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December 12, 1989



LIGHT on the WAY

meditations on God's Word

Volume 27 Number 23

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Luke 2:7

Her firstborn Son. A rather simple description, wouldn't you say?...often understood simply to mean that this was Mary's first child.

Oh, it means that, most certainly. You see, Mary was a virgin, and the miracle of the birth of this, her first child, is clearly and powerfully proclaimed in the Scriptures.

But there is much more that is included in this description, "firstborn." This Child, born to Mary, was not just a man-son, He was *The Man-Son*, because He was also *The God-Son*. God become flesh, Mary's firstborn Son.

The Holy Spirit through Luke captures and emphasizes the awesomeness of this occasion in describing the Child as "her firstborn Son." A more literal translation of this description would read, "her Son, *The firstborn One*." Luke wants the reader to pay special attention to the word "firstborn," and Luke's emphasis not only describes the Son, it also "names" and identifies Him. The emphasis is not so much "her firstborn Son," but rather "her Son, who is the Firstborn One."

As we look through the Scriptures, this emphasis becomes significant for several reasons. The Biblical significance of firstborn is *not* that it emphasizes time; that is, the major emphasis of firstborn is not on "born first" before many others. Rather, the significance of firstborn is that it speaks of prominence and honor. To be firstborn means to hold the unique position of honor and prominence.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, applies the title firstborn to Jesus in Colossians 1:15, "And He is...the firstborn of all creation." What Paul is saying is that this Man-Child, born to His mother Mary, is the prominent One over all creation. And why is He prominent? Because, Paul says in Colossians 1:16, He is the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. This One, born to Mary, held in her arms as a tiny infant, cared for and nourished by her, also was and is the All-powerful Creator God. True man,

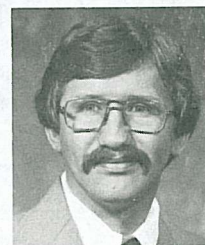
What Child is this?

and at the same time, true God. Awesome! Thus Luke declares, She gave birth to her Son, the Firstborn One.

The significance of firstborn is further seen as we look into the Old Testament. Israel was God's son, His firstborn (Exodus 4:22). The nation occupied a position of prominence among the other nations; they were a people chosen by God, His special possession. When God led Israel out of Egypt, He killed all the firstborn of the land of Egypt (the tenth plague), but He spared the firstborn of Israel. As a consequence, the firstborn in Israel were claimed by God and consecrated to Him, because He had redeemed them by the blood of the Passover lamb. They especially were God's firstborn, and all the firstborn sons of Israel had to be redeemed at the time of their birth, because they especially belonged to God (Exodus 13:2, 12-16). This "redemption of the firstborn" (Numbers 18:15-16) served as a reminder to Israel (Exodus 13:16) that God had delivered them from Egypt. Later, God claimed the tribe of Levi as His "firstborn," instead of the firstborn sons of Israel (Numbers 3:41; 8:14-19). The Levites, as chosen and firstborn ones, were set apart for the purpose of worshipping and serving God in the temple.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, Mary's Child, is *The Firstborn One*. He, the Perfect Sacrifice and our High Priest, died a substitutionary death in order to redeem *all* of God's firstborn. Thus, Hebrews 13:23 speaks of all believers — the whole Christian Church — as being God's "firstborn ones." It is our privilege and honor to be His firstborn, because He, in His mercy and grace, gave the Firstborn One to be our Redeemer.

What a marvelous redemption!



by Pastor
Philip Haugen

All day the storm lashed against the window in the pastor's study. Pastor Alfred Dahl was preparing his sermon for Christmas. He thought it curious that the preparation continued to become more difficult for him: to bring something out that would mean something for himself and which also had a positive message for others.

He was so taken up with his thoughts that the first time he seriously realized how bad the weather was was when he and his wife were on their way home after church on Christmas Eve afternoon. The snow whirled around in front of them on the way and the wind went through nerve and bone. It felt good to get home.

"How good the two of us have it together!" He put his arm around his wife.

"Yes," she smiled, "I feel the same way. And I really am thankful for a Christmas Eve that we can have to ourselves, you and I and Inger. Before we have always had a house full of guests."

"Inger belongs in the house," he said. "She is a faithful hired girl who only thinks of making things happy for us."

"It will be good for once to relax!"

He sighed. "In some way, considering all things, I haven't been thinking about Christmas. I have always thought it was grand to have many guests. But let us go in and I will read over my sermon for tomorrow morning while you and Inger get dinner ready."

"It's so unpleasant out tonight," Inger said as the pastor's wife came out in the kitchen. "Pity those who have to be out in such weather!"

"You're right about that," Mrs. Dahl agreed, "but every job has to be done, also for those who have outside work."

Inger began to brown the potatoes.

When she had come to the parsonage several years before, her work had been criticized. Then Inger, who otherwise was goodness itself, had reacted, "If the lady of the house can do it better herself, I can surely find something else to do." She could remember that Mrs. Dahl had been left standing there half embarrassed. Since then Inger had

*They had planned
a quiet
Christmas Eve*

*the
Christmas guest*



been put in charge of taking care of the kitchen. But setting the table she had been glad to leave to her mistress, who understood that part of the work better than she did.

When dinner was ready and everything was decorated and in place, Mrs. Dahl bid them come to the table. The Dahls had no children. Maybe that was why up until now they had always been so good to invite their friends. The pastor meant that Christmas was missing something without company, without thinking about the extra work that put upon the hostess and the household help.

They set themselves to the matter at hand. Many nice things were said about the food and the way things looked. Inger went out in the kitchen when she heard a noise at the door.

Who could it be.

She opened the door.

*"How good
the two of us
have it together!
He put his arm
around his wife."*

A dishevelled figure stood on the steps. Before she could get the door again, the man had put a foot in the crack.

"Is the chief home?" The voice was thick, there was the smell of alcohol.

"Yes, he is."

"Is it permissible for a highway ruffian to ask for a little food?"

"It's a little inopportune; the man and his wife are eating," she answered.

"No, is that so? Our master eats and drinks and misses a holy Christmas Eve! I am hungry and sent away," the words came contemptuously. "Will you let a poor man lie outside in the storm and freeze to death on Christmas Eve; would your conscience allow it? Let me come in and warm myself at least while the folks of the house satisfy themselves. Or isn't a person welcome here in the parsonage when it comes down to it? Then you can greet the pastor and say that I don't give much for his preaching."

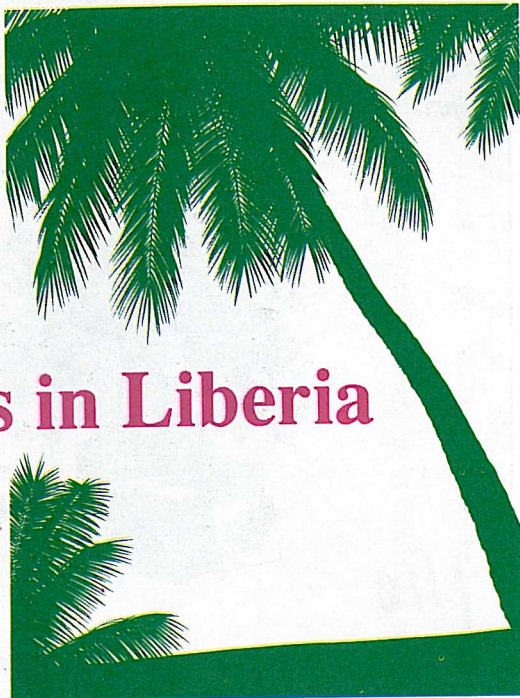
"You must go now." Inger was impatient. She realized that she had to go and get the pastor, so she went in and said, "There's a tramp in the door and he won't leave until he gets something to eat."

◇

The holy day in
a different culture

Christmas in Liberia

—by Maria Blees
age 14



November 2

Today as we walked to school we saw our first Christmas bird! Christmas is on the way! Christmas birds for us are a bit like snow for you, signalling the coming of Christmas. They are really cattle egrets that fly to Liberia for a warm vacation from Holland or wherever they live. Everyone just calls them Christmas birds.

November 28

Time for Christmas shopping! We'll probably take a taxi to Waterside, the Liberian open-air equivalent of a street-long shopping mall. There are many little stalls which may sell toys, gifts, stationery, cloth, jewelry, as well as many other things. Some of the more luxurious shops have air conditioning.

While at Waterside, everyone has to tightly hang on to their purses. The closer it gets to Christmas, the more rogues there will be ready to pick your pocket! The beggars around are more persistent than usual, too. I guess they think everyone should be more generous since it's Christmas.

As we walk along the streets, stopping in various shops, we see evidence of Christmas. One of the reasons we've gone to town is to get presents for Famata's family. Famata is a Liberian mother with ten children. She

is a good friend of ours and we give her family Christmas presents every year.

Though Muslims themselves do not celebrate Christmas, Muslim businessmen prepare for Christmas in their shops, because there are always people ready to buy Christmas presents.

December 1

The excitement of Christmas fills the air as we begin decorating the house. "I get to open the first door!" someone shouts as Mom takes out the Advent calendar. Dad puts our artificial Christmas tree together, about three feet high, and strings the light on as we all watch. We take turns putting colored balls and homemade Christmas ornaments on the tree, not to mention everywhere else in the house! Virtually every ornament has a special meaning, being made by one of the kids, as a gift from a special friend or relative or saved from past years.

"The little figurines
are made of thornwood,
a soft African wood
used for carving."

"Oh, here's the nativity scene!" Mom takes the carvings out of the box. The little figurines are made of thornwood, a soft African wood used for carving.

For non-Christian Liberians, a time of fear is beginning. No one knows when and where the "heartman" will come and collect people wanted for sacrifices. This takes place mainly at Christmastime. The fear is very real, with grown men afraid to step out at night without another companion and a weapon in hand. Satan is really hard at work at this time of year.

December 10

The smell of cookies and pastries baking floats through the house. Christmas is almost here!

It's a nice day today, it's the beginning of the "harmattan," which is a dry wind blowing down off the Sahara and over the mountains, which cools it off. It's a little cold, though, about 70° F! It is unusually dry, too; the relative humidity may range from 30 to 70%. This nice weather usually lasts until January, when the temperature and humidity go back up into the 80s and 90s.

December 20

"It's really low tide!" We all look out the window, and sure enough, it is. The tips of many rocks are showing above the surface of the ocean and gentle ripples have replaced the usual crashing breakers. This is the best time of year for snorkeling.

"Before we go swimming, let's bring the presents to Famata's," Dad says. Famata and her family live in a house made of mud and sticks about a mile from our house. Today Famata's children will be getting off school for their "summer" vacation. They'll probably go up country, to the farm, to be with their relatives during Christmas.

Tonight we'll go to the Christmas cantata at church. This is a yearly tradition, when everyone who likes to sing gets together and performs a Christmas musical or collection of Christmas songs. The elementary school also does a musical every Christmas. It is really nice to listen to these singing times, because it helps us

◇

GUEST

The pastor looked annoyed. "Give him some food and tell him to go over to the farm where a place will surely be found where he can spend the night. We should be able to have some peace tonight."

"Now, what did the pastor say, that perhaps you will give me something to eat, and then? If I heard correctly, was it that the farmer should find a place for me to spend the night?" The man laughed scornfully. I had it figured right; I can get to sleep in a stable Christmas night, because there isn't any room for me in the parsonage."

Inger was put on the spot. The man continued, but in a milder tone.

"Don't cry, miss! Give me food and then I will go over to the barn. No one is going to suffer hurt if I sit down here in the kitchen."

The pastor felt restless. Perhaps it was wrong to let Inger be alone with the stranger.

"No, Alfred, just stay here. If you go out in the kitchen, I know it won't be long before you invite the man to be here over Christmas." His wife smiled.

"He is terribly loud. But," she meant, "that kind of person is seldom dangerous."

Still the pastor was restless. From the kitchen he heard a grating man's voice: "Well, so the pastor doesn't have any office hours tonight. Greet him and tell him that he can keep his heavenly kingdom for me!"

The pastor got up and went to the door.

He had never seen anyone as pitiful as the man who now sat at the kitchen table. Their eyes met. The man turned white in his face, cried out like a wounded deer and got up shaking. Before anyone could prevent it, he tore the door open and tumbled out in the storm.

Without thinking, the pastor ran after him. His one wish was to reach the man again. Fortunately, he had more strength than the stranger and overtook him at the gate. "I don't want to throw you out," he excused himself.

"Come back in and get the food you need."

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CHRISTMAS CROWDS



"...There was no room for them in the inn."

(Luke 2:7)

Julien C. Hyer
(from *The Shepherd*)

"No room!" the inn host said to them,
The holy pair in Bethlehem.
Do you make room for sacred things
At Yuletide when the season brings
Its crowds in bus and street and store,
And Christmas parties by the score?
What of the Christ who is its King?
Will you His praise and carols sing?
And will you give Him room, and pay
Your tribute to Him on His day?

LIBERIA

to get more into the spirit of Christmas. The church will be decorated with lacy bamboo branches with miniature lights strung around the building. Some of the songs like "White Christmas" and "Jingle Bells" seem a bit out of place here when the temperature is 85° or 90°!

December 24

It's Christmas Eve! Tonight we will have a cookout on the beach with some of our friends, as we have for the past few years. Soon it will be time to open presents! We look forward to our yearly gift from the Indian trader who does business with us, here at ELWA.

A look under our tree reveals some packages wrapped in brown mailing envelopes. These are exciting to everyone, because we know that someone from "home" has sent us goodies. We usually have a few of those packages, some bought on Waterside and the rest homemade. As Christmas gets closer, the kids in the family bustle around, inspired to make the best Christmas presents ever.

December 25

Christmas is finally here! Every year we have a Christmas Day service at church. This helps us to think more about Jesus' birth and the real meaning of Christmas.

Today we will have a big traditional Christmas turkey dinner and we will share it with lots of other people. We usually invite families and single missionaries who are feeling a little lonely because this is their first Christmas away from home and family.

"Bock bock!" we hear as we are eating dinner. ("Bock bock" is the Liberian way of knocking or saying "knock knock.") We open the door and there are some finely dressed Liberian kids.

"I come for my Christmas," one of them says. We give the kids candy or another treat and they are on their way to the next house. Soon another group comes along.

Since Christmas is a religious holiday, the beach is closed and we can't swim. Maybe tomorrow!

Many families do not celebrate Christmas the way we do. Liberian Christians may have a Christmas ser-

He felt the lure of the sea

—by *Gracia Christensen*
St. Paul, Minn.

It was a beautiful May Sunday in the year 1868. The church bell tolled the close of the worship service, and soon the people came out. But no one seemed to have eyes for the glory of the Norwegian valley that morning. Everyone joined the eager cluster around the returned American, questioning him, listening to him, gazing at him. Anders was among them, staring, too, noting not least the gentle-folk clothes the tall man from America wore — the top-hat, the fine frock coat, the collar and tie, the gleaming watch chain, the shiny boots. Neighbor Syver had indeed become a changed man, yes, a great man, after these years in the wonderland of America!

Anders could not erase the picture from his mind. All day and night it haunted him. To be sure he had heard and read and talked about America before. He had thought vaguely about going there some day, too. (Was there any one in Norway who did *not* think thus?) But now here was Syver, sort-of America in the flesh. Hm-m-m...

By the next morning Ander's decision was reached. He announced it quietly, but firmly, to his parents.

"I, too, am going to America," he said.

Mother smiled her patient smile. "You are not yet fourteen years of age, my boy."

"Next year I shall be confirmed, and then I shall be a man."

"And what will such a man do alone in that great land across the sea?" asked Father kindly.

"All that I could ever do here, Father — and all that I could *never* do here."

Father and Mother looked at each other, in the way that parents do, when they are disturbed and try to hide it.

"Has the America fever now come to us, too?" Father asked, dismayed.

The "America Fever" was a disease to be reckoned with in Norway, a hundred years or so ago. For many different reasons, tens of thousands of Norwegians, most of them earnest young people, left their little farms and homes in the valleys or on the seacoasts and set out to pioneer in the New World. They knew the heartbreak of parting from their loved ones. They knew the dangers and hardships of sailing eight or nine weeks or more across the Atlantic, even furnishing their own food and light for the voyage. They also knew the uncertainties and difficulties which awaited them at their journey's end. Yet they counted the cost not too great for the wonderful opportunities America offered — and so they continued to leave.

The letters they wrote from their new homeland were hungrily read by their families. Then they passed into

vice and witness to others at Christmas without having many of the frills of our Christmas. Non-Christian families can be just the opposite. They have all the trimmings — big feasts, new clothes, gifts — but no real meaning.

—*Maria*

As you can see we hold on to many of the traditions of our home country, passing on to our children what was given to us. We are so thankful that Jesus' birth is the essence of our Christmas and our heritage. The contrast here is sharp between the hope we

have in Christ and the fear that controls the hearts of the people without Jesus. Pray with us as we seek to touch the hearts and lives of those around us.

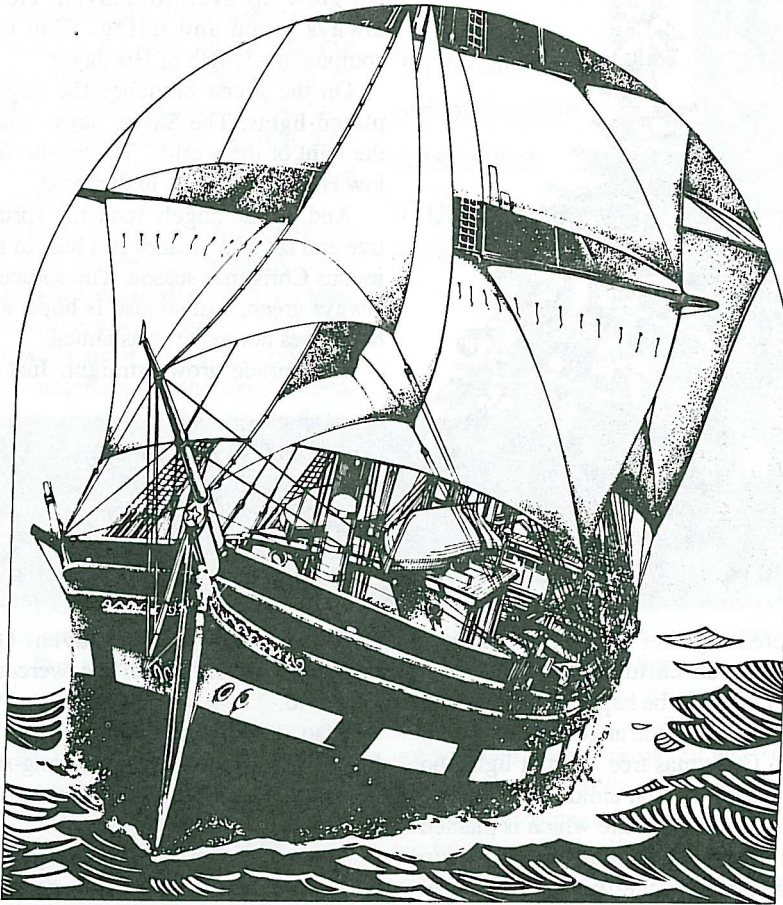
—*Bob and Gracia Blees*
Radio ELWA

P. O. Box 10-0192

1000 Monrovia 10, Liberia

(Gracia Blees is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Dyrud, Newfolden, Minn., members of Westaker Lutheran Church there. Bob and Gracia have three other children: Elisabeth, 12, Kari, 7, and Michael, 5.

"‘I, too, am going to America,’ he said.”



The Singing Sailor

the hands of many friends and neighbors, too. Thus the life of the emigrant was eagerly discussed, whether in praise or in condemnation, by great numbers of people, and the magic name of America spread from lip to lip, and home to home. A call stirred deeply in the soul of many a young person like Anders, during the day, during the night. Was it only a call to escape? only a call to adventure? or a call from the Lord?

To Anders the call had come, and he could no longer escape it. The thought of leaving home choked him.

But during the long winter months as he prepared for his confirmation in the spring, his conviction grew that his decision to go was right. Not easily could his parents find it in their hearts to bless this venture. But in those days a boy was often self-supporting and on his own even before the time of confirmation. They knew they could hold him no longer. They knew they had little to offer him for the future — except their love, and that would be his to the ends of the earth. So with heavy hearts they accepted what they must and gave him their consent.

Then the preparations for the long

voyage began. His father carpentered a sturdy traveling chest, and painted it in gay colors. One brother wrought two iron bands, a lock, and a large key for the new chest. Mother and sisters wove and sewed, and wiped away many an unbidden tear as they worked. A small pillow case they embroidered with his name, and all their names, and filled it with the fragrant needles of the giant pine by the barn. The pastor did his share, too, by contacting a friend who was captain of an emigrant vessel. Through his efforts it was arranged that Anders should earn his passage by working as a messboy and general handyman for the Captain.

Thus the months passed, and the time of parting came.

It was Anders' fifteenth birthday when the anchors were weighed at last, and a gentle wind filled the great sails and the ship slipped away from Norway's southern coast. Fifteen years old, and tears in his eyes!

Anders tried to fight down the panic within as he watched the coastline blurring. Never before had he felt such utter loneliness. He felt sick.

"Hey you, boy!" boomed a loud voice almost in his ear. "You're the new captain's boy, eh? Blubbering, eh?"

Anders looked into the scornful eyes of the first mate, a large and powerful man.

"Y-yes, sir. N-no, sir." He tried desperately to control himself.

"You'll have something to blubber about if you don't get going. Captain's looking for you." With that, the mate stalked away.

Anders had no fear of Captain Eliason. During the two days the ship had lain becalmed in port after the scheduled sailing date, the captain had taken time to talk with the lad, partly out of consideration for his friend, Anders' pastor, but mostly out of the kindness of his own Christian spirit. He had gotten the boy to talk about his home and family; about the excitement of

continued on p. 14

The Christmas Tree

The elderly tell many stories about the green Christmas trees. The young call such stories sagas or legends, but I think that many sagas have a deep, deep meaning and that the stories about green Christmas trees can stir our hearts and lift them up to heaven.

It was a thousand or fifteen hundred years ago; the snow lay deep and the afternoon sun's rays glittered over the frozen land. It was very quiet in the dark forest as if hill and valley held their breath. The sound of bells rang



"On the green branches the angels placed lights."

From the files of *Folkebladet*,
December 24, 1919

out over the fields of snow. Christmas was being rung in. In the church the candles were lit for the afternoon devotions, and the lights in the church and the setting sun's rays greeted each other. The old church leader mumbled under his gray moustache, "At night there shall be light."

In the house the man put on his best clothes and prepared himself for the celebration of Christmas Eve. The old and infirm sat with folded hands behind the stove and the sick raised themselves up in bed and folded their hands on top of the sheets. But the children blew on the Jack Frost patterns on the window panes and looked toward the bright church windows, then over the white snow and at the golden evening sky.

Then their spirits lifted but also they again looked sad and tears glistened in their eyes.

But their angels which stand before their Father's face in heaven looked down on them filled with love and it hurt them that the children still didn't have any complete Christmas joy.

Then they said to one another: "Come, let us prepare a gift for the children for Christmas!" And they

gathered together many kinds of presents which children like and with which they can be happy.

Then one of the angels said: "Let us find a Christmas tree and put lights on its branches so that children can get an idea of that tree of life which is planted on earth, and so that the light can spread its glow over the gifts and over everyone standing around the tree, young and old, yes, so that children can see something of the Lord's glory which shone forth on that glorious Christmas night."

All the angels agreed. And they went out in the forest to find a Christmas tree. They found the oak and the beech. But the oak is too gnarled and there are often worms in the beech. After that they looked at the birch, but they knew so well what its branches are used for: as a rod for disobedient children. It was the same with the hazelbush. The rod is a bad aunt and the cane is a mean uncle.

Then they thought about the Prophet Hosea's word: "I am like an evergreen cypress, from me comes your fruit" (14:9). See, as the spruce Jesus stood among His brothers. His roots were set in our soil and He heard

the beat of our poor world's hearts; and He grew up even to heaven. He is always green and living. Who can compute the length of His days?

On the green branches the angels placed lights. The Savior says: "I am the light of the world." Those who follow Him do not walk in darkness.

And so the angels took the spruce tree and set it in palaces and huts in the joyous Christmas season. The spruce is always green. Just so also is hope, and hope does not make us ashamed.

The spruce grows straight. Just so

faith grows up toward heaven. Our faith is the victory which has overcome the world.

Also in winter the spruce keeps its fruit (cones). Even so love is long-suffering and untiring. Love never gives up.

Therefore the angels brought the green spruce from the dry ground, from the frozen woodland, into the halls, rooms and chambers for the glad and holy festival of Christmas. And the old see Christmas Eve with holy earnestness in among the dark intertwined branches and in the clear gleam of the lights. And the children march around the green tree and sing with their clear voices:

"Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn,
A Savior unto us is born.
The Christ, the Lord of Glory;
His lowly birth in Bethlehem
The angels from on high proclaim,
And sing redemption's story.
My soul extol
God's great favor,
Bless Him ever for salvation,
Give Him praise and adoration!"

— Birgitte C. Boye

Tr. Carl Doving

— Translated from Norwegian.

Gifts at Christmas

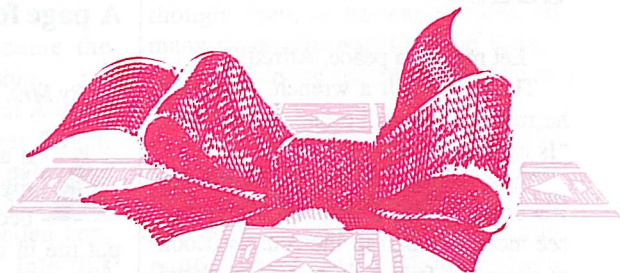
For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Once again it is a joy to share a Christmas greeting with each of you, the readers of our *Lutheran Ambassador*. As the thoughts of Christmas warm our hearts, how enjoyable it would be to visit each of your homes and be able to share a personal greeting with you at this very special time of the year. In many of the department stores Christmas displays have been in place for over a month. The commercial emphasis becomes more evident year by year. The intent is to capture the attention of gift-givers sooner, so that they will buy more.

Gift-giving has a strong hold on all of us. I am not criticizing the giving of Christmas gifts, since they ought to be motivated by the greatest Gift of all that God Himself gave to mankind. But the giving and receiving of gifts so often involves selfish motives.

The age-old question is asked over and over as Christmas approaches — "What do you want for Christmas?" At a younger age there was a time when that pocketknife was a desired item for me. Next it was a watch, then a bicycle, and then a radio. But time and perhaps age have a way of changing these things. I find that I can honestly answer that I really don't have any special item that I want for Christmas. Material things are no longer the all-important. A spouse, children and grandchildren, as well as dear friends, now provide the contentment that meets the desire of the heart. I guess what I am saying is that people are more important than things as I look forward to Christmas this year.

It was God who began Christmas giving as He gave us



His great Gift. It was the gift of His only begotten Son. It was the gift of a person, to enable us to have a personal relationship to Himself.

As we give our gifts this year, let us remember this Gift, and infinitely more precious gifts which a loving Heavenly Father has provided for us. These gifts are beyond the power of man to evaluate.

First, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Bethlehem's manger cradled God's greatest love Gift to lost and dying humanity. Here it was that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

God forbid that we should ever think of Bethlehem's Child apart from Calvary's cross. For upon that cruel tree, the plan of redemption was made available to all men. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

We carefully select our gifts for our loved ones. They are beautifully wrapped and sent or given. What if they were received carelessly and tossed aside with a lack of appreciation? Have we carelessly cast aside God's gift, the greatest gift of all the ages, God's own Son Who gave His life for us all?

Christ has other gifts for us this Christmas as well. The gift of eternal life is His gift to you and me. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (Jn. 10:28). This life is revealed in the person and personality of Christ Jesus and is actually imparted when we receive the gift of Christ as our personal Savior.

Christ also has the gift of peace for each of us this Christmas. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27).

As thoughts of gifts engage our interest this Christmas, it is fitting that we meditate on how we can show our gratitude to a loving Father. He was willing to adopt us into the heavenly family and to call us His sons, heirs and joint heirs with His Son, Christ Jesus. What gift can we give Him which will show our love and gratitude? God wants our hearts, broken and contrite, our lives yielded, our wills surrendered.

If you have never given this gift to God, what a fitting gift you can make to Him this year. Your life and your Christmas will be the richest and fullest you have ever known.

A Blessed Christmas to all.

Pastor Richard Snipstead.

FOR
GOD
SO
LOVED
THE
WORLD
THAT
HE
GAVE HIS ONLY
BEGOTTEN SON
THAT WHOEVER
BELIEVETH IN HIM
SHOULD NOT PERISH
BUT HAVE
EVERLASTING
LIFE.

"Let me go in peace, Alfred!"

The pastor felt a wrench. Suddenly he realized whom he had before him: "Is it you, George?"

"Yes, Alfred, it's me, so let me go! It's undoubtedly a surprise for you to see me in this part of the country. Look at your old friend from school days! This must certainly be some kind of pay back for all the times I went ahead of you in school. I didn't know you lived here. If you want to give me anything, let it be in cash for liquor, you know. You, of course, have always been our Lord's favorite, so why don't you let yourself give a little charity. As you can see, I have a permanent job in 'the tramps' society,' there I manage well."

"Enough of that, George. Come in and eat! It is too cold to stand out here in the storm and argue."

A little unwillingly the other followed his old school comrade inside. Then he was first shown to the bath. To his wife the pastor said, "You have to forgive me this time as well. The stranger, George, is his name, was my old school friend. We studied together many years, then he skipped out. And now we should meet in this way. It was partly due to George that I became a pastor; he was at that time a Christian and had ability and energy that were respected. I can't get myself to send him away."

"Do you mean that he should be here during Christmas as a guest?"

"I haven't thought that far. First he has to have food and get to feel that he is a human being."

The Christmas guest was through with his bath and took his place at the kitchen table.

"Am I fine enough to sit here?"

The pastor didn't reply, only took him under the arms and guided him into the dining room. "My school comrade and friend, George," he introduced him.

Mrs. Dahl bid him welcome. Inger's eyes were large; she still wasn't clear as to the connection between the visitor and the pastor. But when they sat around the table for the second time

—By Mrs. Arnold (Lydia McCarlson)
Landford, S. Dak.

An afternoon with the ladies of my Miriam Circle, which had been our Christmas party, had put me in a festive mood. Despite the cold and swirling snowfall, my heart was warm and joyful, anticipating the arrival of Christmas.

I entered the kitchen, but for a moment was unable to see through my "frosted glasses." Minutes later the door opened and Andy, my grandson, burst in, brushing off the snow furiously. "Hi, Grandma! Here is your *Comet*. It really is getting snappy out there and I have 20 more *Comets* to deliver.

"Andy, would you like some hot chocolate and cookies?" "Sure, any time, Grandma," replied Andy. As usual, he was edging towards the living room to check the Christmas tree to see if any of the presents had his name on them. He stopped abruptly. "Grandma, come here quick!" I hurried into the room, not knowing what to expect or the cause for his alarm. "What is it, Andy?"

Andy only pointed. "There, in the corner under the tree, that big box or whatever it is, how did it get there?"

I was appalled and embarrassed.

with the guest among them, she could see, to be certain, that he had known better days.

Nearing midnight the two old school comrades still sat by the fireplace. But the conversation didn't go very freely. The Christmas tree stood there with its lights, the Christmas Gospel was read and the gifts distributed among them. Only it was so difficult to keep any conversation going. No one could penetrate the wall which the guest had around himself.

The pastor leafed through the Bible: "We are used to closing each day with devotions. I would be happy, George, if you would be along with us."

The other nodded. He stood half hidden behind the tree. A little later he

There among the beautifully-wrapped gifts stood a large box wrapped in old newspapers and tied with broken pieces of string. It looked very much out of place.

"Andy," I said, "is this your idea of a joke? You know I was gone all afternoon."

"No, Grandma, I've been delivering *Comets* ever since school was dismissed. But if I were you I'd pretend I didn't see it and the truth will come out."

After Andy had left, and for days later, my curiosity grew. The temptation to re-wrap the box with bright Christmas paper entered my mind, but should I tamper with with a gift someone else had placed under our tree? So I ignored it completely.

Christmas Eve the gifts were all given out, all except "the box." Then granddaughter Stacy picked it up and brought it to Grandpa and me. "Open it!" all the grandchildren shouted in unison. With great uncertainty we started, still curious what could be inside the poorly wrapped box. Inside was another box wrapped in newspapers, and another, until finally there was a small plastic box. Grandpa

slipped out through the kitchen. He had some alcohol left in the flask and he fought against temptation. Suddenly he flung the flask away; now he was through with that! God had touched his heart. And outside by the gate, in the cold and snow the pastor's schoolmate, George, laid his weak hand in God's strong one.

And the years go by. The pastor couple still lived in the old parsonage. The Christmas mail was beginning to stream in. Then a letter came from America. It was opened and read in the study:

"Dear Alfred, with greetings to you and your wife!

"Thank you for an unforgettable Christmas Eve some years ago now!

beyond the wrapping

opened it and held up a hundred dollar bill. All the time someone had known the contents of the ugly gift.

The gift was precious but the wrappings did not reveal the value of the contents.

Later that evening as I sat and reflected on the memories of Christmas Eve, the thought came, we are gifts from God. Our bodies are the wrappings and how grateful we are to have healthy, beautiful bodies.

In the Bible it tells us that Paul's "package" was not perfect. He had "a thorn in the flesh." He prayed for deliverance, but it was not granted. God looks upon the heart, but man looks upon the outside.

I thought of a lady who recently appeared on a local TV newscast. She was the victim of a rare skin disease. Her face was disfigured but she wanted to show and tell others about the disease. Her "wrappings" didn't make her resentful but gave her love for others.

Another newscast had a young man, Charlie, unable to speak or walk, but through an interpreter he said that he turned his disability into an ability to challenge others not to give up, and to influence them. "Open your hearts to make a personal commitment to even one

disabled person. It may be only a smile."

His wrappings were not traditional, but underneath was a heart of love, kindness, sharing — all precious gifts.

Jesus came into this world at Christmastime to reconcile us, to make us new creatures, so that we can use what we already have — our bodies and minds, our powers and talents, to serve

God our neighbor. This Christmas let us not let the glamour of a beautifully-wrapped gift under the Christmas tree overshadow the real reason. Jesus came to save us from our sins. He was God's gift to us, His only Son. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21 KJV).

That was a turning point for me. There out in the snow by the gate to the parsonage, I came to my Savior. Since that time things have gone well for me. In America I have found new friends — not that I at any time would forget my dear ones back home in Norway..."

The two in the parsonage read the letter over and over again and looked at each other with tears in their eyes. And bent their knees.

"Thank You, dear almighty God! And forgive us that we weren't willing at once to take in the Christmas guest You brought home to us!"

from *Ved Juletid*, 1969

(Translated from Norwegian)



Christmas Contrasts

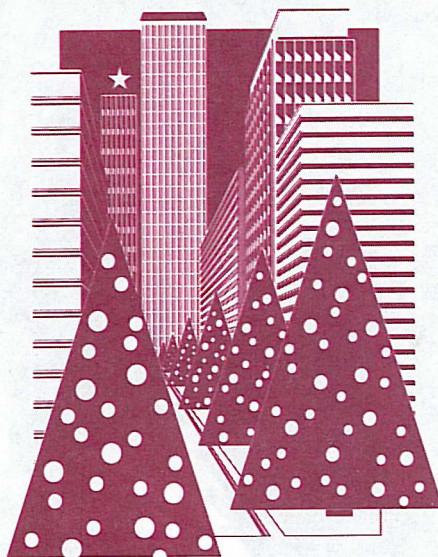
Life in Africa was so simple I thought to myself as we inched along the Los Angeles freeway at peak traffic time amidst the five lanes of bumper to bumper cars. I doubted whether there were this many cars in all of Zimbabwe, Africa. This was the beginning of the 1987 Christmas season in the United States. A well-meaning friend had just taken us to Fashion Island, one of the largest and most exclusive shopping malls in Newport Beach. One elegant store was solely devoted to the sale of Christmas tree ornaments and each of 30 trees was decorated in a different color or followed a specific motif. I appreciated the beauty and the girls found it fascinating, but I began to see that the American culture demanded choices and options in every phase of life and I was tired of decision making.

As we went into a cafe later on that day to order a sandwich, we were struck by how many types of breads, dressings, soups and salads were involved in our desire just to have lunch. Lisa, my oldest daughter, when asked to choose from five different kinds of salad dressing, just looked at me in horror and said, "Please, Mom, just tell them I want a salad."

Getting into the car on the "wrong side" and trying to shift the door knob was another adjustment to face — for 13 years we had been driving on the left side with the steering wheel on the right. Now when I'd come to a corner to turn, I'd have to constantly remind myself to think "Right, Right, Right!" Unfortunately, the Los Angeles freeway system doesn't give one much time for contemplation. Another problem with the car was keeping it fueled. I had never pumped gas in my life because in Africa manual laborers were everywhere and demanded the few jobs that existed. One would merely drive up to the "petrol garage" while at least two men filled your tank and washed your windows. Imagine my insecurity as more decisions ambushed me even at the gas station! I had to drive up, exposing my tank to the cor-

rect pump — we're talking major geometry here — figure out whether to pay before or after pumping, remember the number of the pump, try to pry off the tight-fitting gas cap and then when I felt I couldn't make one more choice I unsuccessfully tried to get the nozzle in my tank and realized that the "lead-ed" gasoline nozzle would probably never fit into my "unleaded" car tank.

That was just my first week. I loved going grocery shopping but I would spend hours wandering up and down the aisles looking at everything, overwhelmed by the quantities available.



The fact that it was Christmas shopping time accentuated the overwhelming choices even more. The decorations were so numerous here but I couldn't help but think of the few strands of tinsel which shopkeepers would display in their windows the last few days before Christmas in Africa. It was just enough to remind us that, "yes," there was a Christmas despite

the lack of commercialism and, "no," the stores would not be open for at least three days allowing everyone time off during these important days.

People whom I hadn't seen for years would heartily welcome us at church and comment, "Isn't it great to be back?" I would nod feebly, choosing not to disclose my mixed feelings. I loved the new choruses and worship times at church. The Christmas decorations were so beautiful and the pews so comfortable. But once again my mind would drift back to the hundreds of African churches which met in community halls or under huge trees. The seating consisted of straw mats or wooden benches. No organs or pianos were present but the most beautiful a cappella singing in three to five parts could be heard. These services were not a slick 60 minutes, but would last for several hours.

I began to realize that a lot of what we call "Christmas" is really wrapped up in our culture. My mom provided lutefisk and lefse on Christmas Eve and we did lots of baking and giving of baked goods to friends. This was something I had missed in Africa, as Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere was celebrated during the hottest months of the summer. The warmth of the evening candlelight services after the build up and anticipation of Advent really set the stage for us to welcome the Lord Jesus at His birthday. And I began to perceive that the real spirit of Christmas is being rightly related to God through Christ Jesus, and with close family friends who believe in Him, too. It doesn't matter where on earth you are at Christmastime, God still reminds us of the pressure of shopping and commercialism; in Africa we avoided all of that and sometimes missed it, but it was easier to focus on Christ and celebrate His birth.

One thing I knew for sure was that God had called us back to the U.S.A. and that we were sure of His will for us in working with the Jesus Film

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EDITORIALS

CANCEL CHRISTMAS?

Christmas morning! What morning in all the year is quite like it? Memories of Christmas Eve linger and will for a long time. Father, Mother and children celebrated together in some cases; in others it was an extended family group. But whatever, it was a warm and wonderful time.

Christmas Day is the official day, the national holiday. Was Jesus born on Christmas Eve, the eve of Christmas, or on the night of Christmas Day? The latter could well be, but at any rate it is Christmas once again.

Pre-Christmas 1989 has been as rushed and busy as all the other Christmases that have gone before, even though the season seems to be getting longer every year. Getting ready for our Christmases is more of a hassle than many of us like. But it's hard to do much about it. Fortunate are those congregations which are able to make Advent, the last few weeks before Christmas, deeply meaningful for their people and where at least the Sundays of Advent are spiritual oases in a frantic and hectic time.

When one surveys the scene about him there might be the temptation to ask, "Shall we cancel Christmas this year?" Last year, for instance, at Bethlehem, where it all began, the local government called off the public celebration for the day. The reason? Unrest and trouble between the Israelis and Arabs. Bethlehem lies on the West Bank, a Palestinian area occupied by Israel since 1967. Four miles south of Jerusalem, the "little town of Bethlehem" of Phillips Brooks' immortal carol now has 50,000 inhabitants, half of them Muslims. The area has been in revolt for over two years and hundreds of Israelis and Arabs have been killed, most of them Arabs. Last year's observance of Christmas there was very low key. The authorities could call off official celebration, but it was still Christmas.

For some individuals and families there may be the temptation to call off Christmas this year. A member of the family faces serious surgery or has been told that no operation can help. Or a loved one has passed away just before Christmas. How can Christmas be celebrated this year?

Or take the people involved in the group tragedies: conflict in San Salvador, the cheap life of Beirut, the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo and the earthquake in the Bay area — for those most directly hurt, how can Christmas be observed this year?

But it's still Christmas. It may be muted for some individuals or families, some parts may be left out of the normal routine, but the central fact of Christmas, that God sent His Son, hasn't changed.

The Christmas Story is the old familiar one. A census brought a husband and wife to Bethlehem, the husband's ancestral city. They made the journey of some 60 miles only to find the town's only inn filled. Their only recourse was to seek shelter in a stable and it was there that the young

woman gave birth to the man-child. He was her flesh and blood, but both she and her husband know that the Baby had been miraculously fathered and was God's Son.

This was surely a very strange place for the Baby to come into the world, this stable, but He was lovingly laid in the manger. Then a strange thing happened. Shepherds came in from the hillsides to see the Child. They had heard and seen a heavenly chorus. They had been told a Savior had been born. The shepherds came to see, to worship, and on their way back to their flocks they told others about what they had seen.

There are national, international and personal problems in our time. Some are saying, we can't have Christmas in the midst of all this. But the fact of Christmas can't be changed.

God the Father sent His Son to a world of need soon two thousand years ago. "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin—." Something had to be done. True, people up to that time were saved by belief in the promise given by God of a Messiah, but that promise had to be fulfilled. Hope must some day become reality and it did in the birth of Jesus.

Jesus came to be the Savior. "Christ the Savior is born," as the old carol puts it. We have to see that, the meaning in the Child who was born. We must see His life, His death and His resurrection in order to get the whole picture. And when we do, we know "the rest of the story," to use the phrase of a popular news commentator.

Don't just see the Baby Jesus, delightful as that is. See *who* He was and is. Realize what He came to do, to bear the world's sins, yours and ours. We have to lay our sins on Jesus and then His work saves us. To lay one's sins on Jesus is simply to give them up and to plead God's mercy for disobedience to Him. This is the only wise course to take and it can only be in response to the love of the Lord which calls us first.

Cancel Christmas? No one can do that. Circumstances may be difficult; the roof may seem to have fallen in, but it's Christmas. Christ came to help people live *above* their circumstances, certainly *through* them. Praise God!

The staff of *The Lutheran Ambassador* wish all our readers a most joyful and blessed Christmas.

LAST YEAR'S MEMORIES

Last year at Christmas I had the opportunity to attend several Christmas programs and functions. Many of you did the same. The events helped to make for a happy, rich, festive season.

Two of the events stand out above the others. One was the Christmas program at Salem Lutheran Church in Wampum, Manitoba. You may remember that I conducted worship services for that small congregation over a period of some months earlier. Being invited to come back for the program on Dec. 20th was something I looked forward to. ◇

SAILOR

seeing the great sailing ship, with its mighty masts hewn from the tallest forest trees; about the wonder of watching so many people swarming on the decks, in kerchiefs and caps of every color; yes, even about the bitter sorrow of bidding farewell to his family, perhaps never to see them again. The captain was Anders' friend. This certainly reassured the lad as he hurried to report.

"Yes, I wanted to see you, Anders," the Captain was saying, "I have explained your duties to you, but now I would like to add a special one to the list."

"Yes, sir." Anders knew he would do anything in his power for the kindly man who sat before him.

"The pastor told me you can sing. Is that right?"

"Well, I do love to sing, sir," Anders stammered in some wonderment. What had singing to do with a messboy's duties?

"You have a hymnbook along?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I received my own *Landstad* hymnal for confirmation."

"Good. It is my custom on every voyage to have a little devotional service early each evening with the passengers and crew. I shall ask you to be responsible for choosing the hymns and leading the singing."

"But, sir, can't someone else do that better?" asked Anders, uneasy at such an unexpected assignment, yet fearing to cause offense.

"The pastor said you would make an excellent *Klokker*," answered Cap-

tain Eliason with a twinkle. "We can give you some training in that, too, on shipboard!"

The month of July was late for America sailings, so there were not many passengers on board. (The ship carried instead a larger load of iron in trade.) At the evening service, Anders looked with interest over the group who would share with him his home-on-the-sea for the next two months or more. There were many rose-cheeked children, contrasting with the pale, quiet baby a young mother tenderly rocked in her arms. There was an unhappy husband with his weeping bride. All day she had wept uncontrollably, because her parents had refused to give her permission to leave for America, and she had gone none-the-less.

EDITORIAL

The church was packed, friends from various points having come to share in the festivities. There was no Sunday School operating, but the children there plus some others put on a fine program. Some of them stood on the rather high platform and with the aid of spruce boughs formed a human Christmas tree, the first one I had seen.

Before the evening was through we had heard some carols in several languages and that added a special dimension to the program and service.

Although there is no serving area in the church, lunch was served and treats were passed out.

The other special occasion of last Christmas was the old-fashioned Christmas program at Satersdal Church, northeast of Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Twice a year a service is held in the old country church, the other one being on Memorial Day.

Since there is no electricity in Satersdal, candles became very important for the service which began at 5 o'clock on Dec. 27. And there were many candles, including those on a wagon wheel suspended from the ceiling. Of course, it was special to see real candles on a tree, something I hadn't seen for many years and which I remember from childhood days.

The program was made up mostly of songs and readings by members of families which had belonged to the former Satersdal Congregation. Then I had the privilege of bringing the meditation for the service. Our feet got cold (it was a very cold night) but our hearts were warm in the fellowship of an old-time Christmas in a country church.

These are two memories I have from last Christmas. You have yours. And in our memories of Christmases past there are many pleasant things which enrich our lives today as we recall them once again.

—Raynard Huglen

Under The Stars, One Holy Night

Under the stars, one holy night,
A little Babe was born;
Over His head a star shone bright,
And glistened till the morn.
And wise men came from far away,
And shepherds hastened where He lay
Under the stars one night.

Under the stars, one blessed night,
The Christ-child came to earth,
And through the darkness
broke the light
Of morning at His birth.
And sweet hosannas filled the air,
And guardian angels
watched Him where
The virgin mother knelt in prayer,
Under the stars one night.

Under the stars, this happy night,
We wait for Him once more,
And seem to see the wondrous sight
The shepherds saw of yore.
O Jesus, born in Bethlehem,
Come unto us as unto them,
And crown us with love's diadem,
Under the stars tonight.

—Anna S. Driscoll
(The Junior Hymnal, Augustana)

There was a quiet circle of good faces, men and women, resolute, strong, slowly ripened, calm. Anders felt at home among these people.

They sang with fervor, and listened with appreciation. Anders thought how glad his mother would have been, could she have been present. To think that he, her boy, was leading the singing! Quavering at first, to be sure, but soon lost in the glory of the music and message, and singing with all the beauty of a strong young voice come into maturity.

"Are you a sailor-man?" asked one of the children afterwards.

"Oh, something like that, though not exactly."

"I shall call you the Singing Sailor," said the child.

After that, Anders became the Singing Sailor to the whole ship.

One experience of that first Atlantic crossing Anders could never forget. After only a few days, the pale baby died, and was buried at sea. The ship's carpenter made a little wooden box, filling it half full of sand. Into this crude coffin the child was gently placed. The Captain read the beautiful words of the committal service and offered prayer. Anders sang. Then, while the poor mother sobbed as if her heart would break, the little casket was lowered slowly into the deep, and

slipped quickly from view. Anders thought then, as he was to think so many times afterwards, of the Resurrection when the sea should give up its dead.

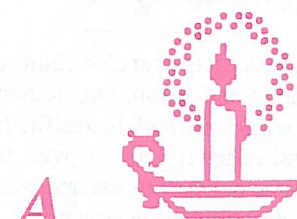
Ten long weeks passed before the new world was sighted at last. It was then late September. Anders had proved to be an excellent sailor and good worker, and Captain Eliason offered him opportunity to stay on the vessel when it sailed from New York to the West Indies. Anders accepted the offer, largely out of personal attachment to the Captain. He little knew he was starting on a round-the-world sailing career, to last many years!

The West Indies voyage proved a sobering apprenticeship. After several weeks of loading freight and provisions in New York, rounding out the crew with replacements, and finishing other essential business, the ship once more set sail. The journey started with excitement, as several vessels raced one another after leaving New York harbor. A thrilling sight it was to see the majestic ships skimming before the wind, every sail billowing, while the sailors urged them on with every bit of skill and spirit they possessed! But the ships soon parted company, and Anders' sailed to the South.

Pleasant and uneventful days of sailing followed, with good winds, and a good spirit on board. No one knew that Anders suffered a great loss one day — and he could not tell, for he was ashamed. Into his chest of supplies and belongings his mother had packed the little homemade pillow of pine needles, gathered from the great pine tree on the "gaard." And *every night* since leaving Norway Anders had stealthily placed this pillow in his bunk, under his head, finding comfort and strength in this fragrant touch of home! He had grown quite dependent upon it, in fact, despite feeling that such sentimentality was unworthy, like a secret sin. But evidently it had not been entirely a secret. Someone had discovered it, and the pillow was gone. But why should anyone steal such a little thing, of no worth?

Anders felt very lonely.

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A Christmas Legend

Almost every Christmas issue of the Ambassador has contained a poem by Marlene Moline of Lansing, Iowa. This year we are reprinting one that appeared in 1967. It is based on an ancient legend that the Christ Child wanders the earth seeking shelter and food on Christmas Eve. Any mercy shown to a beggar or other person was thought to be a symbol of the love of Jesus and also that as we do unto others so we do to Him. A lighted candle in the window was to guide the steps of the Christ Child to a house where He was welcome.

Light the candle, Maggie,
An' the curtain fling wide.
Bar not the door, Maggie,
That He may come inside.
For they say He comes tonight,
Mayhap He will see our light,
Shining like the star so bright
In Bethlehem.

Stir up the fire, Maggie,
Set aflame the glow'n coal.
Warm up the stew, Maggie,
Lay out the Canton Bowl.
Just a bowl of broth an' bread,
Just a cot to lay His head,
'Member now there was no bed
In Bethlehem.

Get the pillow, Maggie,
An' the quilt of eiderdown
The best of sheets, too, Maggie,
An' the linen white gown.
By this hearthside He will stay,
On a feather bed He'll lay;
There was but the manger hay
In Bethlehem.

You hear a knock, Maggie?
Quick and lift the latch.
Here's a welcome, Maggie,
The Child has come at last.
Whether women, child or man,
'Tis the Christ who before us
stands,
Love was born and love began
In Bethlehem.

— Marlene Moline

Christmas on Little Diomedé

After that I was faced with the situation that all the coal which I needed for the winter had been taken ashore at King Island in the dark, in the night, by mistake. However, the Lord does not let His children down. Mr. Anaruk, the school teacher, offered to let me have some coal if I would haul his 20 tons of coal from the beach to the schoolhouse.

With the coming of the pack ice, game came in abundance, such as walrus and seal and oogrook and some time later the polar bears. It looked like we were going to have plenty for Christmas.

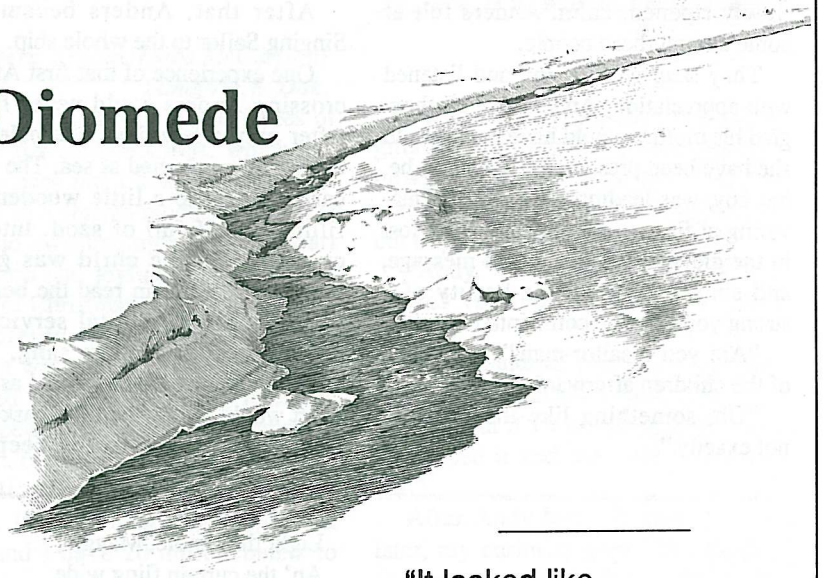
As the weeks passed I kept very busy preparing the Christmas program. Upstairs in the Mission House I found a Sears Roebuck Christmas tree. That tree, with a little extension and some trimming, looked very good on this treeless island. Being that I was single and not much of a baker, Mrs. Anaruk baked my Christmas bread and I carried ice and snow for the water drum behind the kitchen stove in their schoolhouse kitchen upstairs.

We all looked forward to the great festivities of Christmas Eve. The children had memorized the

whole story of the birth of Jesus and hymns were sung in both English and Eskimo languages.

At the school house there had been great preparations for the village Christmas dinner. Everybody brought something to eat. A person could have his choice of reindeer meat, walrus meat, seal meat, oogrook meat and agootuk to go with it. Agootuk is made up of a mixture of tallow and seal oil, and different kinds of wild berries and numerous other goodies.

I had spent Christmas in Norway as a boy and also later some years in Minnesota and other places, but sharing the Christmas story of our Savior's birth with the Eskimos and being their guest at that Christmas dinner was an experience I will never forget.

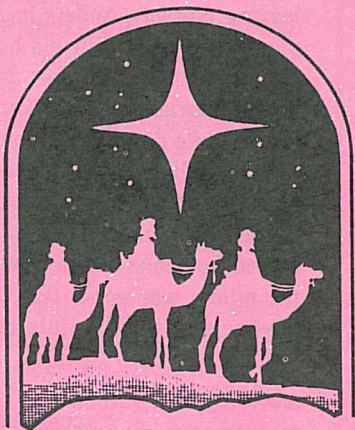


"It looked like we were going to have plenty for Christmas."

Lots of gifts were exchanged afterwards and I, too, was remembered with a pair of beautiful fur slippers. After it was all over, the boys came home with me and wanted the story told all over again. And so it is. The "Old, Old Story of Jesus and His Love" will never grow old. P. S. My coal came next year.

— *Pastor Oscar Brown*

(Pastor Brown is now retired and lives in Cumberland, Wis., where he assists Pastor Thomas Olson in serving rural congregations by Cumberland and Barronett. This excerpt is taken from his memoirs.)



The Wise Men

But this incident of the coming of the wise men from the Gentile world so soon after Jesus was born is a foreshadowing of the fact that the Gentiles as well as the Jews were to be included in God's plan of redeeming grace through the incarnate Son of God.

L. S. Keyser

A Black Christmas

Today almost 90% of Black people live in urban areas in this country and Christmas celebrations appear more standardized and commercialized with every passing year. But in the 1920s about 90% of the Black population lived in the rural areas of the deep South. At that time there was still what could be called a traditional Black Christmas.

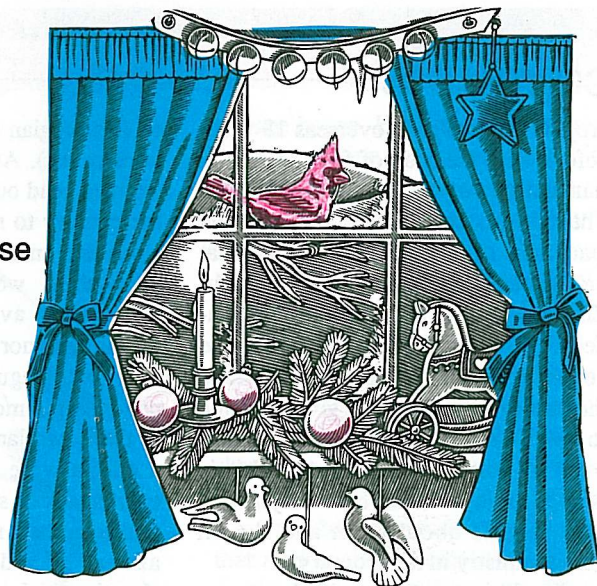
Christmas on those old plantations was a time of great celebrations. The houses were decorated with a cedar tree from the woods nearby. The children always went into the woods and got the materials for the decorations. The ladies planned and made the decorations such as roping for the Christmas tree made from popcorn strung together, crepe paper with cut-out dolls painted on it, cotton on the Christmas tree to represent the snow...

Christmas meant decorations, especially a cedar tree from the woods nearby. The children were responsible for entering the woods and gathering the material. Branches from a holly tree with their beautiful green leaves and red berries were woven on a vine to make a wreath. Mistletoe growing on the old trees nearby was hung about the house.

During the morning, between fireworks and decorations, there would be roasted sweet potatoes and nuts in the ashes of the fireplace. Everyone would watch for the approach of a neighbor (if one were not approaching him!). There was a rule that if a person could say to you "Christmas gift" before you could say it to him, you owed him a gift. Many and ingenious were the ways in which people crept up to a house, to burst in to say, "Christmas Gift!" Everyone would laugh and then share some Christmas feasting.

As today, Christmas meant a feast — but not necessarily a turkey. Wild turkeys are very cunning, and obviously aware of the holiday season. No one saw a turkey from Thanksgiving to Christmas. Instead a hog was butchered about a week before Christmas. The hams were cured for later use, while the shoulders were cooked

"Christmas on those old plantations was a time of great celebrations."



as ham for the Christmas feast. The smell of fresh meat was everywhere, especially of chitterlings cooking. There were wild meats of all kinds, rabbit, squirrel, opossum, raccoon, etc. The tables groaned under the weight. There were vegetables from the garden and pies and cakes in the oven. After the big family meal, the food was left out to share with visitors, or was sent to needy families in the community.

If the weather was good the children would play outside. If the weather was cold and wet, the family would stay inside around the fire in the big fireplace and make their own entertainment.

Christmas Eve meant a Christmas

program for all the children. Every child had a recitation to give. Especially precious were the preschoolers with their mis-remembered and either softly or very loudly spoken Bible verse or wise saying.

That night sleep would come to a tired family, whose celebration had brought them closer to each other, to their community, and to the Christ Child.

—The Rev. Dr. Richard C. Dickinson, Executive Director of the Commission on Black Ministry for The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

Historical Footnotes
Concordia Historical Institute
St. Louis, Mo.

The Christmas Story

Again we hear the story sweet
Of Him who reigns on high —
The King who left His home above
and came to earth to die.

We hear again how Jesus came
To earth on this glad morn;
How God's belov'd and only Son
Was in a manger born.

We seem to see again the star
That gleamed above the plains,
And see again the angel-band
and catch their gladsome strains.

Oh, Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Come down again today;
Free Thou our souls from every doubt
And take our sin away.

James Rowe

CONTRASTS

project. We had gone overseas 13 years before with the idea of finding Christian nationals whom we could train. These locals could then take over the leadership of the ministry. This is what had taken place. After six years in Zimbabwe, God had led us to a wonderful Zimbabwean couple, who were committed and very capable, to lead the ministry. He had then given us time to work together and gradually turn over the ministry to them. And it is with great joy that we hear very favorable reports about them and the on going ministry in that country.

Our desire was to establish a home base, introduce our children to their culture — they had spent all of their lives in Africa — and to their relatives before they became teenagers and adjustments would be even greater. So these events led up to our return to our culture. A few of the adjustments and the culture stress which I described earlier were a result of our world view having changed, as well as the American scene having changed drastically in 13 years.

Our goal was still to help fulfill the Great Commission as commanded in Matthew 28:120.

We had shown the Jesus film many times in Africa and saw such an amazing response; 330 million people around the world had viewed it since its release ten years ago and in live showings there was a positive response to Christ in one out of every ten viewers. We still wanted to reach the "uttermost parts" of the world with the Gospel even though we would be relocating. And God led us back to the headquarters of the Jesus Film project in Southern California.

We hear from over 205 different mission groups who are currently using this film. We want to help accelerate their ministries. This film, based solely on the Book of Luke, is the most translated film in all of history! It has been translated into 143 languages. We have 20 more languages to be translated

(Norwegian being among the top 20 priority list). As the funds materialize, we then send our translation teams into the country to record the lip sync versions and match them to the film. In many third world countries very few movies are available. Many people cannot read nor do they have a Bible in their own language. Some people have never seen a movie, especially a movie in their own language. So we can have a nation-wide access to theatres and even heads of state when a film is produced in their native tongue! With the advent of video and private home showings, closed and predominantly Muslim countries are now being exposed to the life and person of Christ as recorded in the Book of Luke! Finally, we can make use of the media as a vehicle to help spread the *Good News* around the world!

And thanks to the churches' vision and desire to reach out to foreign fields, much of Africa has been evangelized. But don't misunderstand me, there is still a lot of work to be done. Over 100 years ago very properly dressed missionaries came to the African continent to talk to half-naked natives who were dancing strange dances and drinking strange drinks. Maybe in 1990 we will see very properly dressed African students who come to the California beaches and share with the half-naked natives who are dancing strange dances and drinking strange drinks! Thus our missionary efforts may come full circle and our country will benefit from the freshness and zeal of new Christians in other countries.

I am so glad that God's Word never returns void and that we serve a risen and Unchangeable God who reaches down to us at Christmas and continues to help us from day to day, no matter in which country or on which continent we dwell.

(Ilene Bradberry is a daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Orville Hiepler, Valley Center, Calif.)

"Some of you live
in a little Bethlehem."

— By P. O. Bersell

Joseph also went...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...And the angel said to the shepherds, There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord...Ye shall find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:4, 11, 12).

Marvelous words, these Christmas words! Read again in myriads of Christian churches around the world this Christmas and received by hundreds of millions of believing souls, the pilgrimage to Bethlehem is on. The story becomes living again, beautifully real in the mystic aura of the holy night of sacred memory. And yet, for most people it is the event out of the long ago that but faintly casts its shimmer on the life of today, radiating but weakly the glow of never-never land. To such souls it becomes only a saga out of the dim past with as little life-giving warmth as the sputtering, dying flames in the hands of Hans Christian Andersen's pathetic little match girl.

We can't go back to the city of David for a re-enactment of the events of the holy night of the incarnation of the Son of God. Nor would we if we could. That happened in the fulness of time for that particular event in God's plan of salvation. It did happen. That's the greatest thing. It set in motion a universal chain of events whereby the joy of Christmas, the mystery of its heavenly beauty and its divine power have been revealed to and become the possession of a countless throng in ages past and in our own day. For the selfish satisfaction of being in on the initial event, of starting at Bethlehem all over again, who would undo that which was and is, even if he could do so?

The story of Bethlehem is in the past tense. Bethlehem in Judea is a historic shrine of sacred memory, but all around us are little Bethlehems in which the divine miracle happens again.

Little Bethlehems

This is written on a Sunday afternoon. We have just entered into the pre-Christmas season. I went to church this morning and saw a miracle happen. I saw because I believe. Two young couples, the parents and sponsors, carried an infant to the baptismal font where the pastor administered the sacrament of the new birth. In conclusion, I heard the pastor's voice saying, "This child, through the washing of regeneration, has become a child of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ."

Under the spell of that sacred moment I would not have been too much startled if I had heard the sound of angels' voices singing before the

throne of God, "Unto you a child is born, a son is given." Because of the first Bethlehem this miracle could happen in our little Bethlehem. For He, the Son of God, who was born a son of man on Christmas night, had now received this son of man and made him a son of God. A babe, the sacrament, the power of God, little Bethlehem!

Some of you live in a little Bethlehem. The holy family of Bethlehem is the prototype of the Christian family. Its members knew the things that are humanity's lot, trouble, weariness, privation and even poverty. They were misunderstood and subject to unfriendliness and disdain. But mutual love and affection ruled supreme in that home and there was obedience to the Heavenly Father's will and hearkening unto His word. So that family was in God's hands and enfolded in His care and under His protection, even in the temporary borrowed quarters in Bethlehem.

I have seen so many little Bethlehems at Christmas time. It isn't that the festive atmosphere, the lights of the Christmas tree, the exchange of gifts, the holiday rapture of the children and the reciprocal satisfaction of the parents have made them so. Rather it has been in the fact that the child of Bethlehem was given His rightful place making it a Christian home, in which mutual love and obedience to God and His word dominated the family circle. Over such homes the Star of Bethlehem, star of hope and of divine favor, shines even as it did of old. Thank God if you have such a little Bethlehem this Christmas.

Many little Bethlehems have I seen during the years of my life which to the casual observer have been just simple, lonely rooms, sometimes just a room for a transient, such as in a hospital or an inn or in a home for the aged, for whom there is no other room. That which has made them little Bethlehems has been the transforming presence of the Christ. "Ye shall find," said

the angel, and like the shepherds of old these lonely folks have found the Babe. They found Him in the swaddling clothes of His holy Word and they glorified and praised God, for they had found their Savior.

Most of you who read these words will come this Christmas to one of those many Bethlehems that dot the landscape and are scattered about our cities, for you will attend a Christmas service in a church. Perhaps you will really enter into the little Bethlehem prepared for your own heart, where you will find the Child, your Savior. He is not in the throngs, nor in the decorations, nor in the pageantry. He is in the Word. There you will find Him and He will find you. "For He comes to His own and as many as receive Him He gives the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." What a wonderful Christmas it is when this happens to us!

Finding the little Bethlehems is not the easiest thing in the world. There was undoubtedly carnival and merry-making by the visitors who thronged the inn and other places in Bethlehem. This would have disconcerted the shepherds if they had not been fully obedient to the heavenly voice and solely intent on finding the child. Just so the many strange sights and noises and merriment that have crowded in on our Bethlehem towns also as by-products of Christmas, but quite foreign to its true spirit, do hinder many a soul from finding his little Bethlehem.

Bethlehem town is not far away. It is as near to us as the Word of God which we have received. It is as close to us as hands and feet, as near as breathing. It is as near to us as God, for "Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Child enters in."

The Bond

Lutheran Brotherhood

(The late Dr. P. O. Bersell was a president of the former Augustana Synod.)

"He is not in the throngs, nor in the decorations, nor in the pageantry, He is in the Word."



Introduction to the 1990 Bible Studies

The 1990 WMF Bible study series will be based on commands and promises found in the Word. In praying for a theme, the song title "Living for Jesus" came to mind. The song itself became an excellent guide. The second verse reads: *"Living for Jesus who died in my place, Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace; Such love constrains me to answer His call, Follow His leading and give Him my all."*

May the words in italics be *your personal objective* as you study and prepare this series of lessons.

Theme verse for the year: Ps. 1:2 — "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night."

Those of you who are firmly grounded in the Word, would you pray that God would reveal to you in a new, fresh way that these truths can still be for each of us and that it would be for us a cause of rejoicing? Would you pray that our eyes would be opened to see the lost in the world? Would you pray for a willingness to share these truths with others?

A Bible study series based on commands and our obedience to those commands has to arise from a right motive, that of love for the Lord Jesus and His saving grace. Without that love, obedience is legalism or dead works. Throughout the series, check

your motives. It is possible for a Christian to slip into legalism along the road. *Watch and pray* for sensitivity in this area.

Helpful tools for this Bible study series:

1. Several translations of Scripture. In some places a specific translation is listed only because it helps to clarify the answer.

2. A copy of *Luther's Small Catechism Explained*. This is available through the Dept. of Parish Ed., AFLC Headquarters, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. The cost is \$3.00 plus postage and handling. Each home and each church should have a copy. Luther wrote the Catechism as a tool for families to use to help them understand Scripture and apply those truths. It does not detract from the Word, but is intended to help us understand the Word. It is a tool to help us know what we believe.

3. A notebook, spiral-bound or loose-leaf, to be used:

- to write out key Scripture verses which you choose to memorize.
- to write out commands and promises along with a plan of action or goal, or step of faith to apply the command and promise.
- to write our prayers. As God answers, make note of it. This becomes a *source of encouragement*.
- to write out Scripture prayers.

Types of promises:

1. A statement of fact, although we call it a promise as well.
2. The assurance of something God will do.
3. A warning, that is, a negative promise.
4. Conditional promise (my part, God's part).

"A pre-requisite for claiming a promise is knowing it. How many do you know? God doesn't lightly give us His promises."

(A statement from a radio program by Charles Swindoll.)

Requirements for claiming a promise:

1. You must be a child of God (Jn. 1:12, Gal. 3:6).
2. By faith, believe the promise.
3. If there is a conditional requirement in the promise, be willing to meet it (Examples: Ps. 66:18, I Jn. 1:9).
4. Be willing to wait for the Lord's timing in the fulfillment of the promise.

—Lois Oscarson
Wahpeton, N. Dak.

(WMF groups are urged to get copies of the song "Living for Jesus" for use with the monthly lessons this year.)

December promotion

There is no better way to promote the work of advancing the kingdom than to pray. Praying for missions not only brings our concerns to God, but it gives us a sense of having a significant part in the work our God has entrusted to us. Christmas is a busy and blessed season. Please take time to promote the Christmas Gospel in our Home Mission congregations by praying daily for:

1. Home Mission congregations and pastors.
2. Congregations calling — Devils Lake, North Dakota; Cokato, Minnesota; Rugby, North Dakota.
3. Upcoming Home Mission Pastors' Retreat, January 22-23, 1990.
4. Home Mission Committee members and director as they work together with our Home Mission congregations.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - February 1 - October 31

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	%* TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 169,600.00	\$ 12,058.79	\$ 98,417.97	58
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	128,237.00	8,107.06	62,364.45	49
(AFLBS) . .	187,650.00	12,521.64	81,566.96	43
Home Missions	397,564.00	19,485.51	161,980.98	41
World Missions	325,730.00	29,141.98	180,983.03	56
Capital Investment . .	30,000.00	1,063.06	17,624.96	59
Parish Education	69,500.00	2,692.66	18,084.59	26
TOTALS	\$ 1,308,281.00	\$ 85,070.70	\$ 621,022.94	47
1987 - 1988	\$ 1,057,504.00	\$ 66,320.82	\$ 554,057.55	52

*Goal 75%

7. Re-read your answer to the first question. Have you chosen to *live for Jesus*?

* * * * *

Can you sincerely sing

"My Jesus, I love Thee,

I know Thou art mine...?"

... "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine...?"

If not, then Jesus is still tenderly calling, "Come!"

—Lois Oscarson

Living For Jesus

Living for Jesus a life that is true,

Striving to please Him in all that I do;

Yielding allegiance, gladhearted and free,

This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Living for Jesus who died in my place,

Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace;

Such love constrains me to answer His call,

Follow His leading and give Him my all.

Living for Jesus wherever I am,

Doing each duty in His holy name;

Willing to suffer affliction or loss,

Taking each trial a part of my cross.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,

My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;

Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,

Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

CHORUS: O Jesus, Lord and Savior,

I give myself to Thee,

For Thou, in Thy atonement,

Didst give Thyself for me;

I own no other Mater,

My heart shall be Thy Throne;

My life I give, henceforth to live,

O Christ for Thee alone.

Written by T. O. Chisholm

LIVING FOR JESUS

WMF BIBLE STUDY

LESSON ONE

January, 1990

A Life That is True

O Father, thank You for Your Word.

Thank You for the freedom we have to study

Your Word.

Lord, as we begin this new year,

help me to examine my own life.

If indeed I am your child, I praise and thank You

for the gift of salvation through Your

mercy and grace.

If I am not sure that I am Your child or

am in some way deceived,

or am not fully grounded in the facts of salvation,
then reveal those truths to me.

If I have never before been exposed to the truths in

Your Word,

then open the eyes of my understanding,

and create within me a real hunger

for the Truth,

that I, too, might become Your child.

And so for each one of us, convict and enlighten

In the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

1. *What is involved in living for Jesus?* Begin by looking for answers in the song "Living for Jesus." Put your answer to this question in a notebook. (See Introduction: Helpful Tools).

2. I must first of all know Him. I cannot live for Him unless I have a *conscious awareness* that I am His and He is mine.

Many Lutherans lack assurance of salvation and it may be the result of not coming to that *conscious awareness* that I'm His child. This was brought out clearly for me while teaching

Good News Club. I struggled with the idea of giving the invitation at the close of the lesson. I thought, "Most of the children are Lutherans. They have been baptized. They are already your children. Why should the invitation be given to them?" Peace of mind came to me with the realization that each one of us needs to come to that point of conscious awareness... "Yes, Jesus, I am Yours and I want to live for You."

Please take time to study and review the Sacrament of Baptism found on pages 72-76 of *Luther's Small Catechism Explained*. Some of the questions asked in this section are:

- What is God's command concerning baptism?
What benefit do we have from baptism?
Is it possible to remain in the covenant of baptism?
What must we do to remain in the grace of our baptism?
Will God again receive us when we have broken the covenant of our baptism?
What is meant by saying that the old man in us should die and the new man appear more and more?

3. What is God's purpose for all mankind? 1 Tim. 2:4 _____

4. We need to know the fundamental truths regarding salvation.

A. What is the first basic truth? Rom. 3:23 _____

1. How did our sinful nature come about? Gen. 2:16-17 and Gen. 3:1-24 _____

2. What thought did the serpent plant in Eve's mind and what method did Satan use to bring this about? Gen. 3:1 _____

3. What resulted? Rom. 5:12 _____

4. What could be your response in reaching out to a person who grew up in a church and leads a clean, moral, upright life but yet sees no fault in himself? Is. 64:6. _____

I Jn. 1:8 _____

B. What price tag has God placed on sin? Rom. 6:23 _____

C. What provision did God make for sin? Jn. 3:16 _____
Rom. 5:8 _____

D. What truths are stated in 1 Cor. 15:3-4? _____
Was this necessary? _____

E. What do I need to do? Ps. 38:18 _____
Jn. 1:12 _____

F. What truth is stated in Jn. 14:6 and why is it important to know this truth? _____

G. What gifts does God bestow? Eph. 2:8 _____
Gal. 3:26 _____

H. Personalize 1 Jn. 5:11-13 by inserting your own name. _____

5. Have you ever been asked a question about what you believe? _____
What do you learn from Col. 4:6 and 1 Pet. 3:15? _____

6. When we are firmly grounded in the verses showing the way of salvation, when we have assurance of salvation, *then* we are ready to choose to obey, share and grow. Do you agree or disagree with the above question? Why or why not? _____

Next, try the following exercise:
Read this sentence aloud.

THEN WE ARE READY TO CHOOSE TO OBEY, SHARE AND GROW.
The first time read it emphasizing the first word, the second time, the second word, etc.

Take note of the sixth word in that exercise. What is it? _____
Of what importance is that word? _____

Then came the tempest of wind and rain. Great waves covered the decks, and the ship's wooden timbers groaned and creaked in a nerve-wracking way. Day after day the men fought the storm. And time after time they called for Anders to sing. His strong clear voice seemed to give them calmer courage, assurance.

At the height of the storm, late one dark afternoon, a sailor became violently ill. The word went like wildfire through the embattled ship, trailing with it a terrible fear. Captain Eliason made valiant efforts to combat the disease. He isolated the sick man and gave what remedies he had. He urged precautions upon the other members of the crew. But it was too late. The scourge of dysentery spread rapidly, and did not pass until three men had died. Many others were left half-dead with exhaustion. And through it all, dazed himself, Anders went from one bunk to another as both sick and dying called for him to sing. He crooned to them gently, as a mother would comfort a child. He sang to them softly, the beloved hymns of faith and hope. Often his voice broke with emotion, and with weariness.

"You are a blessing to the ship," the worn Captain said to him, gratefully, humbly.

Anders' eyes were clouded and troubled. "Why has God spared *me*?" was all he could think or say.

The nightmare of storm and sickness came to an end at last. But the ship had been driven far off its course, and more weeks were required before the scarred vessel could sail into harbor. As the anchor was dropped in the quiet sunset waters of the Bahamas, the Captain fell to his knees in prayer. All over the ship men followed this example, in pleas for mercy and in prayers of thanksgiving.

Other ships lay at anchor in the bay — other ships with flags also at half mast. How many men had the sea claimed from them, Anders wondered. The Sea! What a strange, wonderful, terrible, living thing it seemed to be! It drew him as nothing else had ever done

before. He belonged to the ship. He belonged to the sea. Later, he could settle in Seattle, but first he must sail, and sail, and sail. He knew this as surely as he knew his name.

Someone was suddenly beside him. It was the mate who had seemed to dislike Anders since the first day they sailed from Norway. He carried something in his hand.

"I came to beg your pardon," he said with difficulty, "and give this back to you. I watched you, always so careful with it, hiding it like. I thought there was some valuables hid in it. I took it and slit it open. I've tried to sew it up again for you." There was pleading in the big man's eyes and voice as he placed the small missing pine pillow in Anders' hand.

A great gladness came into Anders' heart. He took the mate's right hand in his, and held it firmly, while he looked fondly at the ruined pillow.

**"He sang to them
softly, the beloved
hymns of faith
and hope."**

"Think no more of it, Erik," he said. You have done me a service, when you meant to do me a hurt. This pillow did have valuables in it, and it still does, thanks to you. Are we friends?"

A glory filled the sky now and spilled all over the reflecting waters. A glory of song filled Anders' soul, and it too had to spill out. He sought Captain Eliason, to make a request.

"You know what night this is?" asked the Captain with a musing smile, after listening to him.

"Yes, sir. That's why, sir."

"Very well then. Go ahead."

Lights were beginning to glow on the decks of the ships anchored nearby. The warm fragrant evening was growing purple in the dusk. Anders continued on p. 24



at the Seminary

Last June, the Annual Conference at Minot voted to proceed with the building of a new office facility on our Minneapolis campus when a designated amount has been received. The vacating of the present chapel building by AFLC headquarters personnel when the new building has been completed will mean increased usage for the Seminary and Bible School. Already the schools use the building as a cafeteria, a library, a chapel, and for a few offices.

While the Board of Trustees has not made any decisions on the way the increased space will be used by the Schools, it is anticipated that the following changes may be made.

1) Most faculty offices which are presently scattered throughout the campus could be moved to one location;

2) Seminary administration could be more conveniently located in terms of secretarial services, etc.;

3) An additional seminary classroom could be added. At present, part of the library is used as classroom space whenever three classes are scheduled at the same hour;

4) Students would have increased access to the building for study, group rehearsals, etc.;

5) The campus book store could be moved to the chapel building where it would be more accessible to the students and campus visitors.

Certainly the prospects for our Schools are attractive in the future changes anticipated. The full use of the chapel building will be very beneficial to our Schools. We welcome these developments and pray God's blessing and provision as plans proceed for the new building.

*Francis Monseth
Dean of the Seminary*

SAILOR

approached the mainmast and climbed rapidly — up to the topmast, up, up, to the skysail itself. There he settled himself, while down below the men gathered, watching him, craning their necks, wondering.

"Halloo!" he called.

"Hallooo!" they answered.

And then he started to sing, full-throated and clear, contagious. The men on deck soon joined in, and gradually more and more voices echoed across the water as men on other ships began to sing along. One after another well-loved hymns of Christmas resounded, until the night rang with joy, and even the stars came out to hear.

Now he was singing "Silent Night," and all grew quiet. Only the beautiful voice from high above floated between sky and sea. Men listened, and thought, and prayed. Even here, far from their country and homes, it was the Holy Night. It was Christmas Eve.

Yes, it was Christmas Eve, 1869 — Uncle Anders' first unforgettable Christmas Eve away from Norway. And as *he* used to tell the story, it was the night he came of age — at fifteen!

— *Christmas Echoes*

(Gracia Christensen, is the widow of Dr. Bernhard Christensen, who was president of Augsburg College and Seminary, Minneapolis, for many years.)

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:10, 11

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

Second-class

