

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 10, 1987



In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Luoma Photos

at the MASTER'S FEET

The look inward

There are two seasons in the church year that provide us with an opportunity to participate through preparation. Advent sets before us the opportunity to prepare for the celebration of Christ's first advent, His birth in Bethlehem, as well as the opportunity to consider the preparations we are making for His second advent, His coming again in glory.

Lent is that second season of preparation. During Lent we not only prepare to celebrate the resurrection on Easter, but also spend time in reflective self-analysis. Lent, of course, begins on Ash Wednesday and continues for 40 days (excluding Sundays), until the day of the resurrection. It has traditionally been a time when Christians observe fasting, abstain from certain foods or amusements and give monetary gifts to the church in remembrance of the sorrow, death and resurrection of Christ. As a child, I remember this season to be

a very solemn one, where the question was often asked, "What are you giving up for Lent?"

One can clearly see that the celebration of Lent can represent two quite different perspectives, depending on whom you talk to. For one it may simply be another church tradition in which we go through the motions of doing what we are supposed to do for that season of the church year, even if it means "giving something up for Lent."

To the earnest believer, though, Lent can be a tremendous time of "looking inward" and taking spiritual inventory of our lives. The suggestion is not that we second guess the work that the Holy Spirit has brought in our lives, but rather that, in thanks to God for what He has freely given us in Christ, we become transparent or honestly open ourselves up to the Lord and ask Him to further use His Spirit to conform us to the people He would have us be, by His grace.

This, of course, is difficult for us, because most of us are more proficient at pointing out the errors of others than accepting self-error. We go after the speck in our brother's eye while failing to recognize the log that is in our own. Rather than inviting the Lord to change us, we instead suggest that there is very little that needs changing. Isn't our outward fast, our outward sacrifice, enough? Surely these are the things that please the Lord, are they not?

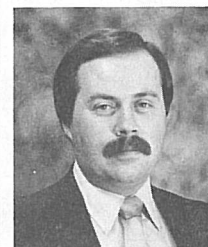
Scripture would indicate otherwise. The Lord told Israel through the prophet Jeremiah that because Israel loved to wander spiritually He would not listen to their fast or accept their offerings (Jeremiah 14:10-12). Isaiah addressed the manner in which Israel fasted, by declaring that true fasting was not in the humbling of oneself or in the bowing of the head or in the spreading out of sackcloth and ashes as a bed.

The true fast, says Isaiah, is "to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke . . ." (Isaiah 58:5-7).

As we spend time preparing for the celebration of Easter, God also invites us to spend time asking the Holy Spirit to loosen those things which bind us, undo those bands that yoke us in less than total commitment and free us from the oppression that mere "religious observance" can bind us to.

The greatest event in human history took place as Christ burst forth in victory from the grave. This is the event that we truly celebrate only as we stand honestly and openly before the Lord with the realization of what it is that we are saved from, namely sin and death.

Whether we celebrate Lent traditionally or more contemporarily let us not lose sight of the fact that God did not invite us to participate in religion, but to participate in a relationship with His Son, whereby we honestly give ourselves to Him, live believing that He lives today, and accept the continuing, transforming work of His Spirit in our lives.



by Pastor
Robert Lewis

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Volume 25 Number 5

God wants you to think

Where are you?

Romans 5:12-19

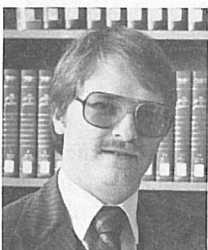
Do you remember the first dealing God had with man? It was in the garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any of the fruit in the garden except of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan came in the form of a serpent and talked them into disobeying God by eating the fruit. When they ate the fruit their eyes were opened and they hid from God. In the cool of the day God called out to Adam and said, "*Where are you?*" Was it because God didn't know? No, God called out, "*Where are you?*" because He wanted Adam to take a look and see where he was, not only physically but spiritually.

Today, many times God calls out to you and me through His Word, saying, "*Where are you?*" Not because he does not know, but because He wants us to think about it. Where are you spiritually?

I. We Are All in Adam.

As we look at Romans 5, we see that we are all in the same place spiritually as Adam. Because of Adam's sin, we are all guilty. Verse 12 tells us: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."

This verse loses something in translation because we do not have the verbs in English to express the original idea of, "because all sinned." The verb in the Greek points to a specific point in time when all mankind sinned. What is it talking about? It is saying that in Adam's sin, we all sinned. Because of Adam's sin, we are all guilty.



by Rev.
Del Palmer,
Everett, Wash.

Adam's sin made us all sinners, who are inclined to sin over and over again. This sinful nature has been passed down from Adam to us, generation to generation. We are sinners because our parents were sinners and passed it on to us. The same situation happens in nature all around us. As I walk down the alley behind our house, a dog always barks at me. Now that animal is not a dog because he barks. That doesn't make him a dog. No, he is a dog because his parents are dogs. He barks because he is a dog. The same is true of sin. We are not sinners because we commit sin, but we commit sin because we are sinners. And we are sinners because our parents were sinners all the way back to Adam. Of course we are not saying that it is not wrong when we sin, we all know that sin is still sin. But it means that we are guilty primarily because of Adam's sin. Even if it were possible that we never transgressed God's Law, we would still be guilty.

"This sinful nature
has been passed down
from Adam to us,
generation to generation."

When God calls out to us "*Where are you?*", we are all *in Adam*. Both in his sin and in the punishment it brings. Verse 12 said, "Death came to all men, because all sinned." We remember "because all sinned" is pointing back to that single point in time when Adam sinned. Therefore, this verse states that all men must die and be punished because of Adam's sin, even if it were possible that they did not sin themselves. That means no one has an excuse, not Martin Luther, not Mary, Christ's mother, not Billy Graham, not myself, not even a one-day-old child.

Then Paul gives the evidence that all

are guilty because of Adam's sin. I like the Bible because it makes sense. When we go into a courtroom the judge asks us for our evidence. Paul gives us that evidence in verses 13 and 14; "Before the Law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam."

What is the evidence? God had not given the Law until the time of Moses. Therefore, it could not have been broken, since He had not given it. Yet people were punished by death throughout that period.

What is the significance of all this to you and me? Even if we were able to do the impossible and never sin, we would still be guilty because of the sin of Adam. It also means that there is no age of innocence as some Christian denominations would have us believe.

Some may be saying that that's totally unfair. If Paul stopped right there, I might agree. But we notice that Paul tells us that because the guilt of one man can be passed on to all, also the righteousness of one man can be passed on to all. That's what makes it fair.

God is calling out, "*Where are you?*" We are all in Adam. In the sin that he committed and in the punishment that he deserved.

II. God Is Calling Out "Where Are You" — ARE YOU IN CHRIST?

God tells us we are all deserving of punishment because of Adam's sin. But He also reminds us that any can be made righteous through Christ's righteousness. Notice verses 18 and 19; "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

Yes, because Adam sinned, we all are sinners, but because Jesus was righteous, all who believe on Him are made righteous in God's eyes.

What Paul says is true. Christ's gift is greater than Adam's trespass. Think about it, Adam's trespass, what did it



The Sympathy of Christ

'Tis sweet to know — when we are tired, and pain
Lies on our hearts, and when we look in vain
For human comfort — that the heart Divine
Still understands these cares of yours and mine.
Not only understands, but day by day
Lives with us while we treat the earthly way —
Bears with us all our weariness, and feels
The shadow of the faintest cloud that steals
Across our sunshine — even learns again
The depths and bitterness of human pain.
There is no sorrow that He will not share —
No cross, no burden for our hearts to bear
Without His help — no care of ours too small
To cast of Jesus; let us tell Him all —
Lay at His feet the story of our woes,
And in His sympathy find sweet repose.

— Author Unknown

He
could
have
called
the angels

HIS LOVE BOUND HIM

"Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

(Matt. 26:53f).

That which the Scriptures have said stands fast. It is God Himself who speaks in the Scriptures, because the holy men of God who wrote them were moved by the Holy Spirit. Jesus has said that — see, for example, Matt. 22:43. And His witnesses in the New Testament have repeated it often (II Pet. 1:21 and II Tim. 3:16).

Jesus could have had legions of angels for His defense if He had wanted to request them of His Father. But He didn't want to do that. Yes, even more — He couldn't. For the Scriptures had said that He would die for all. Isaiah 53 speaks of that as do many other passages.

It is stirring to see that God's own Son has given the Old Testament such a standing. He knew Himself bound to that which was written there. He has no other possibility than to fulfill that which Scripture has prophesied.

We are seized with reverence for the Bible when we think about this. And we ask spontaneously: What is there about Scripture, that God's own Son must fulfill it? And the answer is: It is God's own Word.

But why had the Scriptures prophesied that Jesus must suffer and die? We know the answer. That which the prophets have foretold and which the Lord's apostles bear witness to and explain in the New Testament was

WHERE . . .

bring? It brought death and punishment. Christ's gift brought righteousness and life. Righteousness and life are far greater than death and punishment any day (vs. 15-17).

Once again, some might be asking what is the evidence that believers will be given life and righteousness through the one man, Christ. The Scriptures are not lacking for evidence. If we went into the courtroom, what evidence would we have to give the judge? Josephus, the Jewish historian of Christ's day, says that Christ rose from the dead, also over 500 people saw Christ alive after He was crucified (I Cor. 15:6). Any judge would accept the testimony of 500

people as fact. Now consider the results of Christ's resurrection in I Corinthians 15:20-22; "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

The resurrection is the evidence. Because Christ was resurrected we can have the confidence that those who are in Christ can live without fear of death or anything else! That's the good news of Christ!

God came to Adam in the garden asking, "*Adam, where are you?*" Not because He didn't know but because he wanted Adam to think about it.

God is calling to you today, "*Where are you?*" We are all in Adam and have sinned and are guilty in his sin, as well as our own. But are you in Christ? Remember, "In Christ all will be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22).

God is calling to you. Not because He doesn't know where you are, but because He wants you to think about it.

"*Where are you???*"

"Any judge would accept the testimony of 500 people as fact."



IN OUR PLACE

"Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

In the Tale of Two Cities, by Dickens, Charles Darnay is condemned to die at the guillotine. The night before the execution his friend, Sidney Carton, gains admission to the dungeon and changes clothes with Darnay and the next day is led out and put to death in the condemned man's place.

Paul tells us that the pure and holy Jesus was "made to be sin on our behalf." In other words He became the sinner upon whom God's judgment fell and He suffered for all the sinfulness of mankind. As our substitute He took all our guilt upon Himself and suffered the awful agonies of the lost and the cruel death on the cross for us.

But besides this He presents to us God's righteousness freely. Just as He suffered in our place He fulfilled God's holy will in our place. He lived the perfect life which God demands of all men. Therefore we through Christ have the righteousness of God. God looks upon us in Christ as though we have never sinned. Christ became the sinner that we might become God's holy children.

When we accept Jesus as our Savior we have His righteousness.

Therefore you who are made righteousness in Christ owe it to Him to live a life completely dedicated to Him and His will. You owe it to Him to fight against sin in all forms, leading a good and godly life. You owe it to Him to glorify His name before men by life and word and to win others to Him.

"Ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Corinthians 6:20).

— Rev. P. K. Lawrence Bueide
(*Family Devotions for Lent*)

determined in God's own counsel. Eph. 1:9. God came to the decision in His eternal counsel that He would save mankind with His own Son, who was one with the Father from eternity. There was no other way to salvation for us lost people. Our substitute had to come; He must make good again that which our first man, Adam, made wrong when he took all mankind with him in his fall. The fall of one man led to condemnation for all people, but the work of righteousness of one man would be to salvation for those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 5:18).

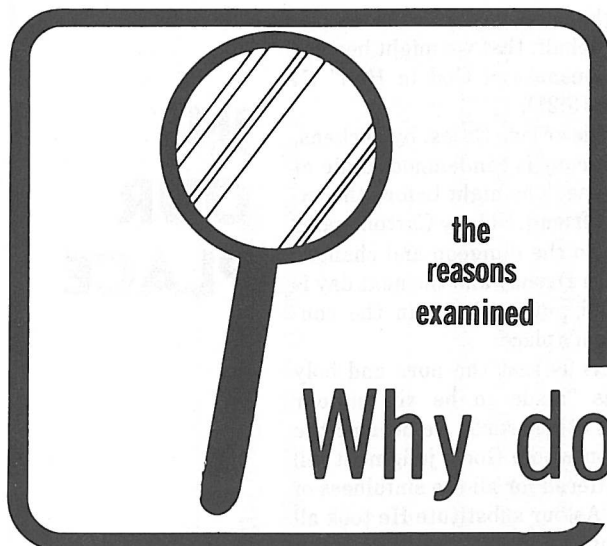
Thus it was that the arm of omnipotence stood powerless there in Gethsemane. It was His own love which had bound Him, so Scripture witnesses.

Love beyond comparison! He gave Himself to save us!

— Carl Fredrik Wisløff, *Daglig Brød*, Copyright 1981, Lunde Forlag og Bokhandel, Norway.

Translated from Norwegian.

(Ed. note: Prof. Wisloff will be the guest teacher at the Summer Institute of Theology at Association Free Lutheran Seminary next summer.)



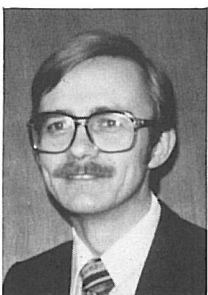
Why do they leave?

"Why do people leave the AFLC for Reformed churches?" That question, recently put to me, has led to discussion with others, prayer and study which have given me new appreciation for my home church.

The term "Reformed," often used to refer to non-Lutheran Protestant churches, was being used by my questioner to refer to churches that are doctrinally baptistic. We will use the term "Anabaptist" (rebaptizer), as the Lutheran reformers did, to describe the groups which either in doctrine or practice oppose infant baptism and deny baptismal regeneration.

Some of my Anabaptist friends and relatives are surprised that I, a Lutheran, can also be a Christian. We do not doubt their faith or belittle their convictions, but if the doctrinal position which our church has historically held means anything to us we will want to know why some people can so casually abandon it.

The answer to the question is here presented in the context of a letter written to a friend who contemplates such a move.



by Rev.
Bruce Dalager,
Grand Forks,
N. Dak.

Dear Brother,

You have expressed your dissatisfactions with the church you attend and have asked for my response. Thank you for the opportunity. May God open our hearts that we might put our confidence in truths our eyes cannot see.

Perceived Faults

1. You said, "Our church is dead!"

Is it? Certainly one should be careful in using a term that even our Lord did not use to describe the most apostate church in His letters (Rev. 1-3). Remember, our Lord shed His precious blood for the church of which you speak.

Okay. So your church seems lifeless, has little going on, gives you no emotional boosts. I understand why you would like a change. In brotherly love, however, let me ask, "Are these signs that the church is dead or does your perception reveal a fault in your own faith?" Emotional experiences and activity are not always signs of life. The most emotional, active chicken I ever saw was the one whose head had just been chopped off.

What is life? Is Jesus present in your church? Is the Bible read? If so, there *is* life. "The Word of God *is* living and active . . ." (Heb. 4:12). Understand also that if the Word of God is present, then your perception that nothing is happening in your church is wrong! For the Word of God *never* goes forth without accomplishing God's purpose (Is. 55:11). Jesus is life. Look to Him for life. All else, no matter how it appears, is deadness. Trust God's Word.

2. "The worship service is too dull," you said.

I wonder what God thinks of the worship service. His opinion is more important than ours. What the service seems to us is of secondary importance. Our worship is to be God-ward. In fact the focus of our entire lives is to be God-ward. Is it not for God's sake the congregation meets?

When the congregation meets, God is there. Thank and honor Him. Encourage other believers by your steadfast faith. Let unbelievers be pointed to the cross of Christ as they observe the humility and reverence with which you worship God. Do not be selfish. Your goal is to lift up and magnify God. When you give God His rightful place, fellowship in the Biblical sense of the word will follow as a by-product.

3. "Your pastor always speaks about Jesus and the cross. You would like him to address more the contemporary issues of the Christian in society, the 'how-to' of Christian living."

Dear brother, what is your most precious possession? Is it not your faith with which you cling to Jesus? I think since this is the case, and the same is true for others in your church, that you

"Some of my Anabaptist friends and relatives are surprised that I, a Lutheran, can also be a Christian."

would want most of all to have that faith protected and nurtured. Your pastor wants your faith to be true and pure so he speaks of your sin and God's grace. You must be brought always to the end of yourself and to total reliance on the sufficiency of Christ. Your pastor wants to feed your soul, not only your mind.

When Jesus dwells in your heart by faith His Spirit guides you in the "how-to" of Christian living. It is more important for your pastor to preach the Word that will make bad trees good than to tell the trees what they should produce. Jesus said that good trees will produce good fruit (Matt. 7:17, 18; 12:33). He didn't say they might or that they should try to do so, but that they *would*. So guard your faith. Be happy when your faith is fed.

4. You are concerned that your pastor always quotes from the old, dusty theological statements, creeds and confessions. "He must not read any of today's best-sellers," you say.

You have a wise pastor. He knows that the ancients wrestled with the same basic problems we face today and that they, through diligent, prayerful study of God's Word, found answers. Would it not be foolish to disregard those answers simply because they are old? Words spoken by Wilhelm Loehe to his contemporaries about a century ago are still relevant: "Great thoughts are not born in the latter days, but were given by the Lord to His Church from the beginning. Novelty and falsehood are synonymous if said of things that cannot be looked into. Every novelty in matters of religion ought to be doubted."

In the area of faith, contemporary ideas are temporary ideas unless they agree with the faith of our fathers. God's Word is as unchanging as He is.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (II Tim. 4:3, 4). Will you endure sound doctrine?

The Church's Guilt

Your concerns convict me of guilt. Perhaps others are also to blame. The feeding of your faith has been treated more casually than the way a farmer

"In the area of faith, contemporary ideas are temporary ideas unless they agree with the faith of our fathers."

feeds his hogs or cows. You have been fed a smorgasbord of doctrinal confusion and now know neither where you stand nor where you want to stand. Perhaps that has at times been the condition of your church, too. God be merciful to us.

The early Reformers understood well the disasters faith suffers when ground is given to the rationalistic, palatable ideas of men. They oppose error, unwilling to treat it like an acceptable alternative to the truth. Too often we have been guided by expediency or feeling rather than the conviction that comes by the Word. Your congregation claims to accept the Augsburg Confession as true and Scriptural. Has the Confession ever been studied or even read in church? Most of our church constitutions prohibit the teaching or preaching of anything that is contrary to the Confessions or Luther's Small Catechism. Yet we have used Anabaptist Sunday School and Vacation Bible School materials which not only disagree with our faith but are openly hostile to it. We have not taken seriously the danger your faith faced under incessant bombardment of hostile doctrines via radio, television and literature.

As you stand ready to leave, please realize the teachings of historic Lutheranism (some of which are openly condemned, others subtly denied in the church you contemplate joining) that are jeopardized.

"Yet we have used Anabaptist Sunday School and Vacation Bible School materials which not only disagree with our faith but are openly hostile to it."

1. Because of Adam's fall, man in all his affections, will and understanding is opposed to God. He is completely incapacitated to move toward God or to will or do good (Gen. 6:5; Eph. 2:1-3, 12).

2. Man lacks the free will to choose God. His will can do nothing but lead him away from God (Rom. 1:21, 9:16; I Cor. 2:14; Phil. 2:13).

3. A child is born with the tendency to sin and the guilt of sin (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19).

4. Unless a child is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3). He must come to Jesus (Mk. 10:14, 15).

5. A child is born again in baptism (Jn. 3:5; Titus 3:5).

6. Faith is worked in the sinner only by the Holy Spirit who comes to him through the Word and Sacraments (Jn. 6:29, Rom. 10:17). The body and blood of Jesus are really present in the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-30).

7. The atoning death of Jesus is effective for all men (I Tim. 2:6; I Jn. 2:2).

8. The Christian life is lived not by man conforming his will to Christ's but by a daily crucifixion of his will in surrender to Christ's. His sanctification consists not in his living his life for Jesus but in Jesus living his life within the believer (Mk. 14:36; I Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:20, 5:24).

9. A believer can deny his faith and lose his salvation (Matt. 10:22, 24:11-13; II Tim. 2:11, 12).

A Final Plea

May I make a request? With your Bible in hand (use it often) read the following: *The Augsburg Confession*, *Luther's Small Catechism*, *I Know In Whom I Believe* by Carl Wisløff, *Baptism & Related Doctrines* by Omar Gjernes. Others are also good but these deal specifically with the issue before you. God will guide you into His truth.

Will you forgive us our failures? Will your parents forgive us or themselves if some day grandchildren are forbidden to come to Jesus as infants by being denied the regenerative waters of Christian Baptism? Maybe they should not.

Your friend

continued
Bibliography
on page 8.

In Memoriam

Key: The name of the town was the address of the deceased. Following that is listed the name of the deceased, age, date of death and the church in which he or she held membership.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Eden

Stanford C. Valnes, 75, Jan. 26, Buffalo Lake.

MINNESOTA

Spicer

Alfred L. Swanson, 69, Jan. 30, Green Lake.

Mayme Kloster, 84, Feb. 2, Green Lake.

Roseau

Kittle T. Halverson, 84, Feb. 4, Rose.

LEAVE . . .

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Jesus, Name All Names Above

Jesus, Name all names above;
Jesus, best and dearest;
Jesus, fount of perfect love,
Holiest, tenderest, nearest;
Thou the source of grace completest,
Thou the purest, Thou the sweetest,
Thou the well of power divine,
Make me, keep me, seal me Thine!

Jesus, crowned with bitter thorn,
By mankind forsaken,
Jesus, who through scourge and scorn
Held Thy faith unshaken,
Jesus, clad in purple raiment,
For man's evils making payment:
Let not all Thy woe and pain,
Let not Calvary be in vain!

Jesus, open me the gate
That of old he entered
Who, in that most lost estate,
Wholly on Thee ventured;
Jesus, leave me not to languish:
Helpless, hopeless, full of anguish:
Jesus, let me hear Thee say,
'Thou shalt be with Me today!'

Theoctistus of the Studium, cir. 890
Tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-66 a.
(*Service Book and Hymnal*)

editorials

THE FINANCIAL REPORT

The final report of the AFLC church subsidy or gifts in 1986-87 is in and may be found elsewhere in this issue. Read it and study it carefully.

The Stewardship Board and others may want to give their interpretation of what the report means, but for now we want to make a few evaluations of it.

It is encouraging that we reached our highest total of giving in our history, almost \$940,000. This is over \$133,700 above last year and almost \$68,000 over the previous high total, which was achieved in 1984-85. This certainly makes the possibility of a million dollars in receipts in 1987-88 realistic.

The percentage of total, at 87%, was so much better than last year's 73%, while far from percentages reached in earlier years.

So these are the good and encouraging signs and something to build on for this year and the future.

It is interesting that five of the funds ranged from 86% to 90% of goal reached. On the other hand, it's too bad that the Praise Fund or Capital Investment Fund achieved only 69%. This latter fund is for retiring debts on property and keeping a fund for future capital needs. We haven't yet learned the value of building up a healthy capital investment fund.

We would think that Home and World Missions are finding some discouragement in missing their goals by \$37,313.50 and \$42,993.23 respectively. Surely, that must mean some work has had to be curtailed. The General Fund and Schools also have large enough shortfalls that there is some scrimping necessary.

The Stewardship Board was encouraged by the last Annual Conference to promote a special anniversary offering. Whether that is tied in with the 1987 Annual Conference in Thief River Falls or is seen as a post-conference matter, it would certainly give a boost to our work at this juncture of our history, provided it was truly above and beyond other gifts normally given.

One more thing. Since our church hasn't reached a million dollar goal yet, although she has had several, it would seem the better part of wisdom to not raise our goal for 1988-89 beyond that of our present one of \$1,014,894. There is a desire to go forward, and we must, but let us reach a goal before we set higher ones. It has been a long time since we've done that.

THREE KINDS OF HEARERS

When Paul preached in the Areopagus, on that second highest prominence in Athens, he met three types of responses in his hearers. Interestingly, they are to be found in audiences also today where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

First, there are the mockers or scoffers. "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts 17:32a). Long before that the psalmist wrote of the scoffers and called that man blessed who did not sit where they sat. What those ancient persons scoffed at specifically, we don't know, but it was about some truth or truths of God's religion. The mockers have been around since Cain.

Second, there were those who were not ready to make a decision, but were at least willing to listen some more. "But others said, 'We will hear you again about this' " (Acts 17:32b). It is good to have an open mind. Every preacher is glad for people who are willing to come to hear. When that is the situation there is the possibility of something great happening. The danger for this hearer, however, is that he may procrastinate, fail to make a decision, until it is too late. Life may end before he comes to grips with what he knows he ought to do. Felix, who heard Paul, is the classic example of one who put off life's greatest choice. He said, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me" (Acts 24:25b, Am. St.). Though he heard Paul often after that, he apparently never made the decision that would have changed all of life for him.

Third, at Athens some people believed in Christ. "But some men joined him and believed . . . and a woman named Damaris and others with them" (Acts 17:34). There are those who believe, praise God! They see that they don't have the answers to their needs but that the Lord Jesus does. They confess their sins and believe that Jesus is the Savior for them. They experience life made new. They become witnesses for Christ where they are and yield to His will for their lives.

Yes, there are three kinds of hearers of the Word. Even mockers may come to hear and return. Where the Word is there is the possibility of something good happening because the Spirit is present. That's what makes preaching exciting.

the
power
of the
cross

After all is said and done, the power of the cross does not lie in the fact that we can explain it, but it does lie in the fact that we can experience it.

Gerhard E. Lenski

No jungle, but many needs

Here I am, a seminary intern on the mission field, slashing my way through the jungle, bringing the Gospel to the uncivilized heathen. Or am I? Actually, I'm afraid that's not the situation at all. My first stay in Brazil was in Curitiba, a city of over one million people, a busy metropolis similar to the "urban jungles" of the United States. It seemed that being hit by a car was more of a possibility than catching some strange jungle disease. I am now living in Campo Mourao, a city which in only 40 years has grown from virtually nothing to nearly 100,000 people.

Okay, so it isn't the jungle; what then is the need for mission work here? The need here is the same basic need that exists in every country throughout the world. People are here, many people. Thus, sinners are here. They are sinners by nature with no hope of salvation apart from Jesus Christ and the cross and the resurrection. They are people who need to believe in Jesus and to do that they need to hear the Gospel. The Bible says, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14, 15).

I have only been in Brazil for little more than a month at the time of this writing so it's impossible for me to be an expert on the state of the country and its needs. All I do know for certain is what I have seen and heard. I have seen examples of God working the miracle of the new birth. People who had never heard that Jesus died on the cross for their sins were told the good news that by God's grace they could be saved. God gave them the gift of faith and they are now joyfully living for Jesus. I've also heard from many of these people about the other members of their family being lost and apart from Christ with little interest in the Gospel. I've heard of broken homes, money problems, fears about the future. I've seen sheep who need a shepherd. I've seen people who need to be built up in the faith and

taught from God's Word.

I see in Brazil a country which does differ in many ways from the United States but in the very basic things it is quite similar. Those who are in Christ are brothers and sisters and members of the same body. Those who are apart from Christ are, in both countries, in need of hearing the same message of Jesus and the cross and the resurrection. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile — or between American and Brazilian — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:12, 13).

I came to Brazil in December, 1986, and will be here until May, 1987, as part of my year of seminary internship. I thank God for the opportunity to be here and to see another part of His work and to meet other members of the family of God. Thank you to those of you whose prayers and support make it possible for me to make this trip. Please continue to devote yourselves to prayer, praying that God may open a door for the message, that the mystery of Christ may be proclaimed clearly (Colossians 4:2-4).

— Craig S. Johnson



Elfie Marlene Ott

Meet the students of IBSM

Part IV

Elfie Marlene Ott

My name is Elfie Marlene Ott. I was born into a Christian home in Curitiba, Parana. I have four brothers and three sisters. Our family is very talented musically and we all play an instrument. We had a small musical ensemble and played in many churches, but it has since broken up because two of my sisters have married.

I like God's Word very much. When I was 11 years old I made the decision to give my life to God and I felt a great change in my life. When I finished high school I decided to dedicate one year of my life to God by studying at a Bible school to help me grow spiritually. I am very happy and satisfied to have Christ in my life.

I am participating in the Central Free Lutheran Church here in Campo Mourao. I help out with music, accompanying hymns with my flute and singing in the choir. On Sunday afternoons I am a teacher in a Sunday School.

I am glad that God can use me musically. I play three types of flutes, and play some piano. I like to play instruments, sing, work with children and practice sports.

I am grateful to God for who I am, the talents He has given me, and for all that He has done in my life.

Two verses that have touched me are: Psalm 37:4 and 5, "Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and He will act."

Marilea de Mello Schroder

My name is Marilea de Mello Schroder. I am from Rio de Janeiro and am 21 years old. I come from a non-Christian family and grew up far from the Gospel.

I've had the opportunity of studying and graduating from junior college with a secretarial degree. I was also able to complete other courses such as decorating arts and a computer course. But I

cont. on p. 13

II. Abraham's Children, vs. 17-25

A. Their Identity

Who are the children of Abraham?

- v. 11 _____
vs. 12, 16 _____
vs. 17-18 _____
vs. 23-24 _____

B. Their Inheritance

The children of Abraham are heirs of all God promised to Abraham. What riches do we inherit if we have Abraham's faith?

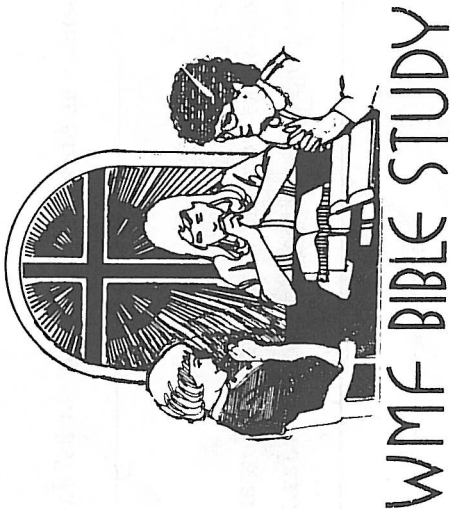
- vs. 7-8 _____
v. 13 _____
v. 16 _____
vs. 17-18 _____
vs. 24-25 _____
Heb. 11:10 _____

Hymn No. 282 (*Concordia*): "Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"

— *Mary Lindquist*

Cradle Roll/Junior Missions: project for April

This WMF fund assists in the salary of the Parish Education Secretary of the AFLC, helps support Missionary Carol Knapp, and provides Sunday School material on our mission fields.



WMF BIBLE STUDY

Studies in Romans *God's Righteousness by Faith*

Chapter 4

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS WITNESSED BY ABRAHAM

Hymn No. 273 (*Concordia*): "I Lay My Sins on Jesus"

In chapter three, Paul has said that God's righteousness by faith is "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." In chapter four, he presents the witness of Abraham, the father of all believers. He begins with a question about himself and his readers. Have we found Abraham to be our spiritual father? (Lenski, *Interpretation of Romans*).

I. Abraham's Faith, vs. 1-18

A. Witnessed by Works, vs. 2-5

Since the Roman Christians had the Epistle of James before Paul wrote his letter to them, Paul wants to point out that there is no disagreement between them. Read James 2:21-24 and compare with Romans 4:2-5.

1. In what sense was Abraham justified by works? Jas. 2:17-18 _____

2. Abraham's works were the works of faith. How are works of faith different from works of the Law? Rom. 4:4; Jas. 2:23 _____

3. What was Abraham's attitude toward his works? _____

B. Blessed by Forgiveness of Sin, vs. 6-8

David uses three different words for sin in Psalm 32, meaning rebellion (Lk. 19:14, 17), missing the mark and deliberate turning aside from God's way (Is. 53:6).

1. What do these words teach us about the nature of sin? _____

2. What things does God do with the sins of the justified? (See also Ps. 32:1; Ps. 103:12; Micah 7:19; Rom. 3:25) _____

C. Counted as Righteousness, vs. 5, 9, 11

Why is it important to us that Abraham's justification came before his circumcision? v. 12 _____

D. Sealed with the Sign of Circumcision, vs. 11-12

1. What is the purpose of a seal? II Tim 2:19 _____

2. Whose father did Abraham become by his circumcision? v. 12 _____

E. Wrought by God's Promise, vs. 13-16

1. What was God's promise to Abraham? Cf. Gen. 22:18 _____

2. What sort of faith did God's promise produce in Abraham? vs. 18-22 _____

ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Church Gifts (12 months) February 1 - January 31

FINAL REPORT

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN JAN.	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL*	BUDGET MISSED BY
GENERAL FUND	208,000.00	23,528.24	185,318.70	89	22,681.30
SCHOOLS - (AFLTS)	115,278.00	20,899.95	99,178.04	86	16,099.96
(AFLBS)	173,200.00	28,605.02	155,447.24	90	17,752.76
HOME MISSIONS	265,000.00	27,063.18	227,686.50	86	37,313.50
WORLD MISSIONS	298,000.00	32,544.94	255,006.77	86	42,993.23
CAPITAL INVESTMENT	25,000.00	2,814.19	17,329.03	69	7,670.97
TOTALS	1,084,478.00	135,455.52	939,966.28	87	144,511.72
1985-86	1,109,382.00	113,230.60	806,232.42	73	303,149.58

Prayer will cut many a knot
that my own hands cannot untie.

STUDENTS . . .

was unable to find a job in Rio because there is a lack of available jobs there.

When I was 18 years old, I was converted to Jesus through my older brother, who spoke to me from God's Word at a Bible Camp, giving me the opportunity of making a decision and giving my life to the Lord.

I have sought God's will in my life and for this reason I entered the Bible School to better know God's Word and

grow spiritually, so I may thus be capable of entering the work that God has for my life. I will be united in marriage to a pastor, Carlos Eduardo, this year and together we will work for and be used of God.

I have gained many experiences in my life and every day I can feel more and more the love and care God has for me.

This year I want to dedicate myself entirely to the Lord and permit Him to mold my life according to His will. I may then serve Him and be used of Him in His redeeming plan.

Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Marileia participates in the Central Free Lutheran Church in Campo Mourao during her year here at school. She helps out with the youth group with music. Pastor Carlos Eduardo was ordained at the Brazil Annual Conference in January and plans to serve with Pastor David Abel at Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil.

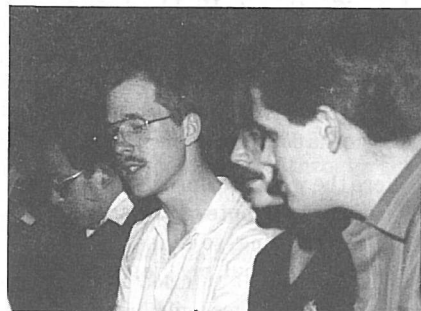


Marileia de Mello Schroder



Among welcome guests at our AFLBS campus this year were Mr. and Mrs. Rafael Libardi from our AFLC congregation in Vitoria, Brazil, where the David Abels are serving. Rafael and Maristella spent several days on our campus, taking classes and sightseeing. Since they only speak Portuguese, they were grateful for the help of Shannon Dyrud, James Eidum, Wesley Sathler and Aurora Braga, four or our students who speak Portuguese fluently.

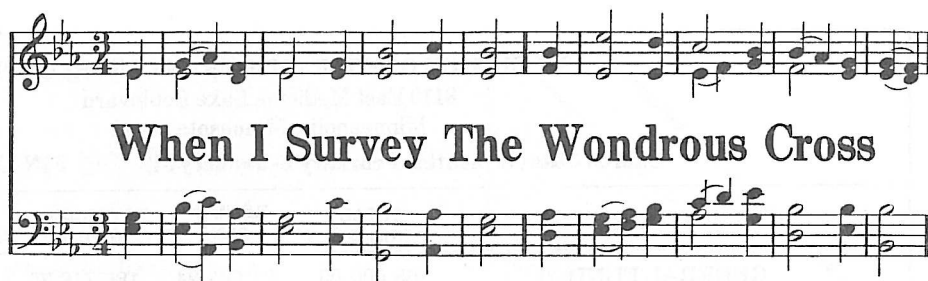
Before leaving the Libardis presented the school with a wall hanging of Brazil, a gift from their congregation in Vitoria.



The AFLC Missions Conference was held February 1-4, 1987. "Adding to the number," served as the theme. Pictured is some of the audience during the morning chapel hour. Rev. Jack Aamot was the main speaker.

Our hymn study

Concordia No. 178
Isaac Watts, 1707
Tune: ROCKINGHAM
Edward Miller, 1735-1807



One of the wonders of the Church and hymnody is the continuing popularity of so many of Dr. Watts' hymns. He and Charles Wesley are the number one and two contributors to English hymnals, regardless of the denominational source of the book. *Concordia* places them second and third with 11 by Watts and nine by Wesley. Only the great Dane, Nicolai Grundtvig, has more with 13.

Another wonder of the Church and its hymnody is Watts' "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," regarded by many as the greatest hymn in the English language. "Thankful giving of one's self in response to the Divine love manifested in Jesus Christ" is its theme. Contemplation of the cross leads to the penitent rejection of self-centered values and replaces the void with humble self-dedication. The hymn is based on Gal. 6:14: "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbidden, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

A. E. Bailey's *The Gospel in Hymns* contains an excellent interpretation of the hymn's imagery, insight and passion:

Stanza 1) "Survey" suggests not only

sight but contemplation, a deeply thoughtful attempt to realize what Christ's death means to the world. The cross is wondrous because in this one instance a Roman instrument of torture and death has become God's instrument for saving mankind. "Prince of Glory" suggests the highest possible exaltation. The tragedy is that He should be rejected and killed. But that also is part of the wonder and mystery. "Pour contempt" refers to our achievements and their values; they are as nothing and all we have taken pride in is contemptible in comparison to His sacrificial gift (Phil. 3:7-8).

Stanza 2) "Boast." Paul frequently referred to his Jewish ancestry, his perfect keeping of the law, and his education as a Pharisee as grounds for boasting; but see I Cor. 2:2. "Vain things." Each person can make his own inventory of the worthless things to which he clings. They can all be summarized in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (I Jn. 2:16). "Sacrifice them." One must choose either the "vain things" of the worldly life or accept the "blood of Christ," the symbol of Christ's sacrifice and of our salvation (Matt. 26:28).

Stanza 3) In Jn. 19:34, a soldier, to prove that Jesus was dead, pierced His side with a spear, "and immediately there came out blood and water." Watts changes "blood and water" to spiritual equivalents, "sorrow and love." The crown of thorns becomes more priceless than a monarch's diadem.

Stanza 4) This "survey" of Christ's sacrifice and its value to mankind reaches a climax of personal resolve. Though the sins of mankind are infinite in quantity, Christ's atonement is adequate. God, therefore, needs nothing from me in the way of further payment. Yet, my gratitude to Christ makes its own irresistible demand. So, insignificant though I am, I can at least give myself, "my soul" (the essence of me), "my life" (all the activities of my days), "my all"

(whatever I possess of wealth and inward power).

(Thanks to Albert Edward Bailey for his excellent analysis from which we have freely drawn.)

For Isaac Watts, see #24 and #35.

Edward Miller's ROCKINGHAM (1790) derives its name from the Marquis of Rockingham, friend and patron of the composer and twice prime minister of England. This beautiful setting is the tune of choice (there are several) in the Anglican Church. As a young man, Miller played flute in Handel's orchestra. He went on to earn a Doctor of Music degree, author several texts and compose notable music.

— Don Rodvold

Personalities

Rev. Frank Cherney and family now reside at 28308 15th Ave. N. E., Arlington, Wash. 98223. Rev. Cherney began serving Atonement Lutheran, a Home Mission congregation, February 1. He previously had served Bethany Lutheran, Sebeka, Minn.

Rev. Walter Beaman, pastor of the McIntosh, Minn., parish (Mt. Carmel and Trinity) for some years, has resigned in order to accept the call from Bethany Lutheran Church of Blue Grass, Sebeka, Minn. He will take up his work there shortly.

Rev. Larry Haagensohn, who has served the Newfolden, Minn., parish (Westaker and Bethania) since 1981, has resigned as pastor there and will complete his work in early May. He has accepted employment with Aid Association for Lutherans and he and his family will be living in Grand Forks, N. Dak.

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NEWS OF THE CHURCHES

From Here and There

Spicer, Minn. — Evangelistic meetings will be held in Green Lake Lutheran, rural Spicer, Mar. 29-Apr. 1. Services begin each night at 7:30. Rev. David Barnhart, Eagan, Minn., will be the speaker. The invitation is extended to all to come and prayer is requested for the speaker and all who attend.

Minneapolis, Minn. — The food shelf items donated at Medicine Lake Lutheran are given to the Marie Sandvik Center each month. Marie Sandvik Center is located on East Franklin Avenue near 11th Ave. South. It is a mission working principally among women and children.

Grafton, N. Dak. — Bethel Lutheran participated in the Eastern North Dakota District Youth Retreat at Jamestown, N. Dak., Feb. 15-16.

Tioga, N. Dak. — The Seven Last Sayings of Christ are the theme for the Lenten Services in Zion Lutheran this year.

Beaver Creek Lutheran Sunday School put on a shlushburger dinner after church on Feb. 22.

Ferndale, Wash. — The Dr. James Dobson film series "Turn Your Heart Toward Home" is being shown in Ferndale churches and the showings began Feb. 23. Triumph Lutheran is part of this and will host the last film on March 30.

Greenbush, Minn. — The parish youth group of Badger Creek and Oiland Churches sponsored an "Uffda Taco" supper on Feb. 14 at the Community Center in Greenbush. Part of the proceeds went to AFLC World Missions.

Eben Jct., Mich. — A pantry shower for Calvary Lutheran was held in February. Members brought various items needed in a church kitchen and for church cleaning.

WMF Rally at Hampden

Our Spring Rally for the Eastern N. Dak. District will be held at Zoar Free Lutheran Church at Hampden, N. Dak. on April 11, 1987. The special speaker for the day will be Reverend Peter Franz. The chosen theme for the rally is "My Joy — Your Joy." Registration and coffee hour begin at 9:30 a.m. with the morning session beginning at 10:00 a.m.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Our goal for the 25th Annual Conference

June 17-21, 1987

Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Every congregation represented by a lay delegate!

AFLBS Campus Days March 27-29

Campus Days 1987 at AFLBS is just around the corner! On March 27-29, about 150 young people will be spending the weekend on campus in Minneapolis, experiencing a taste of dormitory life, warm Christian fellowship, Bible School classes, and inspiring speakers. All *senior high students* are welcome. Pastors and Luther League sponsors are

encouraged to bring their youth. A phone call or letter one week in advance to AFLBS stating how many from your church are coming would be greatly appreciated. There is no cost for the weekend, but all guests must bring their own bedding, etc.

The weekend will begin on Friday at 8:00 p.m. with a program presented by present students at AFLBS, followed by refreshments, skits and fellowship. On Saturday the schedule includes small group sessions, sample classes, recreation, a banquet, and the evening youth rally with Pastor John Rieth from Williston, North Dakota, singing and speaking.

Campus Days concludes with dinner on Sunday, after a morning Bible class and worship service.

For more information, or to make your reservations, call or write to the School. The address is: AFLBS, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. Phone: (612) 544-9501.

If you cannot be with us at Campus Days, but would like a catalog and application forms, simply write to us at the above address. Visitors are also welcome on campus at any other time.

SOME PLANS ANNOUNCED FOR ARC FAMILY CAMPS

Dr. James Gerdeen, Chassell, Mich., will be the evening speaker at the first week of Family Camp at Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., June 29-July 5.

In the second week, August 10-16, the evening messages will be brought by Rev. David Molstre, Fargo, N. Dak.

Other faculty members will be announced later.

The theme for both camps is "Revive Us Again" (Psalm 85:6). Registration fees of \$2.00 per individual or \$5.00 per family can be sent to Association Retreat Center, Rt. 1, Box 92, Osceola, Wis. 54020.