

Beautiful Savior King of Creation

Son of God

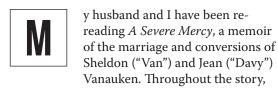
Son of man

SEVEN Gruly I'd love Ghee Gruly I'd serve Ghee Light of my soul, my joy, my crown



JOY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY KIRSTIE SKOGERBOE



Van emphasizes that joy is essential to the Christian testimony of faith—an emphasis that has helped me see Christ more clearly.

Part of Van and Davy's conversion stemmed from observing Christian joy. Van returns to this idea when he describes the small group they later hosted for college students interested in Christianity, relating the astonishment of students who had never witnessed joyful faith.

"The Christianity we represented was sunny and joyous," he writes, "with all the room in the world for humor and gaiety, and yet at the same time rigorous and glorious ... And the students smiled and abandoned the solemn voices they had been taught to use in speaking about such things ... discovering a Christ who was a blazing reality" (131). Moved by this description, I've been pondering how to integrate joy with a theology of the cross.

We have no reason for joy if Christ did not suffer and die to save us. But He did, which means not only that our joy originates in His suffering, but also that every painful confession and consequence of sin can remind us of His sacrifice and goodness. Our joy is Jesus, and suffering is the mud on our blind eyes that helps us see Him.

How do we recognize joy? This question can be confusing because people usually associate joy with a personality type. But given the diversity of

Christ's body (I Corinthians 12), it seems foolish to say that only optimists or expressive people could be joyful—or that Christians with mental illness couldn't. One of my most joyful friends is a gentle, reserved woman in her early 20s whose mom died of breast cancer. Another has clinical depression but continues to model a deep delight in Jesus. And there are many others.

Where is their common ground? The most joyful people I know interact with Jesus like He is a real person who intimately knows them (John 10:14-15). He's not only a name that is printed or sung, but a living God who made us and wants to be close to us. He is someone whose voice is audible to the Father as He prays for us (Hebrews 7:25). He is flesh and blood that really felt pain. We touch Him in the Sacrament. He is not a vague idea but a "blazing reality."

Joy comes from interacting with the actual person of Jesus through His suffering and our own. We access this joy through prayer, which is why King David begged, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Psalm 51:12). Left to ourselves, we lose it, confused by suffering and attracted to sin. When God restores our joy in the living Jesus, however, we see Him more clearly. And so will other people—because, again in the words of David, "Then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you" (Psalm 51:13).

Skogerboe, a 2018 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., lives in Orange, Calif.



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sound bites

Why did You, the most righteous One, undergo flogging and fetters? These all rightly belonged to me. —Johann Gerhard

The grinding power of the plain words of the Gospel story is like the power of millstones; and those who can read them simply enough will feel as if rocks had been rolled upon them.

—G.K. Chesterton

Many are awed by His miracles, few accept the shame of His cross.

—Thomas à Kempis

So that's what I see reflected in the mirror of Christ's crucifixion: my death. My righteous punishment. My sin and its consequences. Me. And precisely because it is so accurate, the sight is nearly intolerable.

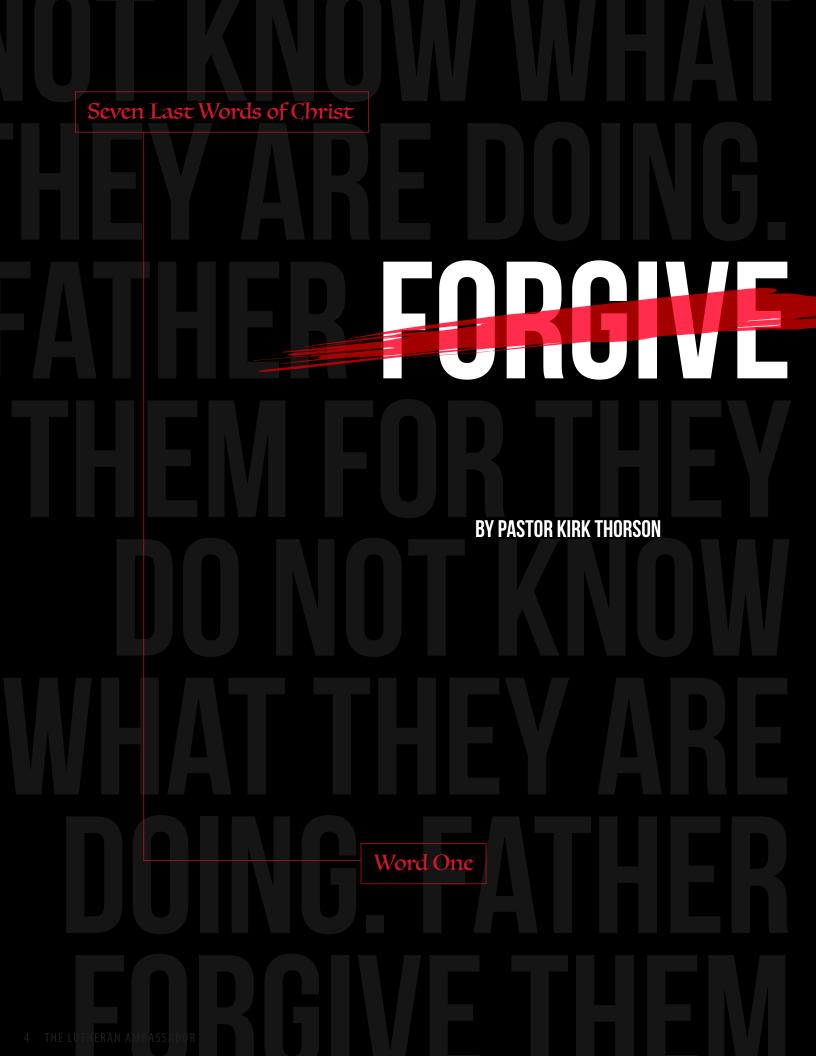
—Walter Wangerin Jr.

To live in the light of resurrection—that is what Easter means.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

We come to the strangest story of all, the story of the Resurrection. It is necessary to get the story clear.

—C.S. Lewis



"Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. Luke 23:34

hat is beautiful about the cross? We often see them displayed ornately in churches or worn as a piece of jewelry. Yet what took place on that cross for Jesus was anything but pretty.

A cross in and of itself is an instrument of torture, cruelty, and death. The cross can only be beautiful because of the Savior.

There is beauty in the mercy Jesus showed in His actions and words even while He was hanging from the cross. We cannot fathom the pain He experienced leading up to and in that moment. When we are wronged or maligned by others, our human nature is to focus on ourselves and how we have been mistreated. Our thoughts may drift toward how we could exact revenge on those harming us. This was not the case with our Savior.

On the cross, Jesus was thinking of others. His words, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" were aimed at the coarse Roman soldiers. These men were putting Him to death, yet Jesus graciously realized they did not fully understand their actions.

This remarkable demonstration of mercy was needed not just for cruel and callous soldiers, but for all people who struggle with a sinful nature. Jesus continues to offer mercy to undeserving sinners

like you and me. Is it possible that we do not fully understand the impact of our own sins? The Apostle Paul echoed this thought in

Romans 7:15 when he wrote, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do."

When we confess our sins corporately in church on Sunday we often proclaim that we have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed. We not only ask for forgiveness for sins of commission (things we have done) but also for sins of omission (things we should have done but failed to do). Using these words of confession is an acknowledgment that we need just as much of God's mercy as did the Roman soldiers of long ago at Calvary.

There is beauty in the rich sacrifice of our

Savior. There is beauty in a gift given when we know the cost associated with it, whether it is artwork or a craft from our elementary aged child, or the hard work and savings that went into purchasing a gift. So, too, we recognize the great cost of our salvation. I think of the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed in which Martin Luther wrote of

the work of the Savior, "who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, bought me and freed me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and innocent sufferings and death ..."

Jesus gave of Himself fully and completely for us, sparing no cost to make possible our salvation. This beautiful gift was given not only for you and for me, but for all mankind. I John 2:2 declares that Jesus Himself is the propitiation for our sins—and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

The cross holds a special beauty in the eyes of followers of Christ as we realize the eternal blessings that result from His finished work. Gifts and thoughtful gestures may serve to make our day a bit brighter though they last for a brief time. Eventually these gifts may break, become outdated, or fail to live up to our expectations. The work of the Savior on the cross is an eternal gift that never wears out or disappoints.

Jesus Himself bore the awful punishment and guilt of all our sin on the cross. As a result of Christ's victory over sin and death, we are made spiritually

Our Beautiful Savior

alive in Christ, and physical death becomes an entrance into the eternal life that God has prepared for those who love Him. We no longer live for ourselves under the power of the devil but live in the power and newness of life found only in Christ.

This dramatic change causes us to joyfully proclaim and declare: That I might belong to Jesus and live under Him in his kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. This is most certainly true!

Thorson serves Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

have somewhat of a love/dislike relationship with spring. On the one Lhand, I welcome the return of longer days, the feeling of warm sunshine on my face, and the vibrant green that once again appears on the grass and in the trees. On the other hand, I'm not a huge fan of the mess of spring—"slush season" as it's appropriately called—with the melting snow revealing months of buried sand and the dead grass that lies matted and ugly after nearly six months under that heavy blanket of snow. As I discussed my mixed feelings about spring with a woman from Bible study, she reminded me that this picture of spring is so like new life: birth itself is indeed a messy process, but the end result, new life, is both beautiful and worth celebrating.

In some ways, I think of spring as a minute picture of salvation. There was nothing physically attractive about the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. In fact, His death was so horrific, so ugly, that men hid their faces from Him (Isaiah 53:3). As He hung on the cross, Jesus' physical body would have been covered with blood both fresh and dried, dirt from the wooden cross He bore on His back, and dust from the road that He traveled to Golgotha. The stench of blood and sweat would have been heavy

King of Creation

upon Him. No, there was nothing beautiful about this spectacle, nothing that would cause us to rejoice or to feel hope. There would be nothing to make us think that a King had come to save His people.

The beauty of the cross lies in the reality that this man, so marred and so uglified, was not just a man. This man was God Himself, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Sustainer of the world. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15-17).

This man *is* God. I think we need to just let our minds camp out on that thought for a minute; it's so easy to rush past it! He is the One who simply spoke

And he said to him, "Gruly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43

a word and created the intricate complexities of a single atom. He made the rules on how those tiny atoms would interact together to form the world that we see and touch and feel around us. He is the One who simply spoke a word and brought forth fascinating creatures of all kinds, from the tiny, rice-sized Peacock Spider who knows how to dance (Google it! It's truly amazing) to the enormous blue whale with blood vessels so wide we could swim through them! He is the One who simply spoke a word and created the intricacies of the human body. As the very Author of Life, Jesus would have knit together in their mother's wombs those very men crucifying Him (Psalm 139:13). And yet, this man, who is indeed fully God, humbled Himself. First by being born as a man, then by serving a sinful people, and finally, by subjecting Himself to beatings, to mocking, and to death.

And He endured such hostility in order that we might have new life. It is because of His wounds that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). This healing, this new birth, is not simply another chance or a do-over, but a completely new beginning. A beautiful beginning of new life. Now, our sins are "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). The old self is not just cleaned up or shined up. We are made wholly new. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away; behold, new things have come" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Just as the criminal who hung next to Jesus confessed faith in Christ and was welcomed into the Kingdom of God, we too, when we confess Him, are welcomed in. The way has been made for us.

I am so grateful for this renewal. There is nothing more beautiful or worth celebrating than to stand before the throne, born new, spotless, and pure because of the ugliness that Jesus endured on our behalf. "Therefore there is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ... If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Romans 8:1-2, 10).

Langness is a member of Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich.

YOU WILL BE WITH - 4

BY SARAH LANGNESS

Word Gwo

YOUR SON. YOUR MOTHER.

BY PASTOR DALE LANKFORD



here is a lot packed into the first verse of the well-loved hymn, "Beautiful Savior." In describing Jesus, the hymn writer brings in several attributes of who Jesus is. He is a king, not simply of a region or select group of people, but over all creation

and all that is in it. He is the Son of God, the divine being worthy of worship, praise, and submission. He is the Savior humanity needs to deliver us from this desperate condition we find ourselves in.

His role as Son of Man is perhaps the one that gives me the most hope. As the Son of Man, we see this immortal divine King who has existed from the beginning becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

He knows what it is like to live in this world. Growing up as a child, He experienced life in a home with a loving family and likely some cruelty from other kids who spent too much time picking on others. As He grew, He probably heard advice and admonitions from others around Him who suggested that wealth and status, lust and pleasure are what he ought to aspire to. He likely grieved over the deaths of people He loved, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas, and watched others grieve around Him.

I'm sure he heard people complain about living

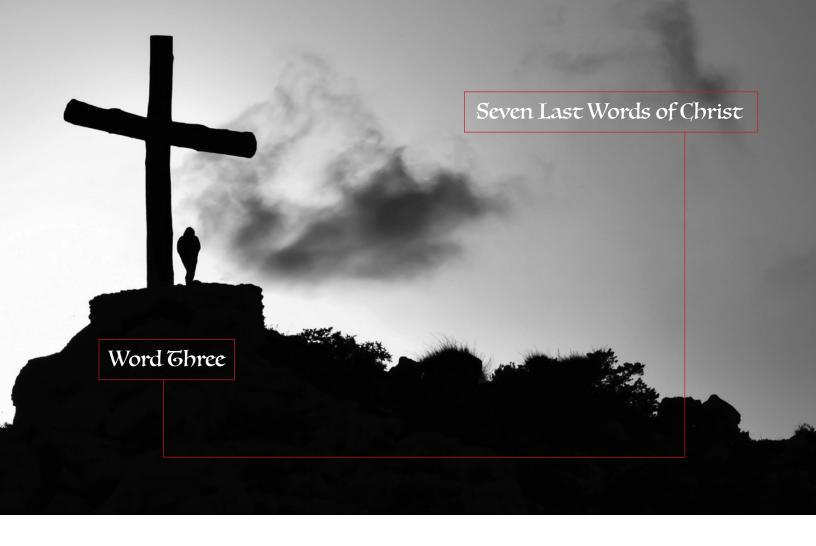
When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "There is your mother."

John 19:26

under the authoritarian rule of the Romans, even experienced oppression Himself. Yet He pressed forward until the day He showed up to be baptized by John, where He and others around Him heard the affirmation, "This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

From there He went into the wilderness where, in a desperate state of hunger and fatigue, He withstood powerful temptation from the devil himself.

He knows what it is like to live like us. Still, He was a light shining into our darkness. Matthew 4:17 says that from that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." We are to hear this as a call to turn from the ways of the world and our selfish desires and look to Him, to see the kingdom that He sets before us, and follow the Son of Man. The fishermen did it, some tax collectors and Pharisees did it, and Mary and



Martha did it because I think they all saw in Him someone they could identify with much more than they could with the worldly leaders around them.

They followed Him and, in so doing, they were able to see and learn incredible things. They saw the power of God in the miracles He performed. They saw the power of compassion, humility, and love. They were also surprised to find that the path that Jesus was leading them along led to the cross.

And remarkably, as He was on the cross with the weight of the world's sin upon
Him, knowing all the big things that
were happening there like atonement,
redemption, and salvation, He took a
moment to recognize that a couple of
people standing nearby needed His
attention. To His grieving mother whose
heart was being run through He said,
"Dear woman, here is your son." And to
a tearful John, whom He loved so much, "Here is
your mother." He knew they were going to need each
other to lean on in the coming days for strength. He
recognized the needs of humanity, and the Son of
Man also recognized the needs of individuals.

Those individuals were even more surprised to find that His path didn't end there. They were able to see the empty tomb and the resurrected Jesus, watch His ascent into heaven, and hear His promise that He would return.

Jesus, the Son of Man, shows what is possible for us when we see Him for who He is, receive Him into our hearts, and follow Him. It is possible to have joy and peace in a world that is full of trial and sorrow. It is possible to have compassion for and serve those who aren't always easy to love. It is possible to embrace humility and still have a future and a hope. And it is even possible to overcome the most formidable of obstacles, that is sin, death, and the power of the devil.

The Son of Man

The Son of Man shows us what it is like in His kingdom. He shows us how it is done. It is in the example of the Son of Man that we find great hope in this life and in the life to come, which allows us to confidently sing, "Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee, Light of my soul my joy my crown."

Lankford serves Lord of Life Lutheran, Mount Vernon, Wash.



From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "Oy God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Datthew 27:45-46)

he mysterious, supernatural three hours of darkness was lifting. Hanging on the cross, the crucified Jesus now spoke a fourth time in the Aramaic dialect, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus was enduring the full force, the full horror of the divine wrath over the sins of all humankind for all time.

How can this be? Jesus is true God, Emmanuel, God with us. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (Colossians 1:15-16). It is the mystery of the Incarnation of God in Christ, the Word made flesh, living a short time in His creation to sacrifice His life, shedding His blood for the sins of the world.

The hypostatic or personal union of the divine and human in one person, the Son of God, who was with the Father from eternity, received into His divine person our human nature so that by this union the divine and human nature are intimately and permanently united. "... 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 Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us ... according to the Scriptures ..." (Nicene Creed).

How fathomless is this doctrine giving us but a glimpse into the person of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One from God. This doctrine sets the Christian faith apart from every other workrighteous religion.

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, the Apostle Paul describes how Jesus, being in very nature God, emptied Himself of all the divine attributes, taking on the nature of a servant,

humbling Himself even to death on a cross. On the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, all people will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (2:11).

In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "We always carry the deadness of Jesus about in the body, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body" (4:10). It is a summary of the spiritual, physical, and emotional struggles Paul experienced in his missionary journeys to spread the gospel. He is experiencing abandonment, being alone,

even by those who seemed to be with him. This happened in the body so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in him.

Our own personal loss of someone near and dear may bring us to the crucifixion of our Lord, where we are reminded again of His sacrifice for our redemption.

From the beginning, when the universe was spoken into existence *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), the Trinity of God was there and the Son of God, the Word, who was with God, spoke and it happened. The story begins and the prophecies concerning the Incarnation began and were kept and guarded by the nation chosen by God. The greatest story ever told is the beautiful story of Jesus coming as the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the King of creation.

The Son of God

The depth of the love of Jesus as He gave His life for us is captured by the words in the hymn "Beautiful Savior." The story of Jesus Christ is the most beautiful story ever told as it is unfolded in Holy Scripture. The beauty of the story lifts us up to high places to behold His glory, giving us the expectation that we will see Him, be with Him, and live in His radiance in the Church victorious in the place He has prepared for us.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Fruehauf, Maple Grove, Minn., is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Seven Last Words of Christ

BY HEIDI NELSON

Word Five

ne of the most common phrases I hear from my kids in our home is, "I'm thirsty." But it is not just a phrase for my children. None of us have to think too hard to remember the last time we were thirsty. From newborn babies to 120-year-olds, we can all relate to the idea of

being thirsty—on a daily basis, even. Maybe that is why Jesus chose the simple phrase, "I thirst," as one of His final phrases on the cross to remind us of His

When we think of the awesome qualities of God, our minds immediately cling to His all-powerful, allknowing, always present, eternal, and holy qualities. The fact that He became human may not be one of the first awesome qualities that fill our minds. But as we ponder this statement as one of His final phrases on the cross, I am realizing that the God of the universe also becoming human may be one of His most awesome qualities. What other god would humble himself to enter our world, experiencing sadness, anger, rejection, betrayal, temptation, agony, pain, and death? But Jesus did.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Not only did He become flesh, but He lived a perfect life, just to die in our place. How can we not love Him for that amazing sacrifice?

Many years ago, my grandma befriended a young woman who had recently moved to their small Kansas town from Thailand. She taught her English and other important things needed to live in the

U.S. One day my grandma told her all about Jesus and about all He had done for us. The woman was amazed and said, "What did Buddha ever do for me?" She could not help but love Him in return for all He had done. Immediately she began her life of loving Jesus and following Him.

By becoming human, Jesus was able to live that perfect life required for the sacrifice to make a way for all of us to know God again. And not only did He give His life for us, but because He lived in our flesh, He understands how we feel. When we journey through the painful moments of this life, we can cry out to a God who not only created us and loves us, but a God who can relate to all the feelings of our hearts and all the pain of this life because He also experienced and endured the same.

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

John 19:28

He knows our hearts because He is God, but He also empathizes with us because He lived through the pain of this world, too. And then because of that great sacrifice on the cross, we can have hope. We have hope that the pain has an end, scars will be healed, peace will reign, and every tear will be wiped from our eyes as we experience forever life with Jesus, our Redeemer.

Isaiah writes: "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (53:3-5).

Jesus said, "I thirst," to remind us of His humanness, His suffering. The Creator of the universe took on flesh. He lived among us and took our place on the cross. He forgives our sins. He makes a way for us to be with God. He understands our hearts. He heals our hurts. He gives us hope for a forever future with Him. He loves us and will never stop. These promises are not just for a few great people or a certain group or demographic. He offers

Gruly I'd love Thee

healing, hope, and forgiveness for every age, gender, tribe, tongue, people, and nation. He suffered so we could live, live a life of joy, freedom, and hope.

When I think about all Jesus has done for me, what can I do but give thanks and love Him in return? "Beautiful Savior, truly I'd love Thee."

Nelson is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30

> s a teenager, I remember being jarred when a speaker asked students to think of what it would be like to wear a tiny golden electric chair, or a guillotine, as a pendant on a necklace. What ugly instruments of death! Of course, I would never choose to do that! And yet, I wore a cross necklace almost every day. Why? Although crucifixion was an intentionally brutal and public way to execute criminals, to any who have been saved by the blood of Jesus, it truly is a beautiful thing. It is the hard evidence of our Messiah's sacrifice for us, proof of His mission completed.

What was Christ's mission? When He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), to what was He referring, and how do we respond?

Jesus sums up His purpose in answer to His disciples squabbling over who would be the greatest: "But Jesus called to them and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus Christ, creator of the universe and omnipotent king, came to earth with the *intention* of not being served, but instead serving those who should be serving Him, to the point of sacrificing His very life. I am wonder struck at that thought. In this, I see three ways He calls me to serve Him—humbly, actively, and sacrificially.

To imagine that Jesus in humility came with the intention *not* to be served is counter to all that we picture as normal in our world. We'd like to think that we don't live in expectation of being served, but times of trial show us our true selves. When so many businesses have been short staffed, it has taken us time to accept that we won't be served immediately, as though that is what we deserve. Signs on drivethrough windows and doors leading into businesses

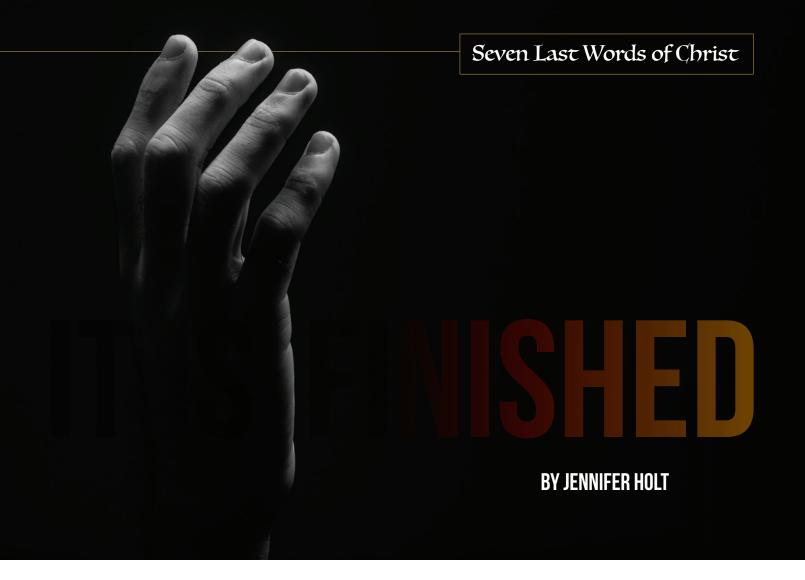
ask for patience with those workers who came in that day, because unfortunately, many aren't patient without a reminder. Why? I suppose after receiving respect and quality service, we begin to expect it. Yet, Jesus completely deserves respect and service, and has had it for eternity, but He came to be Emmanuel, God with us, without those expectations. His heart was set on us with such fervor that He was pleased to give up all of heaven's glory with the intention of not being served. I want to be so in love

with my Savior that I let go of what I think I deserve,

and instead live in humility.

Word Six

When Jesus said, "It is finished," He had lived for 33 years in humility and served His creation. While there is so much we don't know about Jesus' time on earth, we do know that during His public ministry His days were spent teaching and healing and performing miracles. If He had only come to save us from our sins, that alone would have been amazing! But in addition, He met immediate physical needs for thousands of people—the sick were healed, the hungry fed, and the dead raised. I believe He began each day with the intention of serving and did so actively. Even if people didn't come to Him, He



looked for people to serve, and He took time for and with them. He wasn't too busy when the opportunity arose to speak with one Samaritan woman at a well, or for a midnight conversation with Nicodemus. I want to be so in love with my Savior that I leave margin in my schedule so there is time for conversations and opportunities to serve, whether it is cooking a meal for someone who is hurting or helping someone move.

But how much should I serve? Jesus gave His very life "as a ransom for many." With that in mind, I am moved to give beyond what is comfortable. It may seem obvious, but that's uncomfortable! This doesn't mean I have to give to the point of exhaustion every day, but I can no longer look at my own comfort as the deciding factor of whether or not I serve. Instead, I want to look to God for His leading on how and who to serve. Charles Hummel, in his booklet "Tyranny of the Urgent," discusses Jesus' priorities and His secret to living a "finished" life, observing that Jesus "discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of

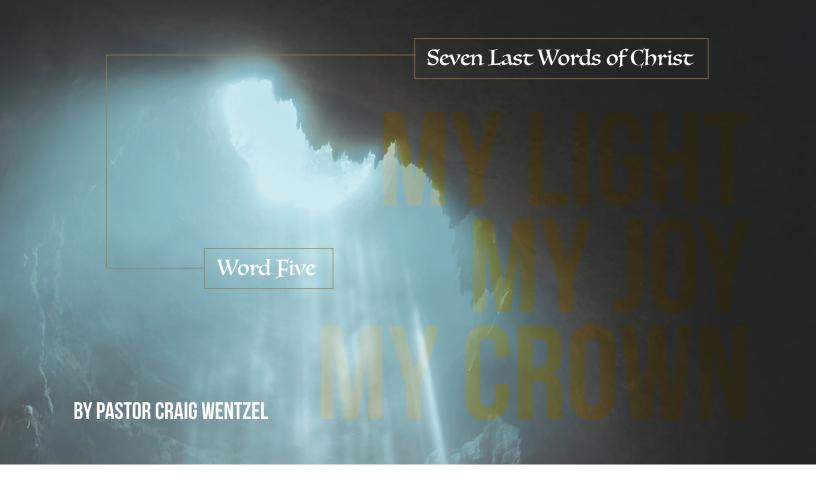
prayer. By this means He warded off the urgent and accomplished the important." There will always be urgent demands in life—work, family, friends, church—and they can be very good and healthy needs. But I want to be so in love with my Savior that I begin each day in prayer submitted to God the Father, waiting for Him to order my steps for the day,

Gruly I'd serve Thee

whether or not it is comfortable.

Can I live even one day with humility, making time to serve, without reference to my own comfort? On my own, no, but by God's grace, I can! I want to serve Him, living moved by the example of my Savior King who was willing to serve until He could say, "It is finished."

Holt is a member of Living Hope Church, Rogers, Minn.



Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."
When he said this, he breathed his last.
Luke 23:46

he last phrase of the first verse from Beautiful Savior reads, "Light of my soul, my joy, my crown." It explains Jesus' last, or seventh, word from the cross as recorded in Luke 23.

The phrase, "Light of my soul," shows the truth about Jesus in the midst of earthly circumstances. At that moment on Good Friday, darkness covered the land in the brightest time of the day. That is a picture of our spiritual condition before Jesus died—there was no light, no hope, for our eternal souls. But Jesus has become the Light of our souls now that He has overcome death and entered into the Father's presence. He is the Light in heaven that we are heading home to.

The phrase, "my joy," describes what we will experience in heaven. Psalm 16:11 says, "in your presence there is fullness of joy." When Jesus spoke His last word, as He gave Himself into God's hands, the curtain, which separated man from God's presence in the temple, was miraculously torn from top to bottom. Likewise, the way into God's presence in heaven was opened by Jesus' death, the tearing of His body. Therefore, each of us can be with Him in heaven. Jesus is our joy because He is God and

enables us to be in the presence of the Trinity, the fullness of joy.

The phrase, "my crown," means that because Jesus' sacrifice was pleasing to the Father, and because Jesus entered into His presence, He is our crown. His work of grace for us

elevates us and makes us important—we become members of God's royal family when we wear Jesus as our crown.

At this last moment on Good Friday, it looks like everything is hopeless because Jesus has died. However,

"It's Friday. The sky grows dark, the earth begins to tremble, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. Holy God, who will not abide with sin, pours out His wrath on that perfect sacrificial lamb ...

"It's Friday. And at the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple that separates sinful man from Holy God was torn from the top to the bottom because Sunday's coming.

"It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, heaven is weeping, and hell is partying. But that's because it's Friday, and they don't know it, but Sunday's a coming ..." (Shadrach Meshach Lockridge).

Wentzel serves Living Word Lutheran, Edmore, N.D., and Zoar Lutheran, Hampden, N.D.



CONSIDERING BIG QUESTIONS

BY HANS TANNER



'm excited for the days ahead for Home Missions. In my less than five months of being on the Home Missions Committee (filling in on an interim basis until this year's

annual Missions Corporation meeting), I've never been as excited as I am now for the direction we are headed as a committee, a department, and a ministry branch of the AFLC. There is much to celebrate about how God has worked through Home Missions in the past, and as we improve our methods and strive to learn from our mistakes, we do so with a humble reliance on the Lord who gives life to His Church, the bride of Christ. Instead of coming up with something flashy and new, our committee is looking to return to our roots and examine the questions of "what does it mean to be a free and living Lutheran church?" and, "What is the healthiest way to plant this type of church?"

Big questions take time to answer well, and we want to lay up a strong foundation that will yield good fruit for the AFLC in the decades to come. In the right time, we will look for a director to execute this vision and lead others in doing this work well. Please pray for us and all those involved to put in place the right team. We don't take this task lightly, and I'm encouraged by the members of our committee who are humbly serving each other well—they even put up with a young'un like me.

As a committee, we frequently hear about another person or congregation that is interested in planting a church, and it truly is fun to hear about this interest. Not all of those expressing interest will go on to plant churches, but it is a delight to see God working in His children to grow His kingdom. In my own congregation, St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Fargo, N.D., we have recently voted to form a steering committee to explore the idea of planting another church. That steering committee should have met for the first time or two by the time you're reading this, and I'm excited to see the direction in which God leads our congregation. Please pray for us.

If you're discouraged at all by what is going on in our world, our part of the country, or even within our own little church association that is the AFLC, remember to look to Christ and the cross. God will build His kingdom with or without us, and that should be a comfort. We all fall short of God's glory—current Home Missions Committee members included—but we look to the cross and the empty tomb to know that our sins are forgiven, and we pray that God would encourage us through the gospel to do the good works that He has planned for us. Onward, brothers and sisters.

Tanner, a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., serves on the Home Missions Committee.

Journey Missions leads trip to Mexico border



An AFLC Journey Missions team traveled to Triumph Free Lutheran, Nogales, Ariz., Feb. 20-27, partnering with Pastor Darwin Jackson, who serves the congregation. The team was involved in door-to-door ministry and evangelism as well as work projects and website development. The team also joined in an outreach service at a local mission, a funeral in Mexico, a congregational prayer service, and a Bible study and Sunday church service.

"Our time was full and we were all very thankful to be able to have the opportunity to join in the ongoing ministry of this congregation," said Jon Nelson, Journey Missions department head.

For more information on individual or group mission opportunities within your congregation, contact Nelson at jon.nelson @aflc.org.





TOP LEFT: Team members included Jon and Heidi Nelson and family, Matthew and Julia Pillman and family, and Paul Pillman. ABOVE: Jon Nelson and Paul Pillman paint the church sign.



TOP: The team went door-to-door inviting neighbors to church.
ABOVE: Pastor Darwin and Alma Jackson lead worship.



WM staff visit Mexico missionaries, field

World Missions Director Earl Korhonen and his wife, Joan, with Madison Greven (WM communications coordinator) traveled Feb. 25 to March 7 to the Mexico mission field to visit Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk, missionaries in Jerez. The group participated in the Sunday school program, worship service, and weekly Kids Club. Pictured are children in the Kids Club (front row) with Barb Schierkolk (right) and (back row, from left) are Joan and Earl Korhonen and Pastor Todd Schierkolk. The group also traveled to Leon and Celaya to visit congregations in the Central Mexican Lutheran Church. (Photo by Madison Greven)



GROTHE: A TRUE SERVANT PASTOR

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

tears as he thought of how wonderful it is that Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. My dad died when I was 16. Pastor Grothe came to visit our family and prayed for each of us. When he got to my name he started to cry. That meant the world to me and was something God used to help me through that very difficult time.

Pastor Grothe was my pastor during my teenage, college, and seminary years. Then, some years later, I had the privilege of becoming his pastor. I wanted him to teach a class on how to be a retired pastor, but he was too humble to do it. He was the best encourager and prayer supporter I could have asked for. There was never any, "I did it this way" from him. I had total confidence he was never going to run me down or talk to anybody behind my back. He believed God could use me, at times more than I believed it myself.

He loved Jesus. He loved his family. He loved people. He loved his local congregation, and he loved the AFLC. He was at the organizing

conference of the AFLC in 1962. He and his wife, Frances, along with John and Ruby Abel, were commissioned in 1964 as the first AFLC missionaries to Brazil. The Grothes had to come home early from Brazil because of Frances' illness.

Pastor suffered the tragic loss of his first wife in 1968. As he talked about it in later years, he was honest about the hurt and the pain. He told

how, in his sorrow, he wondered what he was going to do as a widower with six kids to care for. But he looked back without bitterness. Instead, he was so thankful for how the Lord gave him strength and cared for him. He overflowed with thanksgiving for the gift of his second wife, Loretta, for his family and his church body and for how others helped him.

My heart overflows with thanksgiving for God's gracious gift of Pastor Alvin Grothe.

felt like I was drifting away from

be done. Pastor Grothe was far from flashy. He was real. He was sincere. The more you got to know him, the more his preaching and teaching impacted you, because you got to see that it from his heart. He meant what he said, and he lived it out during the week.

Him rather than drawing closer. At that crucial time in my life, God gave me a wonderful gift.

He brought Pastor Grothe to my church (Bethany Free Lutheran,

Astoria, Ore.) to be my pastor.

Pastor Grothe humbly

served. He would be the first

at church. He wasn't at all

to help move tables and chairs

impressed with himself or his

title. He did whatever needed to

An old book I read in seminary advised pastors not to cry. I'm thankful Pastor Grothe didn't pay attention to that book. Once while preaching on I John 1:9 he was moved to

Johnson serves Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Wash.

AFLC Annual Conference

June 15-18 • Association Retreat Center

The AFLC's 60th anniversary Annual Conference will be held June 15-18 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. The conference theme, "God Rewards the Faithful," comes from Hebrews 11:6.

Registration

Registration for the conference is available online. To register, please visit **aflc.org/about-us/conferences**. The cost of registration is \$35/individual, and \$60/couple. To register over the phone, call Chanel Nelson in the AFLC president's office at (763) 412-2001. Registration will close on June 6. Walk-up registration will be available for late registrants.

As you register, please refer to the conference schedule (subject to change). A full version of this schedule is available on the AFLC conference web page.

Housing and Meals

Reservations for housing and meals at the Association Retreat Center are available through the ARC web page (arc-aflc.org/2022-annual-conference), or by calling the ARC at (715) 294-2877. A link is also available on the conference registration page.

Off-site housing is available at the following hotels/motels:

- Osceola, Wis. (8 miles): River Valley Inn and Suites (715) 294-4060
- St. Croix Falls, Wis. (13 miles): Holiday Inn Express (715) 483-5775
- New Richmond, Wis. (13 miles): Best Western Plus (715) 243-5600, AmeriVu Inn and Suites (715) 246-4606, AmericInn (715) 246-3993
 - Amery, Wis. (18 miles): Forest Inn (715) 268-4100
 - Chisago City, Minn. (20 miles): Comfort Inn and Suites (651) 213-3400
 - Stillwater, Minn. (25 miles): Comfort Inn and Suites (651) 275-1401,

Water Street Inn (651) 439-6000, Lora Hotel (651) 571-3500

WMF Day

WMF Day will be held beginning at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, June 15, under the theme "Sing for Joy" from Psalm 90:14. Registration for the event is available online at aflc.org/women/wmf-day. A link is also available on the AFLC conference registration page. The cost to attend is \$20/person. Registration for the WMF luncheon (on June 15), breakfast (on June 16), and housing can be handled through the ARC registration page. For more information, please contact Margie Lee, WMF treasurer, at margieleend@gmail.com

Children and Youth

Childcare, vacation Bible school (VBS), and youth activities will be available June 15-18. Please register all participants on the AFLC conference registration form available at aflc.org/about-us/conferences.

VBS activities will be provided for children entering preschool through 6th grade. Teams will lead daily Bible lessons, music, crafts, and recreation during morning and afternoon business sessions, and children will join their families for

Childcare will be available for those younger than age 4 during the morning and afternoon business sessions. Children in the nursery will join their families for lunch and dinner. If you plan on using this service at any point during the conference, please register your child/children for accurate planning.

Students in 7th through 12th grades who register for the teen track will join together for worship, Bible study, and fellowship activities each morning and afternoon. Students will remain on camp grounds.



Conference schedule

Wednesday, June 15

9 a.m. Conference committees meet

7:30 p.m. Ordination service

Thursday, June 16-Saturday, June 18

Breakfast 7:30 a.m. Devotions 8:30 a.m.

8:45 a.m. Business session

10:25 a.m. Break

Business session 10:50 a.m.

11:40 a.m. Prayer Noon Lunch

 Thursday Builder's Fellowship

 Friday Chaplaincy Saturday FLBC Alumni

1:15 p.m. **AFLC Department Electives** (Thursday and Saturday)

Corporation Meetings (Friday) 1:15 p.m.

> Lecture Series (Friday) **AFLC Department Electives**

2:15 p.m. (Thursday and Saturday)

Lecture Series (Friday) 2:15 p.m.

Break 3 p.m.

• Friday

Worship and devotions 3:30 p.m.

Business session 3:50 p.m.

Dinner (Thursday and Friday) 5:30 p.m.

7:30 p.m. Evening service

Mission Festival service Thursday

Communion, 60th anniversary Testimony service (4:30 p.m.) Saturday



A GODLY MOTHER'S LEGACY

BY CHERI NELSON

ry it again," Mom said. I was only 6 years old. My mother, Dorothy Russum, had me memorizing II Timothy 3:16-17 as she was ironing sheets.

"All Scripture is Godbreathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be equipped for every good work," I replied in my little-girl voice.

This is one of my favorite memories. I'm glad my mom encouraged me to learn Bible verses instead of helping her with that chore, because who irons sheets these days?

Mom's breakfast every morning before going to work consisted of toast and devotions. I was usually asleep, but when I came to the kitchen each morning, I found her Bible left open on the table for me. Even when she wasn't home, she invited me to take in spiritual food with my Cheerios. After work, mom picked me up and

took me to Bible Club where I learned to teach Bible songs and flannel-graph stories.

Nursing was mom's passion, but every summer, she took two weeks of vacation to impact children. She wanted them to know about God's love, too. Remember the full-day vacation Bible schools? I remember walking up the church sidewalk to VBS each day, my lunchbox in one hand, my mom's hand in the other.

For Mom's other week of vacation, she and dad loaded us into the station wagon. Destination? AFLC Bible Camp at Lake Geneva, Minn., where Mom served as camp nurse. Precious memories were made as we sang, studied the Bible, and had fun. Our Bible camp friends also joined us on our family vacations: camper caravans to AFLC Annual Conferences. These Bible camp friends became Bible college (FLBC) friends and are now life-long friends.

During those early days of the AFLC, when our parents became involved, they jumped in with both feet. Along with VBS and Bible camp, Mom's passion was the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF). She worked tirelessly at all levels supporting our missionaries and the women of the WMF.

She was a wonderful mom who loved us, but her favorite place to be was with Dad. Often, when we'd walk into the house or later into their Fargo apartment, we would find Mom cuddling on Dad's lap in the recliner. Content. Happy.

Nelson (top left) with her sisters and her mother, Dorothy (center).

Together. My parents didn't speak much about their love. They showed it. Yes, they argued, too. They were stubborn. But they were forgiving. My dad, Vernon, would keep his hand on her knee as they rode together in the backseat during car rides. And in church they sat together, hand-inhand.

A few years back, I asked mom, "You really love dad, don't you?" Blushing like a schoolgirl she said, "Oh yes! I do!"

Mom's example of love for my dad makes me smile. It was tender and sweet, the way Jesus loves us. My mom was very confident of our dad's love for her and even more confident in how loved she was by Jesus.

Mom's example of a godly woman and her great love for Christ is the legacy she wanted to leave in this world. Her confirmation verse, which happened to be her favorite, was Romans 8:1, "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

I'm looking forward to spending sweet time with her again in heaven with Jesus someday.

Nelson is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Correction: Ellen Dalager, serving as a short term assistant in Brazil, is a member of Westaker Free Lutheran, Newfolden, Minn.

Licensed Pastor Mark Olson was installed March 13 at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Nominee biographies due

Nominees to the AFLC Annual Conference are asked to submit short biographies to the AFLC president's office prior to the conference. The biographies will be made available to conference attendees at the discretion of the Conference Committee. The biographies will be solicited for nominees to boards and committees only, excluding corporations, conference committees, and the Nominating Committee. Biographies should be submitted to Chanel Nelson, executive secretary to the president, at chanel.nelson@aflc.org.



Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, traveled to Naknek, Alaska, Feb. 24 to March 5 for special meetings at Hilltop Christian Fellowship. Pictured (from left) are Pastor Jeremy Crowell, Pastor Korhonen, Pastor Jeff Swanson, and Joshua Fish.

FEBRUARY MEMORIALS .

Bible College Charles Freeberg

General Fund

Gary Kilbourne

Home Missions Gertrude Lapour

Parish Education Pastor Walter Johnson **Becky Melby**

Seminary **Deb Benson** **World Missions**

Pastor Alvin and Frances Grothe Carol Norgaard Finn Waitman Patricia Karich Kathy Helms Wallace Benson

... in honor of

Bible College Pastor Adam Osier Josh Johnson

Emerald DeBoer

Emerald "Emy" K. DeBoer, 96, of Eau Claire, Wis., passed away on Feb. 11, 2022, at Sacred Heart Hospital., Eau Claire. Born July 19, 1925, she was the daughter of Conrad and Anna (Ose) Opland. She married Hubert DeBoer on Aug. 31, 1947. He preceded her in death on Sept. 8, 2003.

She attended the Lutheran Bible Institute, Minneapolis, where she met Hubert. After marriage, they served the AFLC congregations of Faith Lutheran, Austin, Minn. (1964-65), Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn., and Grace Free Lutheran and Rice Lutheran, Bagley, Minn. (1965-68), Zion Lutheran, Willmar, Minn., and Faith Lutheran, Granite Falls, Minn. (1968-71), and Faith Lutheran of Running Valley, Colfax, Wis. (1978-86). They served as interim pastor for several congregations while living in Thief River Falls, Minn. (1971-78). After retirement, they served as interim at Newfolden, Minn. (1987-88), Christ Lutheran, Devil's Lake, N.D. (1989), Zoar Lutheran, Hatton, N.D. (1990-91), Living Word Lutheran, Edmore, N.D., and Zoar Lutheran, Hampden, N.D. (1992).

Surviving are two daughters, Ann (Mike) Scherf, and Lori (Ron) Lee; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband; one daughter, Sandy DeBoer; and a granddaughter.

The service was Feb. 18 at Saving Grace Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wis. Burial was at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn.

FLY Beyond registration now open

AFLC Youth Ministries will host FLY Beyond 2022 on July 17-21 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. FLY

Beyond is the national youth equipping camp for the AFLC. The camp offers spiritual growth opportunities in a small group learning environment.

The theme for the conference, "Upward," comes from Ephesians 4:11-16. Various speakers will lead morning Bible studies, Tim Barnett will lead the apologetics training, and Pastor Ryan Tonneson will lead the evening sessions.

Registration is now open to teens in grades

7 through 12. Best rate by May 12. Registration options also include a digital version of the camp, which allows congregations to receive all 16 main sessions of the camp content via video following the camp. For more information, visit aflc.org/youth/flybeyond.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-February 28, 2022

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$72,922	\$110,067	\$69,669
Evangelism	13,369	23,148	31,755
Youth Ministries	16,331	39,443	40,083
Parish Education	8,673	20,138	20,874
Seminary	32,156	54,418	45,709
Bible College	44,339	78,671	81,217
Home Missions	31,488	86,026	62,067
World Missions	54,937	96,899	75,185
Personal Support	72,642	144,510	184,915
TOTALS	\$346,857	\$653,320	\$611,473

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

EASTER MORROW

cross the centuries Christians have celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ by setting aside a special day of the year for worship. We call this day Easter Sunday, and it has grown to be quite a festive occasion in our culture, with many aspects that have little (or nothing) to do with its true meaning. [One of my first



Pastor Robert Lee

articles for The Lutheran Ambassador was entitled "An Open Letter to the Easter Bunny" in 1966.]

Music comes to mind for many of us when we think of the holiday ... special choir anthems and hymns from a section

in the hymnal that we probably turn to only once a year, and yet they are often very close to our hearts.

My home congregation changed hymnals during my teen years, and I remember that our pastor introduced us to a new hymn every Sunday during the transition months. But there were a few of what one might call "heart hymns" that had been left out of the new book, and one of them was "Easter Morrow" (Ambassador *Hymnal* 106). It was one of my old Sunday school teachers who called this to the attention of the pastor, telling him that it wouldn't be right to worship on Easter Sunday without singing it. He obliged by having it printed on a bulletin insert and included in the service again.

It was likely the insistence of this one lady that called the hymn to my attention, causing it to become special to me, and I discovered during my North Dakota parish days that it was a "heart hymn" for others who were waiting to sing it again, too. It has been said that the resurrection theme is really too great to be expressed in human language, but this author and others have tried to do so, blessing generations of worshipers in the process.

Join me in mediating on the message of this heritage hymn.

Easter morrow stills our sorrow forevermore. This was surely true for the first Christians, whose first response seemed to be a mixture of fear and great joy (Matthew 28:8). They finally remembered He forewarned them that the time would come when the world would behold Him no more, but they would behold Him; and because He lives, they shall live also (John 14:19). How is it when saved loved ones die? We do not sorrow as those who have no hope (I Thessalonians 4:13).

From His prison Christ has risen. The author likely was thinking of the prison of death, but perhaps we may also think of Christ's years on earth as an imprisonment, too.

Anthems glorious, joy victorious, ringing to our Redeemer rise! Yes, here are some of our familiar Easter hymns: "Christ the Lord is risen today" ... "I know that my Redeemer lives" ... "Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son" ... "Low in the grave He lay." One introduced to me in more recent years is "Christ is risen! Alleluia!" (AH, 110), and it has become a new personal favorite.

Angels 'biding bring the

tiding ... Heralds of heaven the news relay. I recall a conversation with a young future pastor about the dangers of Bible critics, and he agreed but thought that there were some things in the Bible that we didn't have to believe ... like angels, for instance. What? Angels had an important part in the incarnation, ministering to both Mary and Joseph; an angel announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds, and with a heavenly host of angels proclaimed the first words of praise to the newborn Savior. It

was angels who were the first heralds of the resurrection, announcing, "He is not here; He has risen, just as He said" (Matthew

Sin confounded, grace abounded and set us free. Tomb-dreads are ended; Jesus ascended; the shadows flee. One of our seminary teachers often said that the resurrection of Christ was God's amen to the word of Jesus from the cross, "It is finished." There's a hint of abounding grace early in John's gospel: "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (1:16), and in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, he writes: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you

It has been said that the resurrection theme is really too great to be expressed in human language, but this author and others have tried to do so, blessing generations of worshipers in the process.

> may have an abundance for every good deed" (9:8). Now we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens ... and we may "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

May all of our shadows flee as we worship the living Lord during this Easter season!

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

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association retreat center

A MOMENT THAT DEFINES CONTENTMENT

BY KIRK RAUTIO



ontentment, joy, peace, a feeling of security ... these are all things that are heavy on my mind these days. I am reminded deeply of Lent.

At our church our pastor is beginning a sermon series on the things we give up for Lent. I have been doing a lot of pondering on this topic. What was the ultimate sacrifice? We can all answer this question, can't we? Jesus gave up His life for us, for you and for me.

Each day I fall, each day I am utterly aware of my sinfulness. But let me tell you a story. While driving home one night from town—a five-minute drive on country roads—the sky was as dark as could be. The stars were shining, my heart was calm, and all the sudden I could feel it—contentment. The strain to always run to the next thing, to go to the next level, to run on the wheel of corporate time was gone. It wasn't just satisfaction, not a feeling that this will do for now, but pure contentment.

In that moment I heard a voice speak to me, "I have been waiting for you."

Isn't this what the Lord asks of us? Not that I have attained contentment in any matter of speaking, but the Lord urges us to be content in Him, no matter the circumstances, as Paul writes in Philippians 4:11. The Lord wants us to understand our place with Him, to know the kind of contentment that James wrote about, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

These trials do not take away our contentment with Jesus because our faith is rooted and grounded in the cross. It does not waver; it is steadfast, immovable. This contentment—which is not laziness and sluggishness, as some might think—allows us to be steady and on course with the One

who has called us to remain faithful to His commission. He desires us to experience joy in service.

Where do you sit with this? In this season of Lent, as you sit before the cross, where is your heart? Where does your security stand? The things of this world will pass away. They are but a vapor, as described by James (4:4). Instead, I encourage you to let your contentment, your joy, and your hope be in the cross. Lay down your burdens. Give them to Jesus. And cling steadfastly to Him every day so you may rise triumphant each day in Him. I pray that the Lord will give you your starlit road moment. May you feel, if even for a moment, contentment with your situation no matter what it might be. May you be blessed in Jesus.

Rautio is the executive director of the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.