’s work of **universal redemption** was therefore the basis of God’s **universal** or **objective justification** of the world, who “in Christ” reconciled “**the world** unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (II Corinthians 5:19). That gracious, forensic act and declaration of forgiveness and justification of “the ungodly” (Romans 4:5) by God was made possible because Christ perfectly satisfied the demands of God’s justice, fulfilling the Law as man’s substitute — both its requirement of perfect righteousness and holiness (Leviticus 19:2, etc.) and its punishment of death as “the wages of sin” (Romans 6:23a). In that sense “He is the Savior of **ALL men**,” as St. Paul writes to Timothy (I Timothy 4:10a), even though the vast majority of mankind would **NOT be saved** but would be **lost eternally** (Matthew 7:13; Romans 9:27, 11:5; etc.).

Contrary to the false teaching of the Calvinists in particular, “[God] **WILL** have **all men** to be **saved** and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). That is His **primary WILL**, who “is not willing that any should perish but that **all** should come to **repentance**” (II Peter 3:9). Therefore God manifested or made known “**the truth**” of His salvation to **all the world** (Romans 10:18) in “**the Word of Reconciliation**” (II Corinthians 5:19), in “**the Gospel**” (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; 10:16), in the “**good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people**” (Luke 2:10).

Indeed, “it pleased God by the foolishness of **preaching** [that Gospel] to **save** them that **believe**” (I Corinthians 1:21), having ordained that His “**gift**” (Ephesians 2:8) of **salvation**, the evidence of **His love** for sinful man (John 3:16; I John 4:9), purchased and won for **all men** by Christ (II Corinthians 2:21; Romans 4:25; I Peter 1:18-19; 2:24; Hebrews 2:14-15; etc., etc.), be **ACCEPTED and RECEIVED by faith** (Mark 1:15; 16:16; John 3:16, 18, 36; 6:40, 47; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:28; 5:1; etc., etc.) — faith worked in the heart by the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel.

Therefore Paul, writing to Timothy, calls Jesus BOTH “the Savior of **ALL MEN**,” in that He **REDEEMED all men** to God as their “Propitiation” (I John 2:2) and became the efficient cause of their **reconciliation** and **objective justification** by God (II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:23-24), AND “**specially** of those that **BELIEVE**” (I Timothy 4:10) since **only believers** “**receive remission of sins**” (Acts 10:43), “**have peace with God**” (Romans 5:1), are personally “**justified**” (Romans 3:28), are regarded as “**righteous**” by God (Romans 4:5), and “**have everlasting life**” (John 3:16).

Sadly and tragically, “they have not all obeyed the Gospel” (Romans 10:16), both the Apostle Paul and Isaiah lament concerning those who have heard but have rejected the Word of the Gospel in **unbelief**. Therefore, despite the fact that God “**gave His only-begotten Son**” (John 3:16), “not to condemn the world, but that **the world** through Him might be **saved**” (v. 17); despite the fact that Christ by His vicarious atonement became the “Propitiation” not for our sins only, but “also for the sins of the **whole world**” (I John 2:2), having “**died for all**” (II Corinthians 5:15) and having thus “**bought** (redeemed)” even those who “**deny**” Him in unbelief “and [who therefore] bring upon themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2:1); despite the fact that, on the basis of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of divine justice as “the Savior of **all men**” (I Timothy 4:10), God reconciled “**the world**” unto Himself, “not imputing their trespasses unto **them**” (II Corinthians 5:19); and despite the fact that “[God] will have **all men** to be **saved** and to come unto the knowledge [the saving knowledge, including belief] of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4); “they have not all

obeyed the Gospel” (Romans 10:16). And the Bible expressly says of them: “*He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36). “*He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (v. 18), in the name of **Jesus**, “*the Savior of all men, SPECIALLY of those that believe*” (I Timothy 4:10).

Similarly, of the Children of Israel, to whom the Promised Land was **given**, and to whom the gift and promise were **preached**, many did “*not enter in because of unbelief*” (Hebrews 3:19; 4:6). In **unbelief** they **rejected** the gift — the good and earnest, promised inheritance — and **forfeited** their receipt and possession of the temporal Promised Land of Canaan which God fully intended them to have, the “*exceeding good land*” (Numbers 14:7) into which they could have entered immediately and possessed it, had they believed the good tidings of Caleb and Joshua and trusted God’s promised protection in their conquest of it. Instead they had to wander for forty additional years in the wilderness until all, save Caleb and Joshua, had died.

The words of our title-text, “*He shall save His people from their sins,*” do not champion the “particular redemption” only of the elect that the Calvinists teach, nor do they deny the “universal redemption” that the Bible teaches (as set forth above). They do, however, express the **final effect** of Christ’s redemptive work and of the faith in that work that God Himself requires for **final salvation**, as Jesus told the Jews: “*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him, whom He hath sent*” (John 6:29). “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36). “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). In that very SPECIAL sense, then, Christ is “*the Savior...SPECIALLY of those that believe*” in that He brings **only believers** into the mansions of heaven, only those who are “*the righteous*” (Matthew 25:37; 46b) “*by faith*” (Romans 3:22; 4:5b, 13; 9:30b; 10:6-11), only those who “*endure [in faith] unto the end*” (Mark 13:13b). In that very SPECIAL sense, “*He shall save His people from their sins.*” St. Paul reminds us in Romans chapter nine: “*They are not all Israel, which are of Israel*” (v.6); ... “*but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*” (v. 8). Only **true believers** are the true Israel, Christ’s true “people.” “*Esaïas also crieth concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved’*” (Romans 9:27). “[We] are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26), St. Paul writes concerning believers and their special relationship to God; and in Psalm 95, we hear of that same relationship by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, namely, that we, who by faith “*make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation...with thanksgiving*” (vv. 1-2; cf. I Corinthians 10:4), are “*the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand*” (v.7). Jesus said: “*My sheep hear My voice; and I know them; and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man [Greek: anyone] pluck them out of My hand*” (John 10:27-28).

Indeed, what a wonderful “**Jesus**” we have manifested “for **us** and for **our salvation**” (Nicene Creed) in the Christmas “[Gospel-] *tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*” (Luke 2:10), namely, the “**Savior, Christ the Lord**” (Luke 2:11), whom, in the Holy Scriptures, we “trace” as “the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss, from His poor manger to His bitter cross” (TLH 84, 5). For, by virtue of His perfect, vicarious active and passive obedience, “*He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2). By the operation of God’s Holy Spirit through the power of that precious Gospel, let us ever hold fast in faith to this best of all Christmas gifts even unto the end, “*His unspeakable Gift*” (II Corinthians 9:15), **Jesus**, “*the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe*” (I Timothy 4:10). “*For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in the believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
and drives away his fear.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

(TLH 364, 1 and 5)

— D. T. M.

A mark of the Savior's *State of Humiliation*:

“And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a MANGER.”



“And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph — and the Babe lying in a MANGER.”

Luke 2:12 and 16



Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes;
but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
and take us to heaven, to live with Thee there.

(Traditional)

Christmas JOY!

Oh, rejoice, ye Christians, loudly,
for our joy hath now begun;
wondrous things our God hath done!
Tell abroad His goodness proudly
who our race hath honored thus
that He deigns to dwell with us.
Joy, O joy beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence all sorrow and repining
for the Sun of Grace is shining!

See, my soul, thy Savior chooses
weakness here and poverty;
in such love He comes to thee,
nor the hardest couch refuses.
All He suffers for thy good
to redeem thee by His blood.
Joy, O joy beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence all sorrow and repining
for the Sun of Grace is shining!

Lord, how shall I thank Thee rightly?
I acknowledge that by Thee
I am saved eternally.
Let me not forget it lightly
but to Thee at all times cleave
and my heart true peace receive.
Joy, O joy beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence all sorrow and repining
for the Sun of Grace is shining!

(TLH 96, 1-3)

Churches in Fellowship

ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG

Ekaterinburg, Russia

The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor

P. O. Box 27

620039 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: Schurganoff@mail.ru

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria

The Rev. Innocent Karibo, Pastor

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: kanboinnocent@yahoo.com

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

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: tbaaron2@gmail.com

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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. Fyeface, Pastor

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

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyeface@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: (206) 579-8861

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

Sunday School & Bible Class 4:15 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

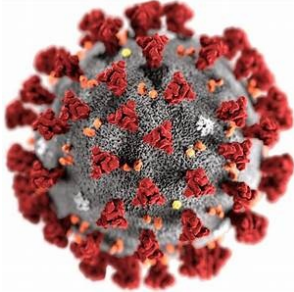
On the Web at

TrinityEvLutheran.com

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 everything 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 as we return to in-person learning in our schools and experience far fewer critical infections and deaths from the Coronavirus due to natural and acquired immunity and successful inoculations with effective vaccines. Yet, with the Omicron variant of the disease, cases tend to spread more easily, and there are more hospitalizations; and even fully vaccinated persons are experiencing “breakthrough” infections. 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, we beseech Thee, 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.