THE LUTHERAN SADOR MARCH 2004 AMBASSADOR



[Encouraging Word]

Doing for God



Liz Johnson Living Hope St. Michael, MN

I guess I had always considered good deeds a sort of optional 'extra favor' that we do for God.

eal faith requires action. James 2:14 says, "What good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith saye him?"

Good deeds are proof of a genuine faith. Hebrews 11 (the hall of faith) lists people with real faith. I looked there and noticed that every person listed *acted* on his or her faith. Take Abraham for example: He could have just said, "I trust that God will lead me to the right place." Instead he got up and *went* where God wanted him to go, even though he didn't know where that was. Faith and action go hand-in-hand.

I had never really thought of works as a proof of faith before seriously reading the passage in James. I guess I had always considered good deeds a sort of optional "extra favor" that we do for God, so I didn't often go out of my way to do them. I didn't think that it really mattered to God. Romans 4:4 says, "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation." Works aren't an optional thing. They are an obligation, something that is due. I'm just beginning to understand how much that stuff means to God, how necessary it is to my faith.

The reason we should do good deeds is to bring glory to God. I want to show people that God is working in my life. James 2:26 compares action-less faith to a dead body. That stood out to me. I don't want to have a dead faith. I want a growing, active, thriving faith that points directly to Christ. James 2:18 says, "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith

without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

Faith without works is useless. The late musician Rich Mullins wrote a song called "Screen Door" about faith and works. He sings, "One is your left hand/One is your right/It'll take two strong arms/To hold on tight ... there's a difference you know/ Between having faith/And playing make believe/One will make you grow/The other one just make you sleep ..." It's so much easier to say what I believe rather than to live it out. I know that a lot of the time I can preach about my faith, but I have a lot of trouble acting on what I've said. It's just like Mullins wrote about the two strong arms — faith and works.

In James 2:22-24, faith is *a fruit* of works. We are justified by faith, which leads to action. Having an action-less faith *can't* and *won't* save me. Doing good deeds will also bring me into a closer friendship with Christ. Every Friday, part of my family goes to my grandparents' house to help them with cleaning. I think that when I do things for other people, not expecting anything in return, I am bringing glory to God. Even through those small insignificant things.

Sometimes no one is going to notice the little things that we do to bring glory to God. But God sees those things, and He doesn't forget about them. Hebrews 6:9-10 says, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you've shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." God's going to reward us so richly for bringing glory to Him.

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Sound Bites

We cannot avoid the cross. Technique and technology are aids, but not the method of gaining spiritual victories.

Patrick Johnstone

Worship ... is the most appropriate response that can be made to resurrection. — Eugene Peterson

If Christ, the Holy One of God, had to die because of human sin, then sin is such a terrible reality that its power of involving men in guilt cannot be pictured too intensely. Since we are a part of that world that crucified Christ and still crucifies Him afresh, our whole life depends on an act of divine forgiveness.

> — Adolf Koberle "The Quest for Holiness"

Death is swallowed up not only in the victory of Christ but also by our victory, because through faith his victory has become ours and in that faith we also are conquerors.

> — Martin Luther "The Freedom of a Christian"

The lost art of THING

BY NATHAN DALAGER

ot too long ago, I read an article where the writer called this present age the most anti-intellectual period in the history of the Church. It made me stop and think. And I realized that I, and probably most Christians, need to do that more often. Stop and think. I have come to believe that writer was correct.

We live in age that discourages us from thinking. Much of our reading today is in magazines and Web pages — short, light articles where the headline often tells us all we really need. Stopping and thinking on the job is easily viewed as a lack of productivity on our part; we have quotas to meet and a deadline fast approaching. TV is probably the greatest discouragement to thinking ever invented. It never stops. Images flash past and one show rolls into another. Often we don't even see an image on the screen for more than a second or two before it cuts to another image. We just barely have time to see, much less really look at and consider what is being presented.

The emphasis of the modern world around us is on perception and not understanding. Thoughtful, considered reasoning is boring; it just doesn't sell. Even worse, it seldom buys! We are urged to buy things solely because they are cool. Image is everything, or so we would be encouraged to believe. A front-running Democratic candidate in the primaries had his campaign come apart not because of some idea he held or opinion he

expressed, but because he got carried away when addressing some of his supporters and let out a goofy howl — bad image. He was done.

The way most decisions are made and opinions formed in the world today is simply by reacting to images or situations, not stopping to think. People believe in ideas like evolution without ever having given it a moment's careful thought.

Our way of life in America has become a hindrance to a thoughtful approach as our lives become ever busier. We are busy with family, occupations and other obligations. There seem to be an unending stream of things calling for our time and attention often good, worthy and necessary things. But no matter how many timesaving devices we may have, there is still never enough time. We never seem to have the break we need to stop and think.

Our churches are easily overwhelmed with busyness, too, as we strive to offer more: more activities catering to different groups in the congregation. It

often seems as if the church is in a competition with the world to get people's attention with a spiraling rotation of new activities. It becomes tempting to judge the level of the life of a church by the length of the weekly calendar. In such a situation, the congregation may be tempted to choose a dangerous path. In such a situation there will be a strong temptation to place emphasis on dynamic methods of "reaching others" and a lesser emphasis on boring things like "sound doctrine."

II Timothy 4:3 says, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." It can be so easy to forget that the only thing we have that the world needs is still that same message of Christ, and Him crucified.

This situation we face daily presents a great challenge for Christians. We still are in the world, and the world seems to be trying to sweep us along

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in an unthinking blur. There are times when we need to heed Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." We need, both as individuals and as congregations, to take opportunities to be still. We need to stop and make sure our focus is on Him.

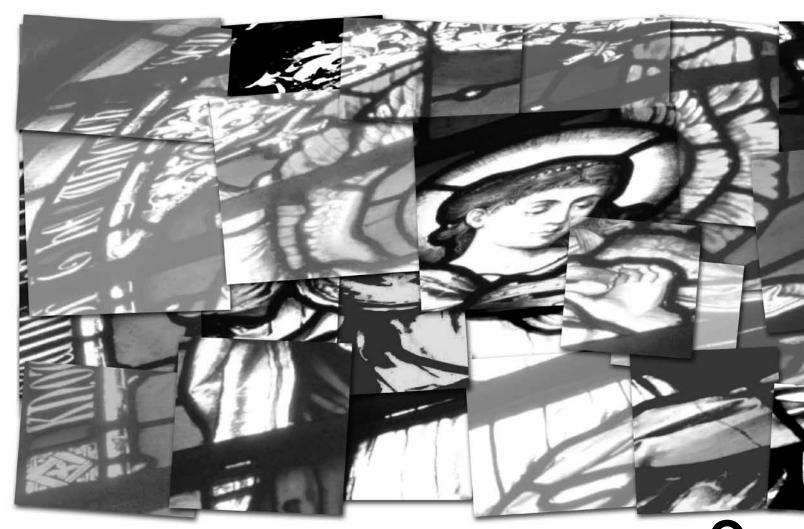
We need, also, to take opportunities to study the Word, individually and with other believers. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. It

is the power of God for salvation. It is truth. It is a means that the Spirit uses to grant us grace. It is our Sword of the Spirit. We are called to know, not to feel. We need to allow the Spirit to teach us and to give us wisdom through a careful study of the Word.

This season of Lent is a true gift to Christians. It is a season that carries few of its own distractions, unlike Christmas or Easter. It is a time to reflect on the great debt that we once owed, the impossible distance between sinful man and the Holy God, and the One who came to pay that debt on our behalf. It is a chance to stop and think.



Dalager is a member of Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn., and serves on the AFLC's Budget Analysis Committee.

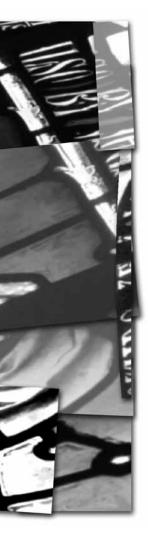


HAVE YOU SEEN THE LORD!

"So the other disciples told (Thomas), 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said unto them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hands into his side, I will not believe it.' A week later ... Jesus came and stood among them and said ... to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:25-27, NIV).

'ery few, if anyone, would deny that Jesus of Nazareth was a historical person who lived in occupied Israel and had a ministry with 12 disciples 2,000 years ago. Historically, not many would deny that Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem approximately AD 33. But often that is where Jesus is left — at the cross. The world may leave the resurrection as a matter of "faith" and not of history, let alone the crux for eternal life. Yes, the cross is extremely important. It was at the cross that Jesus died and took away our sins (Colossians 1:20-22, 2:14-15 et al). The skeptics may not challenge the notion of Jesus being the sin-bearer of the world as much as they would challenge His bodily resurrection. Did Jesus rise from the dead? Let us ask the disciples.

First, as many Bible students would testify, the disciples would not live for a lie, especially Thomas. The appearance of Jesus to Thomas changed his life significantly. Thomas, after Jesus' resurrection, declared that he would not believe Christ arose unless he would see and touch Jesus. Jesus, one week, later obliged him.



Thomas then made the great confession, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Yet Jesus' response to Thomas speaks to the heart of us all, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thomas finally had seen the Lord.

Second, Thomas obviously was not the only disciple to be transformed due to the resurrection of Christ. The Apostle John, in his first epistle, testified, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life ... And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (I John 1:1-3). John, according to tradition, was the only apostle who died a natural death. He lived nearly 90 years, writing the Gospel, the three letters, and the book of Revelation. He was also the pastor of

different congregations. If Jesus' resurrection was a hoax, John and the other disciples would not have taught the Word of God. Not only would there be no reason to die for Christ, there would also be no reason to live for Him.

Third, the resurrection of Christ became personal to Peter. In John 21, take note that Peter, John, James, Thomas and two other disciples went back to their old profession of fishing at Galilee. Perhaps they thought that there was little else they could do as disciples of Christ. Then Jesus appeared to again to Peter. Peter was re-commissioned much in the same way as he was commissioned. Jesus reinstated Peter and personally told him, "Feed my sheep," meaning to preach and teach the Word of God. Like most of the disciples, Peter was martyred; tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down outside of Rome. Had Jesus not rose from the dead, Peter would have no reason to boldly preach the Pentecostal sermon of Acts 2, or to serve the Lord with zeal throughout the apostolic era. Peter was transformed from one who denied Christ three times to publicly and boldly proclaiming salvation through Christ alone.

Fourth, the testimony of the Apostle Paul is compelling in the transforming power of the resurrection

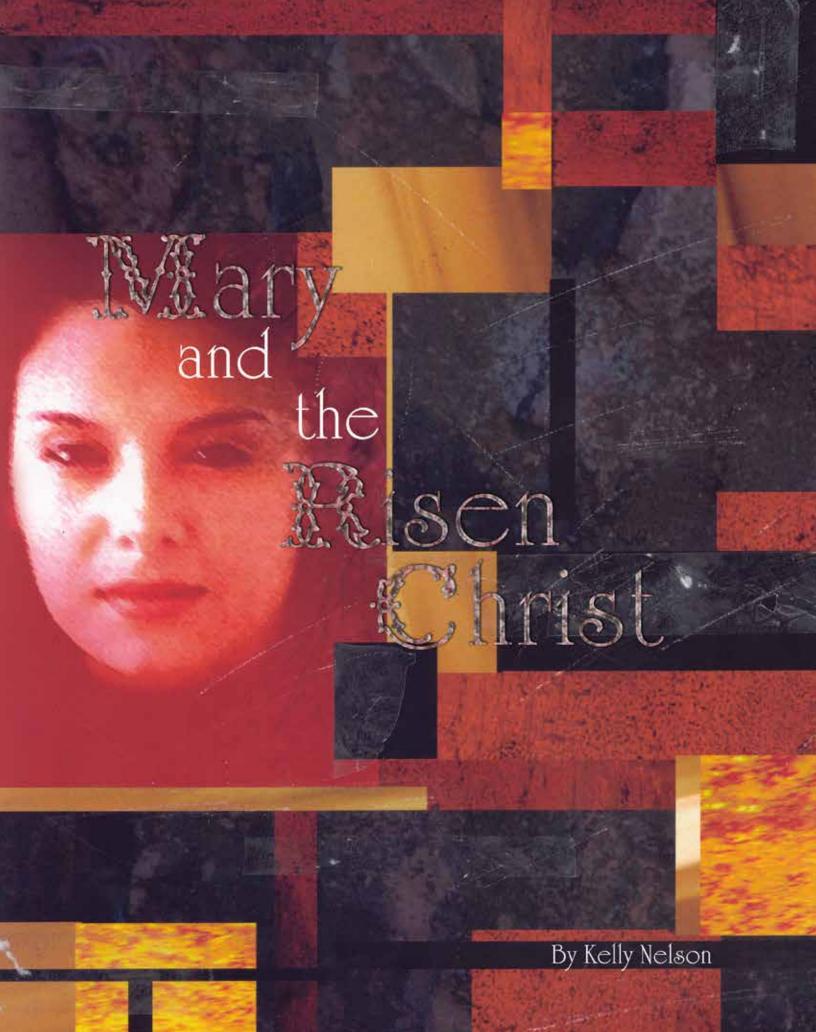
of Christ. Saul was a persecutor of the early church, but the resurrected Christ changed Saul (who then became Paul) on the road to Damascus. He became a missionary to the Gentiles as well as the people of Israel. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote, "If there is no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ... our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... we are then found to be false witnesses about God ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... But Christ indeed has been raised from the dead" (I Corinthians 15:13-20). If Christ did not rise on the third day, there would be no salvation for our souls. There would not be any reason or incentive for Paul, the apostles or any other believer to live a justified or a sanctified life in Christ. Not only would there be a lack of reason or incentive, but it would actually be impossible to live the justified and sanctified life in Christ since we would not have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in us. But because Christ rose from the grave, He grants us the power to "become children of God" to those who believe (John 1:12).

Finally, as the bodily resurrection of Christ has changed the apostles' lives, so the same resurrection changes your life and mine. Even before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus declared who He was by what He would do. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies ... Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). Jesus was not raising this vital question to Martha alone. Our Lord is still asking all of us the same question through the Bible. How each of us individually answers that question will determine each one's eternal destiny. If we answer Christ with a heart response of, "Yes, Lord, I believe" just like Martha did, then we become a resurrected creation in Jesus.

Have you seen Jesus? We may not see Him the way Thomas and the other disciples did. Yet when Christ dwells in us, perhaps we may get a glimpse of Him. When we gather together in fellowship with other believers and when we love and serve others in Christ's Name, His presence is there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20, 25:40). We know that through the means of grace, we, too, have risen with Christ. Certainly our Lord Jesus fellowships with us through the reading of the Bible and prayer. Through daily fellowship with Christ, we cannot help but daily see Jesus and become resurrected and strengthened for His service now and through eternity.

Pastor Klemme serves Minnewaska Lutheran, Starbuck, Minn.

SF



t was Sunday morning. Mary Magdalene was on her way to the tomb where Jesus' body had been laid three days before. Mary had witnessed many things up to that point. Jesus Himself had delivered her from seven demons. She and others had supported His ministry in any way they could. She knew Jesus as her teacher and her Lord.

Then came that awful day when Jesus was nailed to a cross. Mary had been there, watching from a distance. When they took his body down, hurriedly prepared it for burial and placed it in the tomb, she was there. Though she may not have understood why it happened, Mary was not confused about what events had taken place that day. She knew Jesus had died.

Mary and the other women were so sure they would find Jesus' body, they went to the tomb as soon as they could after the Sabbath, carrying spices to anoint His body. As they drew near, they wondered how they were going to roll the stone away from the entrance. However, when they got there, the stone had already been moved aside. They looked inside the tomb to find that Jesus' body was not there. What they knew about death did not lead them to the conclusion that He had risen, but that someone had taken His body away.

After the others had left, Mary Magdalene stayed behind, grieving the loss of her Lord. She went to take one more look inside the tomb, only to find that it was no longer empty; two angels were seated where Jesus' body had been. "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him" (John 20:14). Then Mary turned to see Jesus standing in front of her. "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him" (John 20:15). Even as she looked at Him, she still believed Jesus was dead.

"Mary."

That was all He said. He simply called her by name. In the words of Peter Marshall, former chaplain to the U.S. Senate, "She heard her own name spoken as only one voice could speak it — gently echoing in the garden. ... Christ had spoken her name, and all of heaven was in it."*

Jesus Christ had come to Mary. He reached out to her not because her faith was so strong, but because His love is so great. Mary was not some "super-disciple" who earned the right to tell the others about

Jesus' resurrection; she was a sinner in need of a Savior just like the rest of them — just like all of us. Mary had an encounter with the risen Christ. Because of that, she had a story to tell, a testimony to proclaim to all who would listen.

What about you? Do you have a story to tell? If Jesus Christ has called you by name and you have answered that call, you have as great a testimony as Mary Magdalene did.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord ... who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:8-10).

Mary was not looking for the risen Christ. She was looking for His body. She did not find Jesus. He found her, and she believed. As evidence of her faith, Mary obeyed. She went to the disciples

as Jesus had asked her to. She told them what He had said. She proclaimed the good news of His resurrection.

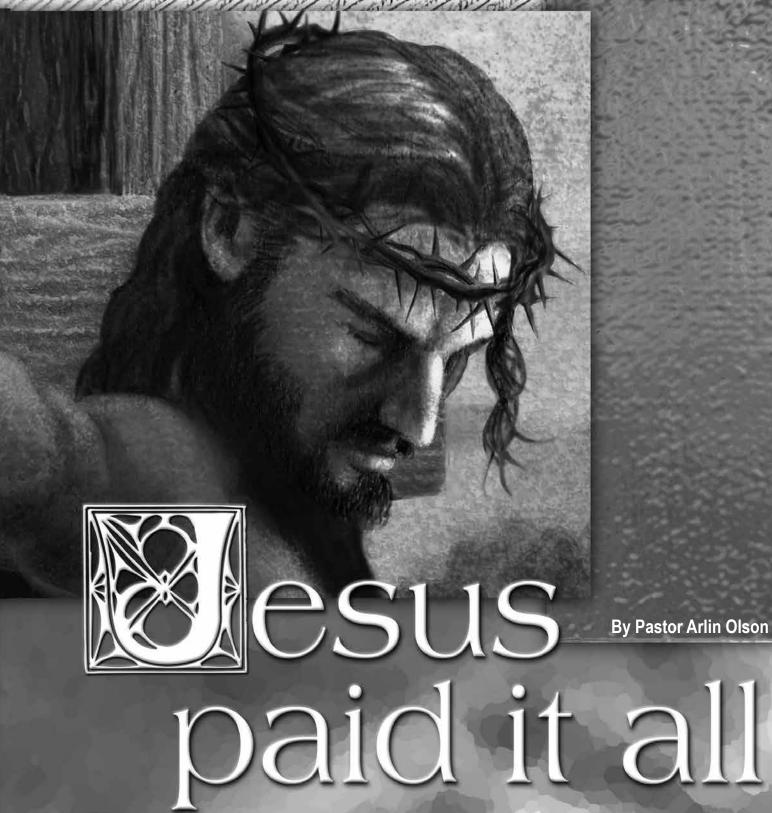
Are you living in obedience today, witnessing to the truth that Jesus is alive and living in your heart today? Do not be ashamed. You have received the greatest gift that could ever be given, and you have received it from Christ Jesus Himself!



Nelson is a member of Grace Free Lutheran. Maple Grove, Minn.

* Quote taken from "Mr. Jones, Meet the Master," a collection of Peter Marshall's sermons.

Mary had an encounter with the risen Christ. Because of that, she had a story to tell, a testimony to proclaim to all who would listen.



story has been told of an old woman carrying a heavy bag, walking tiredly along the road. A man with a donkey and cart stopped and offered her a ride. She happily accepted, sitting down on the cart. A few minutes passed and the man looked back at the woman. She was still carrying her bag. When he asked her why she didn't set it down on the cart, she replied, "Oh no, sir, you have done so much for me giving me a ride. The least I can do is carry this bag myself."

Sadly, this lady is a picture of many of us. We basically trust that Jesus' death on the cross paid for the forgiveness of our sins, but somehow we feel we should carry a little load of guilt ourselves.

Perhaps we need to hear again the words of Paul in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Jesus paid it all on the cross. Carrying a little guilt ourselves won't help us, and it is like saying that what Jesus did isn't adequate, when it really is.

A few months ago, I was in Ottawa for a speaking engagement. While there my hosts gave me a tour of the city. We stopped at one point in a park. While standing on a bridge, we looked down at the water flowing under it. There were two ducks sitting in the water, or so it appeared on the surface. In reality, they were paddling their feet almost frantically to maintain the appearance that they were just sitting there.

My host commented that the ducks were a picture of the corporate world. People are working frantically and experience a lot of inner stress while trying to maintain a calm exterior.

I thought of the Christian's life. Sometimes we forget that sanctification really starts with the death of self when we are baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3 says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" This really means that our old self was put to death with Christ on the cross and buried with Him in the grave. Practically speaking, that means that I don't have to struggle frantically to put my old nature to death: Jesus did it for me. What shows on the exterior of our lives should be a reflection of this inner reality.

Paul said. "I've been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who

loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Are we trusting in what Jesus has done. And are we considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus?

Finally, there is the resurrection. It, too, is to be a part of our experience in the Christian life. "... so that as Christ was raised from the dead we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 5:4). We should now live out the life of Christ to which we have been

raised. We may not always feel alive with Christ, but Paul tells us in Romans 6:5 that "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

Corrie Ten Boom, a Jewish Christian, experienced this resurrection life in a practical way when she was called on to forgive a Nazi guard who had been cruel to her sister. She felt she couldn't do it, but in faith reached out her hand to shake his. As she did. she experienced the forgiveness and the love of Christ for him.

You see, Jesus really has paid the price for all of our sins. We really have died with Him, and we really are raised to new life in Him. Sometimes it may

not feel like any of this is real, but we walk by faith. One poet wrote: "The steps of faith fall on a seeming void and find the solid rock beneath."

This season, let's trust Him anew and stop out in faith, counting on what He has done.

36

Olson serves as pastor of Bethel Lutheran, Elbow, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Carrying a little guilt ourselves won't help us, and it is like saying that what Jesus did isn't adequate, when it really is.

PRAYING FOR YOU

FOUR WORDS THAT CAN MEAN A LOT TO SOMEONE



t's been said that the two most important words are, "I'm sorry," and the three most important words are, "I love you." The four words, "I'm praying for you," meant the most to me this past year. Whether they were spoken, written in a card or sent via e-mail, these words were very encouraging to me, and I know that those prayers were what got me through three surgeries, months of chemotherapy and weeks of radiation.

You see, four other words were said to me over the telephone on Tuesday before Thanksgiving, "You have breast cancer." They're not the kind of words one wants to hear.

God deserves

all the honor

and glory. I

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many family

and friends.

After the news was announced to our church family, I was surrounded by several women who prayed for me. I cannot explain the peace that came over me. A few days later, one of the first of many cards came. Inside was written Jeremiah 29: 11, "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." How many times had I read or heard the first part of that verse, but then tuned out the last part. That day the words "to give you hope and a future" jumped out at me, and I knew that they were God's promise to me.

I am so very thankful to God for His many blessings this past year. After a mastectomy, the results of a CT scan and bone scan on Dec. 18 showed that the cancer had not spread. Praise God! I

had eight chemotherapy sessions, and I always had someone from our family with me. The hours sitting hooked up to an IV went much faster when there was someone to visit and laugh with. I got sick with the first four sessions, but wasn't sick at all with the last four. What a blessing!

Another blessing was a shot I received after the last four sessions that boosted my white blood count so that I didn't pick up any infections and could maintain my chemo schedule. My husband, our youngest son, and I were also blessed with family and friends who came to our home and cleaned, did laundry, supplied transportation and provided us with many wonderful

meals. Their kindness and generosity will never be forgotten.

Then came 33 radiation treatments. I had to travel 65 miles one way to receive those. On the days I didn't have someone traveling with me, I had a lot of time to listen to the Christian radio station or pray. God provided many individuals for me to meet during chemotherapy and radiation who I could pray for. He also provided many opportunities for me to share my faith. Someone would say something about my being lucky, and I quickly informed the person that luck had nothing to do with it. It was God at work! Or, someone said how I shouldn't do some things because

> I had cancer. I just replied, life, GOD DOES!"

God has also blessed me with a wonderful husband, three sons, a daughter-inlaw, and other family members who were always supporting me with their love and prayers. Our church family is wonderful, and I thank God for each one of them and for Pastor Steve. Then there was my buddy. She is a good friend who had breast cancer two and a half years ago, and she was always there to encourage me and answer the many questions I had.

God deserves all the honor and glory. I couldn't have done it without Him and the prayers of so many family and friends. I know God is with me now, and He will be with me in the future. however long He decides that will be.

Please tell someone today, "I'm praying for you." I hope and pray that those four words will mean as much to them as they do to me.

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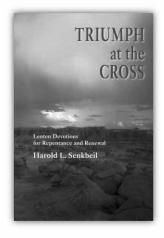
Folsland is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D.

"Cancer does not control my

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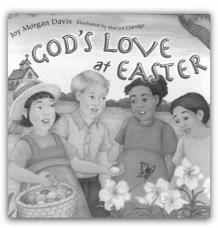
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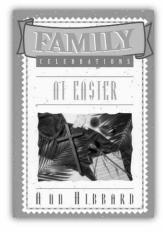
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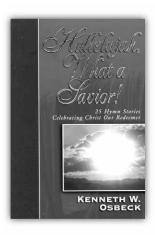
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[Our president writes]

Overheard

hat was that again?
"Dear God, please overlook our worship service today." I expect that the man praying was asking God to bless the worship service, and perhaps he intended to say "look over" instead of "overlook," but it seems to me that the mistake makes a powerful point.

The prophet Malachi (2:17) declares that the people have wearied the Lord with their words. Isaiah's words are even stronger: "...



Robert Lee

even stronger. ...
even your most
pious meetings —
are sinful and false.
I want nothing
more to do with
them. I hate all
your festivals and
sacrifices. I cannot
stand the sight of
them" (1:13-14).
Jesus spoke the following words about

worship to the Pharisees and scribes: "You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce, for they replace God's commands with their own man-made teachings" (Matthew 15:7-9, New Living Translation).

Am I guilty of honoring the Lord with my lips when my heart is far away from Him? Have I wearied Him with my thoughtless, heartless words? Dear God, please overlook my worship and forgive!

What was that again?

"Dear God, forgive my sin and cleanse me from all my righteousness." I smiled when I heard a brother pray these words, suspecting that he was misquoting I John 1:9, and that he meant "all unrighteousness." Maybe this is so, but, on second thought, perhaps he was not mistaken after all.

The prophet rightly declared: "All my righteousnesses are but filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Yes, we may grudgingly agree that our sins are but filthy rags, but to be told that this is true of our righteousness! In other words, the very best that we have to offer is stained with sin. This is a hard word indeed that our old nature hates to hear. Yet to confess our sin is to agree with God, to accept His verdict on who we are as well as on what we have done or not done. The plow of true repentance cuts deep.

Have I confessed the sin of my righteousnesses to the Sovereign Lord and sought His cleansing? Or I am holding up filthy rags before Him as though they entitled me to receive His grace? Dear God, cleanse me from all my righteousness, in the name of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, Who alone is my righteousness, by grace alone!

Am I guilty of honoring the Lord with my lips when my heart is far away from Him? Have I wearied Him with my thoughtless, heartless words? Dear God, please overlook my worship and forgive!



national CONVENTION

June 16, 2004 Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

Name:		
Address:	FEES:	C heck
City / state / zip:	Luncheon: \$7	
Congregation:	Breakfast: \$7	
Address:	·	
City / state / zip:	Registration: \$7	

Make checks payable to Dawn Johnson WMF and send to 2997 30th Ave. Wilson, WI. 54027.

Registrations received after June 1 must add a \$3 late fee.

Activities scheduled for youths attending the Annual Conference

These activities are open to all students who have completed grades 6-12.

Wednesday, June 16

9 a.m.- noon Morning sessions (Bible

study, worship, recreation)

1:30-4 p.m. Open recreation (swimming,

football, ultimate Frisbee, etc.)

Thursday, June 17

All day at Valleyfair! Amusement Park

Each student will need to bring \$20 for a
ticket and money for lunch and supper.

Friday, June 18

9 a.m.- noon Morning sessions (Bible

study, worship, recreation)

1:30-5 p.m. Canoeing on the St. Croix River

Each student will need \$5 to canoe.

Saturday, June 18

9 a.m.- noon

Morning sessions (Bible

study, worship, recreation)

1:30-4 p.m.

Organized recreation

Evening

Youth banquet and service. Sign up!



June 16-20 Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

Hosts: Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.; Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis.; Hosannah Free Lutheran, Cumberland, Wis.; Sunnyside Lutheran, Stacy, Minn.

Name:	
Spouse:	
Address:	
	(E):
City / state / zip:	
Congregation:	

Are you: pastor / visiting pastor / lay member / lay visitor **Spouse:** pastor / visiting pastor / lay member / lay visitor

Registration: \$30 single, \$40 couple Make checks payable to AFLC and send to 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Registrations received after June 1 must add a \$5 late fee.

LODGING

ARC: 1-800-294-2877

Osceola Valley Inn: (715) 294-4066 Located 6 miles away. Dalles House Motel: (715) 483-3206 Located 11 miles away.

Holiday Inn: (715) 483-5775 Located 12 miles away. Camping available at the ARC. Call for information.

	MEAL	#			
ARC	bar-be-cue banquet (Wed.)				
	Schools breakfast				
>	Conference breakfast				
[hursday	Chaplain's lunch				
urs					
ГЫ	Conference lunch				
•	Schools Corp. dinner				
	Conference dinner				
_	Missions Corp. breakfast				
	Conference breakfast				
Friday	ARC Corp. lunch				
Fri	Conference lunch				
	Pastors banquet				
	Conference dinner				
У	Conference breakfast				
Saturday	Foundation lunch				
tur	Conference lunch				
Saf	Youth banquet				
	Conference dinner				
	All meals: \$6 Pastors banquet: \$10				

World missions

a day in Jerez

God has something good in store for us today.

can't imagine a more exciting or rewarding way to spend my life than to serve God on the mission field. I get up every day with the expectation that God is going to do something and I will get to see it - maybe even have a part in it! My family has lived this way for 26

> years, and we never get tired of it.

And here we are still. God has something good in store for us today. I got up this morning, had my prayer time and Bible study, and then went with Harvey Matheson down to the coffee shop, where we visited with some of the



Dan Giles

retired Americans who live here. Two of the people we talked to have cancer and asked for our prayers. Another is at home with a lung problem, asking me to come over and pray for him. A Mexican friend stopped in and asked me to pray for his mother, who is in critical condition in the hospital in Zacatecas, and for his motherin-law, who is at home with Alzheimer's.

We came home, I checked the e-mail

and prayed through the letters that have come in. Now I will spend more time in prayer and the Word, preparing for tonight's ministry. In the evening we will go over to Todd and Barb Schierkolk's house. where we have a women's Bible class, kid's club, and men's prayer meeting. Beginning tonight. I have a brand new confirmation class with a bunch of tough teenage boys who Todd has spent two years drawing to Jesus while playing baseball.

The rest of the day I plan to be working on the Spanish version of the Ambassador Sunday school curriculum and developing a Web site for distributing it. Through this work we expect to be reaching people all over the Spanish-speaking world with God's Word. If the results we had with our previous Web site are any indication, we expect to see free and living Lutheran congregations springing up practically by spontaneous combustion in the United States, all over Latin America and in Spain.

Pray for us. We are on the edge of a great work of God. What will He do next?

Giles and his wife. Debra, work as missionaries in Jerez. Mexico.

MTI students placed for practical field experiences

Karisa Finstrom: AFLC Students Missions with Pastor Kevin Olson and Living Word Free Luther-



Finstrom

an, Eagan, Minn., with Pastor Tim Skramstad. Justin Kantonen: Jerez, Mexico, with pastors Dan Giles and Todd Schierkolk of the AFLC.



Katonen

Clara Nielsen: Mazatlan, Mexico, with Jan Tollefson of World Mission Prayer League.



Nielson

Max Givot: Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., with Pastor Jason Holt.



Lutheran. Minneapolis, with Pastor Peter Franz.



Givot



Novotna

Dan and Marcela Giles: Christ is Lord Lutheran, Onalaska, Marcela

Wis., with

Cambria

Rebekah

Watson:

with Pas-

and Rena-

Mission Network.

Poland

tor Tim

Hoops and



Hoops

ta Hinrichs of Eastern Europe



Watson

Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt.

Dan

making use of our Foundation

[Development]

t was a vacation. My family and I were traveling to South Carolina for an uncle's 75th birthday party. Because we enjoy seeing historical sites, we decided to see as many presidential homes on our vacation as we could.

President Benjamin Harrison's home was one of the first historical sites on our journey, located in an older area of India-



Jon Galland

napolis. We enjoyed the tour in addition to seeing many original possessions of the Harrison family. While visiting the home, I began to wonder how it was maintained. Just as I imagined, a foundation maintains and supports the museum, like many historical sites. These foundations

are able to preserve our link to the past.

The AFLC has its own foundation. It is available to assist all entities within the AFLC, both the local congregation and AFLC department ministries alike. As donors give various financial gifts to AFLC ministries, they have the option of

using its foundation. The donor is able to give property, securities or cash to the foundation to greatly enhance all AFLC ministries in the present and future.

The Lord has greatly blessed each ministry within the AFLC. Praying for each ministry is paramount. However, using the AFLC Foundation is an option in charitable giving to ensure the effective service of the local congregations, schools, missions, the Association Retreat Center as well as several other AFLC ministries.

Our Savior has not changed. People's need for Him has not changed. God's Word has not changed. However, the AFLC Foundation presents a new option in giving to the Lord's work.

The Lord has given each one of us an important ministry. I am reminded of Paul's words in Philippians 3:14 which says, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Let us continue to be faithful in the ministry that God has given each one of us.

Galland is the Director of Development.

Our Savior has not changed. People's need for Him has not changed. God's Word has not changed.

Parish Education Financial Needs

Your prayers and gifts enable Parish Education to provide Sunday school curriculum, Bible studies, teaching aids, and devotional resources to serve our congregations. We are truly dependent upon congregations to provide funds above and beyond the regular budget subsidy in order to continue printing these materials. In turn, we offer these materials at a reduced cost because we are a ministry of our congregations. We are at a point of having to cut back on our work due to a lack of funds. Please pray that God would guide and provide for the ministry of Parish Education according to His will.

New curriculum

- \$12,000 to complete grade 3 teacher manuals for quarters 2 and 3
- \$45,000 to begin printing new Preschool Sunday school curriculum

Reprinting

• \$5,700 to reprint "The Adult Class Manual" used for new member

classes — AFLC pastors regularly request this book, which has been out of print for a year.

- \$3,000 to reprint "Baptism and Spiritual Life" used as a textbook for Bible School and Seminary classes — the schools have not been able to use this book for classes for three years
- \$3,000 to reprint "Bible History for Home and School" used for confirmation classes — current stock will be depleted by fall of 2004 several Sunday school books need to be reprinted in 2004:

Quarter 1 student books for kindergarten, grades 5, 8, 9 Quarter 1 teacher manual for grades 2 and 4 Quarter 2 student book for grade 4

● 2004 catalog — a catalog has not been printed since 2002 due to lack of funds



Twelve members of Living Word Lutheran, Menasha, Wis., braved single-digit temperatures to participate in the annual March for Life in Appleton, Wis. Holding the banner are (from left) Joshua Rieth, John Rieth and Will Dorman.

California congregation dedicates new building

Good Shepherd
Lutheran, Camarillo,
Calif., celebrated the
dedication of its permanent worship and
educational facility on
Jan. 11. Pastor Robert
Lee, AFLC president,
presided over the dedication with Pastor
Paul Nash, AFLC
Home Missions director, assisting.

Good Shepherd Lutheran has been a Home Mission congregation for four years and currently has 69 members. For the past five years, the congregation has met for Sunday school and worship services in rented facilities in the city library, a middle school and the city community center. Weekday Bible studies and fellowship events were held



Congregational president Ronald Spooner, Pastor Paul Nash, AFLC Home Missions director, Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, and Pastor Rodger Olson stand inside the new building.

in private homes.

The newly leased facility, located at 99 Glenn Drive, consists of 5,500 square feet of floor space. It has sanctuary seating for 135 persons and eight separate rooms for use as classrooms, fellowship facilities and office space. Pastor Rodger Olson has served the congregation for the past two and a half years.

Pastor Christian Oswood dies

Pastor Christian Samuel Oswood, 64, of Minneapolis, died Jan. 10. Born May 13, 1939, in Seward, Alaska, he was the son of Christian and Emma (Sorenson) Oswood. He married Charlotte Gerdeen July 18, 1964.

He moved with his family to St. Paul when he was 2 years old. He

graduated from Alexander Ramsey High School and attended Augsburg College and Seminary in Minneapolis. When the seminary closed in 1963, he transferred to Luther Seminary in St.



Paul. He graduated in 1964. He served American Lutheran Churches in Vashon Island, Wash., Genesee. Idaho: and the Minnesota towns of Swift Falls, Jackson and Maynard. He joined the AFLC clergy roster in 1986. He then served Zoar Lutheran, Hampden, N.D., and, subsequently, Living Word Lutheran in Edmore, N.D. He moved with his family to Bloomington, Minn., in 1989 because of failing health. They moved to Minneapolis in 1991. He had a heart transplant in 1993. He was a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, where he served on the church council and taught Sunday school.

Surviving are his wife; three sons, Mark (Ann) Oswood, Shoreview, Minn., Paul (Karen) Oswood, Willmar, Minn., and Steven (Laura) Oswood, Minneapolis; five grandchildren and his mother-in-law, Barbara Gerdeen.

The service was Jan. 14 at the Association Free Lutheran Schools Chapel, Plymouth, Minn., with Pastor Ivars Krafts and Pastor Robert Lee officiating. Burial was in Crystal Lake Cemetery, Minneapolis.



Illinois congregation joins AFLC

ion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ashkum, Ill., has found new shelter with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The congregation, formerly a member of the ALC and more recently the ELCA, is currently being served by retired AFLC Pastor Jan Horne.

Zion Lutheran congregation has a rich history of staunch devotion to Lutheran doctrine since its formation on May 3, 1896. The congregation was served by neighboring Lutheran pastors and for a short period of time [1922-1937] joined together with a local congregation to form a two-point parish. In 1937, the congregation decided to become independent and called its first resident pastor.

Like other congregations in the local area, members of Zion voted against the merger in 1988 that formed the ELCA, but was persuaded to "give the new church body a chance." However, in the ensuing years, members of Zion had been becoming increasingly concerned and disturbed over the direction of the ELCA. Shortly after Horne's arrival, the congregation began to question him about the AFLC. Upon learning the Association's five guiding principles [particularly the one which states that the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth and recognizes no authority above it except the Word of God] many members became convinced that their beliefs and their mission as a congregation were more in keeping with those of the AFLC.

Zion Lutheran Church looks forward to a fruitful relationship with its new friends in the AFLC.

Youth Leadership Training Conference

The AFLC Youth Ministries annual youth leadership conference will be July 12-17 at the ARC, Osceola, Wis. With the theme, "Do you know the truth?" conference attendees will have a change to attend workshops, evening sessions and small group sessions throughout the week.

Study topics will include "Get it right with God," "Loving Christ ... loving people," The TRUTH," "Power up,"

and "Sent out."

Recreational activities will include canoeing, basketball, volleyball, rock climbing, swimming, small groups and evangelism training.

For more information on the conference, call Youth Ministries at (763) 545-5631. Or email: youthmin@aflc.org.

The cost is \$250 per student, \$125 per counselor and \$175 for adults not counseling. Late fee after April 1.

WMF memorials — January

Doris Peterson, Morris, Ill.
Vernon Johnson, Beresford, S.D.
Lois Andersen, Beresford
Gladys Olson, Culbertson, Mont.
Esther Boettcher, Brookings, S.D.
Evelyn Peterson, Bruce, S.D.
Freida Holter, Bruce
Mrs. John Hovey, Bruce
Martin Rasmussen, Bruce

Galilee Bible Camp

Lake Bronson, Minn.

June 22-27

Preteen Camp

Contact: Pastor Ken Hart (218)

782-2246

June 27

District Bible Camp Sunday

June 27-July 2

Teen Camp

Contact: Pastor Ken Hart

July 5-9

Family Camp

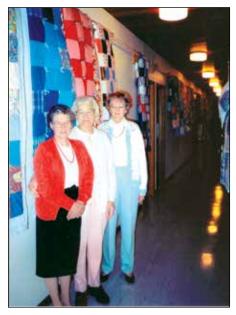
Contact: Lyle Mattson (218) 782-

2310

July 23-24

WMF Retreat

Contact: Carmen Gustafson (218) 681-3091



Lillian Solberg, Edna Quanbeck and Virginia Haugen stand by a quilt gallery at New Luther Valley Lutheran, McVille, N.D. The quilts are sold locally, and the funds are used to send other quilts to the mission fields.

People and places

Correction: Several benevolence numbers were reported incorrectly in the February issue. The December receipts for World Missions personal support were \$39,218 for a year-end total of \$352,264.02, 117 percent of the goal. The total December receipts were \$290,517 for a year-end total of \$1,720,413.65, for 99 percent of the goal.

Pastor Don Richman, Bloomington, Minn., is taking on the new title and role of founding director of East European Missions Network. The change comes with the calling of a new director, Pastor Bill Moberly, Bloomington. Moberly, who currently serves as the president of the Commission for World Missions for the AALC, will now share directorial duties with Richman. Richman will direct more of his time toward preparing and presenting seminars and teaching.

Nearly two dozen members of the Sioux Falls congregations of **Abiding Savior Free Lutheran** and **Living Word Free Lutheran** are traveling March 1-15 to
Trinec, Czech Republic, for a short-term missions trip. The group will work with Pastor Michal Klus, a 2003 graduate of AFLTS, who serves Trinec Lutheran Church. Please pray for a building project, the establishment of ongoing relationships and the establishment of a Bible-oriented ministry.

Pastor Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, N.D., has resigned as pastor of Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, and from the AFLC Coordinating Committee. Pastor Gary Jorgenson, Durant, Okla., will fill his position on the committee until the Annual Conference.

Members of the Coordinating Committee received resolutions of affiliation from five congregations on Jan. 19: Christ Lutheran, Jacksonville, Fla., served by Pastor Walter Enquist; Tressler Memorial Lutheran, Loysville, Pa., and Mount Zion Lutheran, Landisburg, Pa., both served by Pastor David Peterson; Zion Lutheran, Ashkum, Ill., served by AFLC Pastor Jan Horne; and Dell Lutheran, Frost, Minn., served by Pastor Joe Ocker, who was also accepted onto the AFLC clergy roster. Look to future issues for more background on these churches.

AFLC memorials — January

AFLBS

Emma Larson

AFLTS

Norris Fugleberg, Chris Oswood, Janet Benz, Deloris Haufchild

General Fund

Edith Morrison, Chris Oswood

Home Missions

Jan Fatland, Elyria Hovey, Norris Fugleberg, Omer Pederson, Mildred Rostad, Don Piehl

Miriam Infant Home

Edna Ohnstad

MTI

Chris Oswood

Parish Education

Ray Holkestad, Chris Oswood, Walter Nelson, Mary Lindquist

Vision 2004

Chris Oswood, Mabel Ness, Norris Fugleberg, Lois Johnson, Ragnhild Windingland, Delores Amb, Mildred Buhr

World Missions

Roger Hanson, Emma Larson, Omer Pederson, Clarence Christensen

Seminettes publish cookbook

Proceeds from sale will fund scholarships to retreat

"Family Favorites," a new cookbook produced by the 2003-04 seminary student, staff and faculty wives (Seminettes), is now available through the seminary office. The book includes more than 200 recipes from appetizers to main dishes and des-

serts. For a copy, send \$10 plus \$1.50 for shipping each to AFLTS Seminettes, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Funds raised through the sale of the book will be used for scholarships to the ARC women's retreat in March.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (1 month) - January 1 - January 31, 2004

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$288.771.00	\$28,445.95	\$28,445.95	10
Youth Ministries	54,024.00	5,782.31	5.782.31	11
Parish Education	82,062.00	3,521.65	3,521.65	4
Seminary	154,195.00	25,098.62	25,098.62	16
Bible School	264,089.00	12,909.38	12,909.38	5
Home Missions	287,115.00	24,130.27	24,130.27	8
Church Extension	24,576.00	389.77	389.77	2
World Missions	256,326.00	12,419.20	12,419.20	5
Personal Support	328,311.00	27,811.49	27,811.49	8
	31,739,469.00	\$140,508.64	\$140,508.64	8
TOTALS 2003	\$1,740,325.00	\$138,023.03	\$138,023.03	8
Goal 8%	. , ,		. ,	

The Evangelism Department received \$10,605.18 in January. The office of Director of Development received \$0 in January.

a CLEAR ending

had the opportunity recently to hear an orchestra perform Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony*. Strauss wrote the symphony in 1915 and cited as inspiration a book by the philosopher Nietzsche called "The Antichrist." In the book Nietzsche claimed that "liberation and moral purification" could be achieved without the Christian religion, but instead "through one's own strength, deliverance, through labor and worship of nature, eter-

nal and magnificent."



Craig Johnson

The symphonv does have some sections of great music. It requires a large orchestra with a variety of instruments. The percussion section pulled out instruments they prob-

ably don't use very often. The musicians were excellent and made some loud and impressive sounds.

Then the music stopped and the conductor put down his baton. The audience seemed a little uncertain and didn't clap right away. It didn't sound like a real ending with a solid conclusion. We were left kind of wondering, "Is that it?"

Strauss' music fit with Nietzsche's philosophy of looking to our own strength and ability for hope, instead of to Christ. Like the play of the orchestra, our work can, at times, be impressive. We can make a lot of noise and employ a lot of instruments. But then it is time for the ending. People apart from Christ lack certainty and wonder, how does it end? Is that it?

The death and resurrection of Jesus means this life can end on a note that is clear, distinct and triumphant. "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I

know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Matthew 28:5, 6, NIV). The claims are not confused and muddled. The declarations are definite. "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:54). Jesus lives and Jesus reigns.

After doing a funeral for a man I hadn't known, a niece of the deceased asked me if I could tell her where her uncle was. I told her only God knew the answer to her question. It all depended on where her uncle stood with Jesus. If he died having faith in Christ as his Lord and Savior, then he went to be with the Lord. She talked of her uncle's good works, but I could tell those weren't providing her with true hope. That comes only from the Lord. But we can know for certain where we are going because of the certainty of Jesus' resurrection.

Many in the world are like that woman. They are wondering where loved ones have gone and where they are going when they die. They are not sure. Their song is like the ending of Strauss' symphony vague and unclear.

After the resurrection, the followers of Jesus were singing songs of victory. They were sure of what had happened, and no trials or threats or persecution could change their tune. "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact," Peter confidently declared on Pentecost (Acts 2:32).

I had a friend in college who liked to play the piano, but he only played one song. Whenever he sat down at the keys you knew what the song was going to be. In some ways the disciples were like that. They kept singing one song. They did talk about other issues, but they kept coming back to the resurrection of Jesus. They couldn't get over it. They couldn't stop

[Editorial]

... they kept coming back to the resurrection of Jesus.

talking about it. "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The truth had captivated them and transformed their lives in dramatic ways.

Too often we talk about the resurrection at Easter, but then put this glorious truth on the shelf during the rest of the year. We share good ideas on how to live. We talk about rules on what to do and not to do. We moan and groan about how bad things are in the world. Often we are sharing truth that is good, but not talking enough about the greatest truth.

We read of the church in the book of Acts and wonder why we don't see results like they saw. Is it because we don't talk about the resurrection of Jesus as much as they did? Is it because we treat the resurrection as the cause of a once-a-year holiday more than the core of our very being?

I Corinthians 15:19 says, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." Our hope rests on this one truth. But that truth is solid, for the next verse triumphantly declares, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead." We know how this life ends for those who have faith in Jesus. The song we keep on singing is one of certain hope for now and for all eternity.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

character development

[Something to share]

I thad been another busy day, and I was dreading having to stop at the store to get milk in the frigid Minnesota temperatures. But with teenagers at home, milk was needed, along with a few other supplies. I heaved a sigh after getting my groceries and headed outside in the cold to my car.



Karen Floan

Just as I was about to unload into my car, I gasped in horror! I had forgotten about the pop at the very bottom of my grocery cart. I had not paid for it. My mind raced as I contemplated what I should do. After all, I thought, no

one had noticed, and it would really be a hassle to have to go back into the grocery store in the cold weather and wait in another long line.

I reasoned to myself, it was only a few dollars, and it wouldn't really matter. Or would it? Just as quickly as these thoughts came into my mind, I knew what I had to do. I headed back into the store, waited in line, paid for the pop and made my way home, with a feeling of relief.

As I drove home, I remembered some Scripture that I had just read

the past week. They were used in a chapter from the book "The Purpose Driven Life," which talked a lot about character and being faithful through the tests of life. Matthew 25:23: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." It struck me while reading this part of the book that the author, Rick Warren, stressed our characters are being developed and revealed constantly in our daily living, especially in the little things. Though we may think no one else sees, God is watching our responses to people and situations, even the very small ones we may think aren't that important.

In the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25, God watched the responses of those servants and their use of the various talents He had given them. To one the master gave five talents, to another two and still to another only one, each according to their abilities. I believe, like those servants, God has given each of us talents and gifts to use for Him. It isn't so much the amount or size of the talents that matter, but rather, how faithful we are with them and what we do with them. We may think that no one is watching exactly what we do with our talents, time, abilities, money, or anything

... our characters are being developed and revealed constantly in our daily living, especially in the little things.

that comes from Him, but God is. Are we being faithful with all that the Lord has given to us? Romans 11:36 says, "For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory."

Everything we have is from Him and intended for His glory. Being faithful with what we have been given, even though it may be small, will help determine and mold our character in Christ. Even in something as small as remembering to pay for pop!

Floan is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.