

THE 

MARCH 2018

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

+ FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

**A WALK  
THROUGH  
HOLY WEEK**





## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2018  
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# PURSUING LIKE GOD

BY JENAYA CRESTIK

**P**eople disappoint. Perhaps someone you care about said an unkind word or maybe someone did not do something you wished they would have done. We all have experienced and know what it feels like to be let down or unappreciated. Feeling ignored or forgotten has the potential to cause us to fall deeper into sin and self-pity, but it does not have to.

Part of who God has shown Himself to be is a pursuer. If you have ever had the opportunity to read the Old Testament in its totality, you will see this common thread throughout history—God’s love and pursuit of His people Israel. It is God who called Abraham out of his homeland to the Promised Land. It is God who led His people out of captivity in Egypt. It is God who pursued His people in their sin and wickedness through the prophets’ messages of repentance. There may have been periods of time when the people of Israel felt like God had forsaken them, but as believers today we can see how the Lord worked it all together for good and that He had not forgotten them. In fact, God had actively pursued them all along.

However, God has not been an ultimate pursuer while being far away and unable to relate with us in our weakness. Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Enduring Word’s online commentary put it this way, “to the ancient Greeks, the primary attribute of God was *apatheia*, the essential inability to feel anything at all. Jesus isn’t like that. He knows and He feels what we go through. The ancient

Greek word translated sympathize literally means ‘to suffer along with.’” Although we do not live in ancient Greek culture, oftentimes people today believe that God is apathetic toward humans and that He does not care. This could not be further from the truth. Jesus fully understands what it feels like to be disappointed, unappreciated, alone, and rejected.

Our hope and security are found in Christ, and as we grow in Him and appreciate what He has done for us more and more, with the Holy Spirit’s help we can begin to love like Him. We can become pursuing people. Part of dwelling in this reality involves a change in how we treat others. It must lead us to ask honest question of ourselves. Have I disappointed others? Have I been unappreciative of people in my life? Although we should seek healthy and balanced relationships that involve give-and-take from both sides, it does not erase the fact that as pursuing people we must learn to forgive and increase in our grace toward others.

What if we viewed our experience of disappointment as a way to comfort and relate to others? What if we leaned so hard into the reality that Christ pursues us that it pours out in a godly, loving pursuit of others around us? Christ’s loving pursuit of us ought to pour out from us to others as encouragement and forgiveness (Hebrews 10:25, Colossians 3:13).

*Crestik, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.*

Christianity stands unique among all religions of the world. Many of them have gods. But only one has a God who cared enough to become a man and to die.

—Philip Yancey

Good Friday is the day when you can do nothing. ... Someone else is doing the terrible work that gives life to the world.

—Virginia Owens

How you loved us, O good Father, who spared not even your only son, but gave Him up for us evildoers! How you loved us, for whose sake he who deemed it no robbery to be your equal was made subservient, even to the point of dying on the cross!

—Augustine

Christianity begins not with a big “do,” but with a big “done.” We begin our Christian life by depending not upon our own doing, but upon what Christ has done.

—Watchman Nee

The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man.

—John Stott

HOLY WEEK

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

By Yvonne Blake

**A**llow me to recreate the setting in which our text for this day takes place. It is Passover week and Jesus is observing the Feast of the Passover with His disciples. Knowing this is His last chance to give instruction before He must face the cross, He has much to do and say.

He has shown them how to be a servant by washing their feet and taking on the difficult task of revealing Judas as His betrayer. How His heart must have ached to send Judas on his way with the words, “what you do, do quickly.”

Now He turns to the rest of His followers and proceeds to give them His last words before they depart. He begins by telling them that they cannot go where He must go, and then He speaks the words from our text, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

As a musician and composer, I enjoy the challenge of packing a multitude of meaning in as few words as possible in my lyrics. So I am amazed at Jesus’ ability to do so in this text. He has managed to sum up the whole law in these words, “love one another, even as I have loved you.” He said something very similar to the scribes in Mark 12:29-31, “The foremost [commandment] is, ‘Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And you shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Unfortunately, I have a very difficult time loving just as Jesus loves. Even so, this should be our constant goal as Christians. So now the question becomes, how has Jesus loved?

When I pondered this question, the first answer I must give is that Jesus loves sacrificially. Jesus stated in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” Could I love this much? As a mother I have sacrificed sleep, time, my own wants, and I might even be able to give my life for my children. Could I do this for my neighbor? This kind of love requires total selflessness. Jesus not only sacrificed His life for us, but He gave up paradise and took on humanness to accomplish it. What am I willing to give up for someone else today?

Jesus also loves unconditionally. Paul, writing to the Roman church, described this kind of love, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). There is nothing that I have done to earn or deserve this love. In fact, when we love, we have conditions such as: I will love you if you treat me right; I will love you if you love me back; or, I will love you if I can gain something from it. Jesus frees us to love unconditionally because He loved us first. “We love, because He first loved us,” as I John 4:19 states. Jesus’ love for us fulfills all of our desires and need for love so that we can be free to love one another without expecting anything in return.

Jesus loves us perfectly and completely. He is the very definition of love as we read in the latter half of I John 4:8, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” He cannot love us more, nor can He love us less. Look in the

Gospels and study how Jesus treated people. He knew exactly what each person needed in every situation.

Finally, Jesus loves us sympathetically. By this I mean He identifies with our emotional and physical pain, disappointment, rejection, frustrations, loneliness, joys, or any other feeling. We see how He wept with Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus even though He knew He would be raising him from the dead in just a few moments. He took the time to love them by joining them in their time of great sorrow. Can I come alongside my friends and love them in any situation? Only by God’s grace.

I realize that many of these passages are familiar to many of you, and we can often brush over them without really taking the time to let them impact our daily lives. It is my prayer that we will truly consider how to “love one another, even as I have loved you” during this Holy Week.

*Blake is a member of Redeemer Free Lutheran Church, Ontonagon, Mich.*



# AS I HAVE LOVED

• THURSDAY

+ FRIDAY

• SATURDAY

• SUNDAY





# THE PROMISE OF

John 15:1-13

HOLY WEEK

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY





# THE HOLY SPIRIT

THURSDAY

+ FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

By Pastor Rob Buechler

**A**s I have read and studied the Gospel of John, one of the things that has struck me is how often we find Jesus speaking about the Holy Spirit. In John 14-16 we see Him speaking of the Holy Spirit in a number of ways, and emphasizing that the Church will not be able to function without Him. As we consider Holy Week, it would be good for us to ponder this great promise of the Holy Spirit and how He operates in our lives.

Obviously in an article of this kind, one cannot speak of every aspect that touches on this topic. Whole books have been written on the promise and working of the Holy Spirit, and certainly those books do not exhaust the topic. However, if I may lift out one aspect of the many for us to consider on Holy Week, it would be what we find in John 14:16-17a, which reads, “And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth ...” (ESV).

Let’s look at the description given for the Holy Spirit, the word “helper.” The Greek word is *parakletos*, which has been alternatively translated in English as “comforter,”

“advocate,” “counselor,” and “helper.” The Greek word simply means, “One who comes along side of”—that is, someone who has come to you and me to help us and give us their authority, wisdom, power, help, and guidance because on our own we can’t get the job done.

Allow me to stop here and ask the following questions: Do you feel helpless? Do you feel powerless? Do you look at the circumstances surrounding you or your family, your church, or your community and say, “Wow, I have absolutely no clue how to deal with this problem?” Do you want to step out and share your testimony with others, but are held back by fear? Or maybe there is someone near and dear to you who desperately needs prayer. The diagnosis is desperate, and you really don’t know what to pray or how to pray.

One more consideration: Do you find yourself dealing with personal habits which are sinful, and you hate the sin but cannot get free from the habit? Are you dealing with addiction, anger, bitterness, or anything else that seems to be a stronghold in your mind or spirit, and you know that these things are wrong and unholy but you don’t know how to free yourself?

The good news for you and me is that though we are helpless, we were never intended to fight the fight of faith without an Advocate, to walk out our faith alone, or to pray and live in this life without a Helper. We get in so much trouble when we look to our own strength or intellect for help. We are reminded over and over again in Scripture of the charge found Psalm 124:8, “Our help is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

The Lord Jesus knows that as the body of Christ we cannot carry out the ministry of salvation without help. And He knows that as individual members of the body we cannot live

lives of faith, love, and obedience without the Helper working in us to grow the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Because the Triune God knew our need before we did, they arranged for the Holy Spirit to be with us forever after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. He will guide us. He will give us wisdom. He will keep us in the truth, the Word of God, and show us all things. He will empower us with His gifts, guide the ministries of the Church, and grow His fruit in believers.

During Lent and Holy Week, it becomes obvious to us that we cannot follow Jesus on our own. We cannot believe on our own. We cannot act on faith or have faith on our own. We cannot overcome the power of sin, the flesh, or the devil on our own. We must have the Helper, the Holy Spirit, working in our lives so we can live out our Christian faith.

If you find yourself saying, “I just can’t do it,” or, “I don’t have the strength to meet this challenge,” you are in a great position to see a supernatural breakthrough in your life. When we recognize our inability and our helplessness we are ready to receive the Helper. God has arranged the moment so that you have no choice but to reach out or drown.

We read in Joel 2:32, “And it will come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” When we surrender our intellect for His wisdom, and our power for His, then the vision will come, the fruit will grow, and grace will flow.

*Buechler, serves Trinity-Bergen/Lakeview Lutheran Parish, Starkweather and Egeland, N.D.  
Artwork by Domenico Campagnola (1500-1564).*

# SATAN ENTERS JUDAS



By Pastor Chad Forman

**W**hat kind of Savior are you looking for? That may seem like a rather odd question to be asked and yet, that question rests at the heart of our walk with Christ. According to God's Word, while Jesus was talking with His disciples, He asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" If Jesus were to ask you that same question, how would you respond? In the Gospel accounts we learn about Jesus being betrayed by Judas Iscariot. As I read these verses, it leaves me wondering—what exactly was Judas looking for? What kind of Messiah was he hoping to find?

Can you imagine what it would have been like in those days for the disciples as they walked along with the Lord, sharing meals together? What would it be like to listen to Him teach about the coming Kingdom or witness the power of God

transforming lives? What an incredible time that must have been. On that first Palm Sunday, as the Son of Man entered the gates of Jerusalem, shouts of joy and exhilaration filled the air. People lined up just to catch a glimpse of this Messiah spoken of through the prophets. This same Messiah who three days later would be betrayed into the hands of sinners by one from His inner-circle—a man He called friend.

When we look at His ministry, we see that Jesus was not the leader of a rebellion, yet His actions turned the world on its head. He did not give people economic wealth or social significance, but He did give power through the Spirit of God. Jesus did not come to be served, but to demonstrate the heart of a true servant. And still, this Jesus was not the Messiah Judas had been looking for.

I once asked our Sunday school class, a group of highly sophisticated kindergartners, "What do you think Jesus is like?" As you might imagine, there were some very interesting answers: He smiles a lot, His hands are really soft, He has a pretty voice, He is very tall and wears a white dress. Their list was quite extensive. With as much of a straight face as I could muster, I thanked them for their keen insights. Each of us, men and women, young and old, whether Jewish or Muslim, atheist or agnostic, even Christian, we all have an



THURSDAY

+ FRIDAY

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opinion or belief about Jesus. What kind of Jesus are you looking for? Your answer matters because who you say Jesus is, what you believe about Him, can make an eternal difference.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, claimed that we must make a choice: “Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse,” he wrote of Jesus. Rather than acknowledging Jesus as the true Messiah, Judas chose to look elsewhere. He turned to the world instead. As heartbreaking as it is to consider, how often do our friends, neighbors, even some of our family members look for a different Jesus than the one we read about in Scripture? How often do we hear of that happening in the church?

In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the

Father except through me.” He is being very clear that there is only one path, one avenue to the Father, and that is through the Son. Therefore, as followers of Christ, we need to examine the way in which we view ourselves and the world around us. Jesus may not have been the Messiah that Judas was looking for, but He was certainly the Messiah Judas needed—the Messiah we all need.

“Who is this Jesus?” you might ask. Quite simply, He is the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, Master, and Friend. The Word made flesh. God sent His only Son that we may have life, not as the world understands it, but in a way that is far greater. You see, whether we admit it or not, we are all sinners in need of a Savior. And in the greatest act of love, Jesus accomplished what we could never do. On the Friday that is called Good, Jesus nailed our sins to the tree as He

died on the cross for us. This perfect, unblemished Lamb, our paschal sacrifice, became the propitiation for the sins of all believers, reconciling them to the Father.

As we consider the kind of Messiah we are looking for, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for anything less than the Jesus of Scripture is really no gospel at all. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you this Lenten season. Amen.

*Forman serves Stronghold Lutheran, Wyandotte, Mich.*

## HOLY WEEK

MONDAY

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WEDNESDAY

By Sarah Bierle

**Y**ears ago, while attending a conference about spiritual gifts, I sat and listened as my table mates rattled off their first response to helping a person in need. While one person would immediately stop and pray, another's initial reaction was to write an encouraging note. Still another would start cooking a meal for delivery as needed. I marveled at the gifts these women possessed. While I was still seeking God's counsel on my own gifting, I found myself admiring how God had made them so uniquely individualized in their responses while still sharing the commonality of serving others.

During this time leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection, I continue to be amazed at how the Word of God always demonstrates its ability to be a living, breathing document, seeking to provide truth at the core of our need. Recently, when studying John 13, I was again convicted of the beautiful example Jesus provides as He displays the counter-culture image of servant leadership to His chosen disciples. These were His friends, His companions, "his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (vs. 1).

This passage of Scripture is

filled with many deep lessons as Jesus assumes the role of servant to wash the feet of those sharing in the feast of the Passover. In these few powerful verses, He demonstrates to us humility, caring for others, loving your enemies, and the gift of being washed clean with the blood of the Lamb. And, it is not a temporary or one-time lesson. It is also a charge to His disciples, and to all of us. We would do right to take to heart what is written in verse 15, "For I have given you an example, 'that you also should do just as I have done to you.'"

As a dorm ministry team at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School my husband, Brad, and I are striving to cultivate a culture of servant hearts in our students. Certainly, this does not happen on our own accord or will, but by the power of the Holy Spirit living and working through the hearts of our students. This is God at work in them and in their lives as a response to their salvation. As I reflect over the recent weeks, the examples of these servants at work are plentiful: a young woman who cleans the top of a dorm refrigerator just because she saw the need, men (and women!) helping to jump start cars and change flat tires in the bitter cold temperatures, daily bagel deliveries, friends taking others to Target because they don't have their own transportation, an extended conversation at the lunch table with someone outside a normal friend group, decorating a hang-out room in the men's dorm to make it just a little cozier, searching through a foot of snow for lost keys and a missing white phone—and finding it! These snippets are but a small sample of the ways our students look to serve as an extension of themselves, simply because Christ lives and works through them. What an opportunity exists with those we love to the end, to continue to support and encourage one another to integrate a servant heart as a natural response—that of serving others because

Christ was the first and greatest example of a servant to each one of us.

Do we desperately fall short? Yes, each and every day. Unfortunately, we are as filthy as that water would have been when all the dirt of the day was washed off the feet of Jesus' disciples. So it is with our sin. On our own, we would be stagnant and murky, but, as the cleansing of the disciples' feet reflects, because of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been purified of our inadequacy, our selfishness, our seeking to put our own desires ahead of the needs of others. The dingy water with all the dust from the disciples' feet is thrown out the door, leaving behind the fresh and clean. Just as we need to confess our need for a Savior daily, we can also be assured that we are washed white as snow through the blood of the Lamb.

When I reflect on that spiritual gift conference from years ago, I must remember that though we all have been uniquely blessed with different talents from the Lord, God doesn't require us to have any special training in order to further His Kingdom and demonstrate His character. All He requires is obedience to embrace an attitude of serving. As Paul reiterates in Philippians 2:4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others." Even though my first response may not be to put a card in the mail, or even to pray (although I still would like that to be so), I know that with the Lord's help, I can seek first to serve and know that I will benefit in the process through the blessing of being obedient to Christ. Let it begin with me.

*Bierle, the women's resident head at AFLBS, is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.*



John 13:1-17

○ THURSDAY

+ FRIDAY

● SATURDAY

● SUNDAY

# SERVE AND BE SERVED



## HOLY WEEK

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TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY



By Pastor Gary Jorgenson

If you were or are ignorant of who Jesus of Nazareth is, you would likely conclude from a reading of John 19:1-18 that Jesus was a victim—a victim of seething hatred and of truly cruel and inhuman punishment. After all, we read in this passage that Jesus was subjected to an excruciatingly painful scourging at the hands of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. And we read that Jesus was cruelly mocked and abused by Roman soldiers.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, was backed by the authority of the most powerful government on earth. Yet in the matter of dispatching justice to Jesus of Nazareth, we see a clear case of the tail wagging the dog. He knew Jesus—brought before him by the Jewish leadership and charged with insurrection—was innocent. In fact, at least

three times leading up to this scene Pilate publicly affirmed Jesus' innocence (John 18:38, 19:4, 19:6). He should have acquitted Jesus of the spurious charges and let Him go. Instead we see the Roman magistrate kowtowing to the Jews—afraid that if he did the right thing and set Jesus free, then the Jewish leadership would go over his head and appeal directly to Caesar. Then he would suffer, perhaps even be stripped of his position and punished by Rome.

His interrogation of Jesus was a total contradiction in terms. He knew almost immediately that the charges against Him were false, yet how did he handle the situation? He had an innocent man scourged, a horrible beating with a multi-thonged whip which had pieces of bone and metal embedded in the cords. A scourging could, by itself, be a fatal affair. Those thongs could tear flesh from bone with each lash.

Had Pilate excused Jesus following the scourging, Jesus would have been scarred for life. But Pilate didn't stop there. He allowed his soldiers to make sport of Jesus. They fashioned a crown, made of branches from thorn bushes, and thrust it down on His forehead, threw a purple robe over Him, and then hailed Jesus as king, all while beating Him with their clubs and swords. He even paraded Jesus in front of the Jewish crowd gathered in his courtyard that day.

Jesus claimed that he was indeed King, but that His Kingdom was unlike any kingdom the world had ever known. But this King appeared powerless to thwart His own arrest. As they spit on, beat, and dragged Him from court to court, then denied Him food and water, Jesus appeared totally defeated. And when Pilate ultimately denied Jesus justice and sentenced Him to death by crucifixion, it seems that Jesus could do



John 19:1-18

THURSDAY

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# VICTIM OR VICTOR?

nothing to defend Himself. He was subsequently led through the streets of Jerusalem carrying His own cross and taken out to Calvary, where He was nailed to that cross and there crucified.

Without knowing some additional vital information about Jesus it would be impossible to see Him as anything but a victim. But we would be wrong. We need to know the rest of the story, as commentator Paul Harvey used to say on his daily radio program.

What else do we need to know?

First, in Jesus the two natures, human and divine, dwell together in perfect harmony. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, ESV). He assumed human flesh and nature so that He could offer Himself as an offering for our sins.

Second, it was God's plan, even from eternity, to send His Son into the world to be our Savior. "Even as he [God the Father] chose us in him [Jesus the Son] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Ephesians 1:4).

Third, God's gift to mankind was that of a Savior. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). He offers us the gift of faith that we might receive eternal life.

Last, to become our Savior, He must sacrifice His life. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

No, Jesus was no victim. He suffered and died as the world's Savior, willingly. In what appeared to be a colossal defeat, the greatest victory in

the history of the world was accomplished—salvation for all.

On Good Friday afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "It is finished!" That wasn't a cry of relief that His suffering and humiliation were at an end. It was a shout of victory. All that was required of Jesus on His rescue mission had been accomplished. Calvary, for Jesus, became the place of completed task. And for us salvation had been secured.

*Jorgenson, Baxter, Minn., is the assistant to the president of the AFLC.*

# LIGHT AT WORK IN THE DARK

By Kristin Tanner

**M**ore than a year ago I was blessed to visit the Holy Land and stay in Jerusalem on a Saturday. I experienced first-hand how the Jewish people honored the Sabbath by resting from work. The elevator in our hotel ran continuously and stopped on every floor so one would not have to press a button. The espresso machine was shut down and coffee service halted because it, too, required work. From the Gospels, we read how Jesus was accused of healing and working on the Sabbath.

And on this last Sabbath before the resurrection, Jesus was again at work.

After Jesus was pronounced dead on Friday, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Jesus in a new tomb in the garden of the crucifixion

site. Galilean women who had followed Jesus to Jerusalem observed this burial. The Gospels imply that the men worked in haste because it was the preparation day for the Sabbath. Luke tells us that the women prepared spices on that Friday but then rested on Saturday in obedience to the commandments. They were ready to resume the burial customs on Sunday, the first day of the new work week. These Jews who loved Jesus obeyed the Sabbath and rested.

But Matthew tells us that on the Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees went before Pilate to ask him to have the tomb secured with a seal and guards. A spiritual and earthly battle was being engaged between light and darkness on this Saturday. Satan, with the religious Jewish leaders, was working to make sure Jesus stayed in the grave. They were afraid Jesus' disciples would steal His body. But the disciples were just plain afraid and out of sight.

Again, Jesus was working on the Sabbath to bring healing and life to His people. John Piper writes of this day, "When it looks like He is buried for good, Jesus is doing something awesome in the dark" (*Taste and See: Savoring the Supremacy*

*of God in All of Life*).

As believers we can rest in the knowledge that Jesus worked on our behalf for our salvation. When we face a seemingly hopeless situation, we can be assured that Jesus is still at work in our lives. I can imagine that after a stone was rolled against the entrance of any other tomb in biblical times that darkness would have prevailed—but not the tomb where Jesus laid. We can believe what John wrote at the beginning of his gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Two years ago, with my husband Phil, I visited friends on Easter weekend in South Carolina. We attended a powerful service with them on Saturday evening when the whole congregation processed into the church in darkness. Slowly throughout the service, the room was gradually lit. Our own congregations might not offer a Holy Week service on Saturday, but we can all be mindful that Jesus was and is Light at work in the darkness.

*Tanner is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.*





# COME & SEE, GO & TELL

By Nathan Dalager

**A**nyone who has spent time with children is familiar with the experience of having a little hand tugging at them as they hear a small voice say; “Come here. I want to show you something.” Every growing child gathers the family to show off his or her new skill.

To show is one of our most basic desires. We do this even as we grow older. If we read an interesting article we want to share it. If we watch an amazing video we want others to see it, as well. It is important to us to show others the things that we think are wonderful.

In Matthew 28 we have the remarkable story of the omnipotent Creator of the universe speaking through His angels to two women. God Himself had done something

so wonderful, so amazing, that He sent His messengers to proclaim, “Come, see the place where He was lying.”

Those of us who have grown up in the Church sometimes overlook how utterly stunning the crucifixion and resurrection really are. In a sense the events of that weekend in Jerusalem are more truly awesome than the actual creation of the universe. In order to save His fallen creation, the Life chose to die. The Holy One became sin. The Eternal Son of God was laid dead in a tomb. This series of incomprehensible impossibilities was how God reconciled a rebellious creation back to Himself. When Jesus took up His life again He sealed His victory over sin and death, and in doing so, gave us a full demonstration of the depth of God’s love for us. So on that third morning long ago, God did something so amazing that He wanted us to see it.

But that was not all that He had in mind. Matthew 28:7 begins, “And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead.” Just as He did at Jesus’ birth, God announced His glorious work through His angels, and then left the task of spreading the message to ordinary

humans. He could have sent legions of angels throughout the world to proclaim His mighty work. Instead, angels spoke to a handful of people that first Easter. Jesus met with His followers and left them with the command to go and tell what they had seen and heard.

God’s Word and the message of Christ’s death and resurrection are shared through His people, and through this gospel others receive salvation.

It amazes me that of all the means God could use to carry out His work, He chooses to spread His message of salvation through frail, weak, ignorant, distractible, squabbling, hopeless people—us. What an honor and privilege we have been granted. It would be easy to consider it a great burden, but I wonder if our perception is accurate. Do children consider it a burden to share their joy and wonder with their parents?

On this Easter Sunday may we all share in the excitement and wonder of Christ’s resurrection. May God use us to proclaim far and wide the victory of our risen Savior.

*Dalager, Argyle, Minn., is a member of Westaker Free Lutheran, Newfolden, Minn.*





# VISION

BY DR. TIM SKRAMSTAD

**H**ow well can you see? We often take our eyesight for granted, but think of how terrible it would be if we became blind. Two years ago, I had an eye exam and scheduled surgeries on my eyes. Without corneal transplants, my ophthalmologist warned that I would eventually go blind. Thankfully, the surgeries were successful and my vision is greatly improved.

While physical vision is important, spiritual vision is even more so. Whether we are trying to see God's will in our personal lives, our congregations, or in the larger work of our AFLC, it is imperative that we see and do things as God would determine. Medical doctors can examine our physical eyes, but we need Doctor Jesus to search our hearts and remove the obstacles that keep us from the living in His will.

Spiritual vision is a "clear, challenging picture of the future of ministry as it can and must be," writes Aubrey Malphurs, author and theological professor. Spiritual vision is not something we mere humans dream up or convince ourselves is important. Spiritual vision comes to us directly from the Scriptures. Jesus gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them

to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Under the authority of Jesus we are to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. This command of Jesus has an underlying truth that every person is lost without the life-giving message of the cross. We have spiritual truths, but perhaps we have yet to see the vision of Jesus. John Stott claimed, "We see what is, but do we see what could be?"

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we catch a glimpse of the vision God has for this world: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands" (7:9). Stop and see what Jesus sees. A great multitude from every nation will stand before God's throne.

Our vision, then, is to also connect with Jesus in seeing heaven filled with souls redeemed by Jesus Christ. This is not an optional issue. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, yet millions have never heard the message of salvation. Included in the vast sea of lost souls are neighbors, cities, and countries. Part of our spiritual vision must be that we see people's eternal destiny, either with or without hope.

A dear friend told me that we are

either to personally go with the gospel or to send others. What would happen if your congregation and the AFLC would fully embrace this concept? None of us can be excused from fulfilling Christ's vision. We either heed the call and say with Isaiah, "Here am I Lord, send me," or we become like Christians in the first century who gave out of their poverty to support the earliest missionaries.

What about your congregation? Are the lost being reached with the gospel? I have served rural congregations and know how difficult it is to grow in an isolated area, but in the smallest congregation, we can still pray, "Lord, give us a burden for souls. Help us to tell others about your redeeming love." Even in the most remote areas, there are people who are lost. As we honestly seek the Lord, He may lead us to just one person whom He is claiming as His own.

The AFLC has been blessed with incredibly gifted people. We have a beautiful campus, ministries that were established to fulfill the Great Commission, and resources that have unlimited potential. If the Lord could turn the world upside down with a handful of men we call apostles, what could he do with the congregations in the AFLC?

*Skramstad, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Eagan, Minn.*





# TO SHOW MERCY

BY PASTOR BRENT RAAN

**W**

hat is mercy? In two separate places in the Gospel of Matthew (9:13, 12:7) Jesus quotes

Hosea 6:6 and challenges the Pharisees to learn what is meant by the phrase, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” As we marvel at the greatest display of mercy through this Lent and Easter season may we also be asking God through prayer how He may be calling us to show mercy.

It is easy to display the sacrifices of a Christian life. It is easy for us to go to church, to give at least a little into the offering plate, and to take other steps in our lives to make it appear that we are justified before man and God. But I wonder if we have truly grasped the *mercy* of God.

It is upon the cross of

Christ that we see the greatest display of mercy, grace, and love. It is here that we come face to face with the question of whether we will believe and display God’s mercy to a lost and dying world or just go on with our daily routine.

As my family walks the roads of Jinja, Uganda, we are often asked for money. The locals we meet often come up with the saddest and best stories that I have heard as to why I should give them money. Through these encounters, I have begun to wonder what it means for me to practice mercy, rather than sacrifice a bit of money. Unfortunately, people often are quick to only give money and then leave those in need alone. Do these acts truly show mercy?

One individual who has become a very close friend of ours has allowed us to live out showing the mercy of God. This relationship did not start by her asking for money but instead with an act of kindness. Our 3-year-old had fallen on the uneven road while on a walk. My wife, Emily, carried her all the way home while this stranger pushed our baby’s stroller. To say thank you for her help, Emily gave her some small jobs the next day and we prayed with her for a longer, more dependable job—which she received that very week.

Our new friend and her sister now come to church with us and are also attending a Bible study at our home. It was humbling to hear during one study that because of her friendship with us, and especially with Emily, she has become closer with God and, in her words, “will not turn back.”

It would have been easier to give her some money on that first day. But we would have missed out on the investment we’ve been able to have in her life. And she might have missed out on being drawn closer to God because of our friendship. I share this story not because I display mercy all the time, for I fall short so often, but I praise God for using my wife in this young lady’s life. I wonder, though, how often God puts these events in our lives to speak into someone else’s and to use us to draw others closer to Himself.

May we, through this season, be quick to show mercy to those with whom we cross paths, and may we ourselves rest in the mercy of God.

*Raan and his family are AFLC missionaries serving in Jinja, Uganda.*



# Home Missions hosts winter retreat in Arizona

Debbie Sorensen

**U**nder sunny skies in Mesa, Arizona, the AFLC Home Missions Retreat took place from February 5-9. Pastor Al Monson and members of Calvary Lutheran Church saw to every need of participants. Romans 12:1-3 was the foundation Scripture for the week.

The Monday evening speaker, Dr. Steve Lombardo, inspired all with an opening presentation: "It's All About Jesus," using Philippians 2:5-11 as his text.

A team of musicians came together to lead praise and worship before each daily session. With a focus on the components of worship, the morning speakers were Dr. Steve Lombardo of Yorkville, Ill.; Pastor Gary Jorgenson of Baxter, Minn., and Pastor Joe Ocker of Frost, Minn.

After lunch Tuesday through Thursday, men and women broke into two groups for study and application. Linda Johnson of Camarillo, Calif., led the women all three days. Pastor Paul Nash, Pastor Al Monson



and members of the Home Missions Committee shared with the men during those sessions. Mid-afternoons offered free time for participants to enjoy the area.

Tuesday was "Squeaky Clean Comedy Night." Wednesday night, Dr. Lombardo used Jude 24-25, as a text to exhort all to engage in a benediction of praise to God. Thursday night included a campfire, sing-a-long, s'mores, and a hay ride featuring a team of Percheron draft horses.

Pastor Joel Walde of Dillon, Mont., summed the retreat up by quoting Dr. Lombardo: "People



will not buy into what you do, but they will buy into why you do it." He concluded saying, "The retreat helped remind me that worship is a life of response to what Jesus did and continues to do for us."

By Friday evening, more than 80 people from throughout the United States and Canada returned home renewed by the Word for service to the glory of God.

*Sorensen is a member of The Gathering in Butte, Mont., a Home Missions church plant.*

## Olson forms International Orality Institute

Dr. Kevin Olson, Crystal, Minn., announced the formation of a new non-profit ministry called the International Orality Institute, which was registered with the state of Minnesota in late January. The ministry will focus on orality training, which was the aim of AFLC World Missions' Ambassador Institute, for which Olson created curriculum to train national leaders in AFLC mission fields.



Dr. Olson

Serving on a transitional board for the Institute are Dr. Phil Haugen, Pastor Tim Hinrichs, and Pastor Matthew Ballmann. Contact Olson for more information (kevinolson5@gmail.com).

Olson also accepted a half-time call as missions pastor at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. Beginning on February 1, his ministry there includes disciple making and training, working with the missions team and other outreach areas, assisting in visitation, prayer ministry, and pastoral care, and developing ongoing outreach efforts to the local community.



## Elaine Elness

Elaine Elness, 86, of Duluth, Minn., died Nov. 12, 2017. She was the wife of Pastor Jerome Elness, whom she married Jan. 29, 1956.

Born Aug. 25, 1931, near Northwood, N.D., she was the daughter of Edward and Elsie Hamberg. She grew up in Williston, N.D. She studied at Augsburg College and felt called to world missions work. After marriage, they lived in Duluth before serving as Lutheran missionaries in Taiwan and Hong Kong for 12 years. Returning to the U.S., they served congregations in Montana and Minnesota, as well as the AFLC congregation in Superior, Wis. She taught kindergarten, and secondary education after earning an MA from the University of Wisconsin, Superior. She also taught at the UND, Grand Forks, and Lake Superior Community College.

Surviving are her husband; one son, Luther Elness; three daughters, Elenn' (Stephen) Parrish, Faith (Jeffrey) Lind, Beth (Eric) Elness-Hanson, one foster son, Khun Vin Thi; one brother, Glenn (Sande) Hamberg; five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The service was held Nov. 15, 2017, at First Lutheran, Duluth.





# WMF

WOMEN'S  
MISSIONARY  
FEDERATION

## SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

BY JAN STRAND

**T**he FBI—you have most likely heard those initials before. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the domestic intelligence and security service of the United States. When exploring a different way to meet the needs of some of the women of our congregation, our WMF group used these initials but applied a different meaning to them. Although sometimes met with a giggle when announced, the “Female Bible Investigators” was founded.

Our WMF booklet describes it this way: “This Bible study group will meet the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 8 a.m. Place, times and dates may be changed to accommodate needs. Lessons

will be done as a group effort at the meeting. This is a casual group—just come as you are.”

That’s right. Come as you are. And we do. Our goal has been to present a flexible and low-pressure atmosphere. Some from other congregations who are unable to attend their own women’s meetings have been invited and come. God has blessed this group. Lively and deep discussion comes from the Word and the WMF Bible study booklet. Although we are not always on the lesson of the month—we meet more than the monthly groups—we find that we take more time to complete a lesson. Coffee is allowed and encouraged.

This has worked for us. So many of our women are unable to attend the strong, well-established core groups that meet on a weekday once a month. We felt we needed to find a way to include women who are in that situation. Having a relatively early Saturday time also allows for unhurried prayer time. We established early on

that confidentiality was important, so we are able to share one another’s burdens without worry. Tears and laughter happen often, sometimes simultaneously.

Perhaps the definition of the real FBI might be closer than we initially realized. Perhaps we are developing a domestic and security service for the families of our women. We praise Him for providing for us.

An apt portion of Scripture comes from Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

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*Strand is a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, rural Wanamingo, Minn.*





## Missions conference held at AFLC Schools

Schierkolk, missionary to Mexico, speaks on the "Desire of the Nations"

Each January, the AFLC Schools host a Missions Week Conference, inviting AFLC missionaries to share from their experiences on the field and encourage students, staff, and visitors to consider the work of missions at home

and abroad. This year, Pastor Todd Schierkolk, AFLC missionary to Mexico, spoke during the conference, held Jan. 21-26, under the theme, "The Desire of the Nations," from Haggai 2:7. Schierkolk focused on three themes: the

desire for peace; the desire for love; and the desire for mercy. Videos of these messages can be found at [vimeo.com/aflbs](https://vimeo.com/aflbs). The conference opened with a service on Sunday evening, and included daily chapel services.

The week also featured

presentations by mission groups, including AFLC World Missions, AFLC Journey Missions, AFLC Home Missions, and mission partners including the East European Mission Network and the World Mission Prayer League.



## Franz installed at Brainerd

Pastor David Franz (center) was installed Jan. 14 at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Brainerd, Minn., an AFLC Home Missions congregation. Officiating was Pastor Gary Jorgenson (left), assistant to the AFLC president and former pastor of the congregation.



## Youth Ministries hosts Youth Worker Weekend

Youth Workers Weekend was held Jan. 19-21 at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. Fifty participants met under the theme, "Multiply." The annual event for volunteer and vocational youth leaders is hosted by AFLC Youth Ministries.





**FLY**

FREE  
LUTHERAN  
YOUTH

I

love infomercials. I'm fascinated by miracle sponges, super knives, and amazing blenders,

and I'd bet I'm not the only one. We live in a world that loves infomercials. Our world loves telling us what we need, what we want, and what we absolutely cannot live without.

But as the world clamors to tell us what we want, Jesus tells us that He is everything we need.

To those who don't know where to go, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." To those who are hurting, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd." To those who don't think life is worth living, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." God summarizes Himself to Moses by saying, simply: "I Am."

The 2019 FLY Committee has chosen "I AM" for the convention theme, with the theme verses of Isaiah 45:5-6. Our prayer is that the FLY Convention won't be seen as just another infomercial, but as a chance to know the God who actually *is* everything we ever need.

In these verses in Isaiah, God is talking to Cyrus the

# GOD SAYS SIMPLY, 'I AM'

BY ANDREW KNEELAND

Great of Persia and preparing him for his mission to rescue the Israelites from captivity in Babylon. God says, "I am the Lord, and there is no other." There is nothing else—no other religion, no other idea, no other god—that can accomplish what God can accomplish.

Cyrus' rescue of the Israelites from Babylon sets the stage for Jesus' rescue of all His people from their sin. God says, "I am the Lord, and there is no other." No other religion, no other idea, and no other god can offer forgiveness, life, and salvation.

God longs to be known, and we pray that He will be known through the 2019 FLY Convention. We pray that God will be known as the great "I AM," as everything we could ever want or need. We need the great I AM to be our fortress of stability and assurance in this unstable and uncertain world.

God speaks of equipping Cyrus for the work of letting people know about Him. We pray that this same goal is accomplished at FLY 2019 through the Bible studies, the times of worship,

the games of basketball and Frisbee, the workshop breakouts, the sunrise hikes, and the evening sessions. We want our youth to know salvation through Christ. And we want to equip our youth to share about Christ.

God isn't just another check box in your search for fulfillment or contentment. He's not just another infomercial; He is the I AM. He is everything we ever need.

Please be in prayer for the FLY Convention. It's not too early to lift up those students who might consider attending, and who need to hear about the God who longs to be known. Also, be in prayer about who you might invite to attend the FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colo., from July 1-6, 2019.

For more information and to follow announcements, visit [www.flyconvention.org](http://www.flyconvention.org).

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*Kneeland, the second vice president on the 2019 FLY Committee, is a middler student at the Free Lutheran Seminary.*



PEOPLE & PLACES

**Correction:** Pastor Mark Johnson was on a sabbatical leave from serving the Dalton Parish, Dalton, Minn.

**Pastor Todd Klemme** has accepted a call to serve Grace Free Lutheran, Bagley, Minn. He resigned from serving Minnewaska Lutheran, Starbuck, and Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minn.

**Pastor Paul Kneeland** was ordained Feb. 11 at Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

**Dr. Nathan Olson**, who serves Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minn., has accepted an appointment to fill an unexpired term through 2020 on the AFLC Youth Board.

Internship assignments were announced for senior seminarians. They include:

- **Kevin Czymbor**, Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., with Pastor Steve Carlson as supervising pastor.
- **Justin Nelson**, Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., with Pastor Nick Dyrud as supervising pastor.
- **David Niemela**, the Roseau Parish of Roseau Free Lutheran and Spruce Free Lutheran in Roseau, Minn., with Pastor Todd Erickson as supervising pastor.
- **Matthew Pillman**, Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., with Pastor Tim Johnson as supervising pastor.
- **Israel Vasquez Flores**, St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., with Pastor Scott Stroud as supervising pastor.



Pastor Gerald Gettis

Pastor Gerald Gettis, 77, of Mesa, Ariz., died Jan. 16. Born Dec. 19, 1940, in Salem, Ore., he was the son of Earland and Clara Gettis. He married Shirley Benoit on Dec. 18, 1971.

He worked with the family business, Gettis Bros. Construction, and earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1963 from Pacific Lutheran University, and a theology degree in 1967 from Luther Seminary. He served AFLC congregations in British Columbia and Arizona, and was a member of both the AFLC and LCMS clergy rosters.

Surviving are his wife; four sons, David Gettis, Keiser, Ore., John Gettis, Matthew Gettis, Phoenix, Ariz., and Daniel Gettis, Ramona, Calif.; two daughters, Claire Gettis, and Joanna; and 19 grandchildren.

The service was Jan. 20 at Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church, Gilbert, Ariz.



Jan Galland

Jan Galland, 81, of Shakopee, Minn., died January 14. Born Jan. 25, 1936, on the family farmstead in rural New York Mills, Minn., she was the daughter of Oscar and Mayme Erickson. She married Les Galland on November 25, 1959, at St. Peter's Lutheran in New York Mills.

After completing high school, she enrolled in a one-year teaching licensing program that launched a six-decade career as an educator, both in public and Christian education. She completed her Bachelor of Science in education from Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minn., and took graduate courses in special education at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. After marriage, they both were employed as teachers but knew the Lord was calling them to ministry. Jan spotted a short write up on the newly formed AFLC and Les enrolled in the seminary. Together, they served congregations in both Minnesota and Washington state. She enjoyed being a part of the Women's Missionary Federation, and served as vice president and wrote and taught women's devotionals. She was a member of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran, Lakeville, Minn.

Surviving are her husband; two sons, James (Cindy) Galland, Hastings, Minn., and Jon (Sherry) Galland, Medina, Ohio; one daughter, Janeen Gimberg, Shakopee; two brothers, Chester Erickson, and Harold (Bethel) Erickson, one sister, Judith (Pastor Daniel) Hacking; and three grandchildren.

The service was held Jan. 20 at Hauge Memorial Chapel, AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn., with Pastors Tom Olson and Brett Boe officiating.

JANUARY MEMORIALS

<b>AFLBS</b>	Clayton Lee
Gary Hodne	Jeanette Larson
Ruth Claus	Tim and Iona
Sherry Ann Stover	Korhonen
Charles Moen	<b>Miriam Home</b>
Clayton Lee	Joyce Bumgardner
<b>AFLTS</b>	<b>Parish Ed</b>
Elsie Lautner (2)	Jan Galland
Sherry Ann Stover	<b>WMF</b>
Jan Galland (2)	Dixie Peterson
Ed Lorenzen	Neil Kamp
Gary Hodne	Doris and Ernie
Dorothy Schaller	Rhoten
<b>General Fund</b>	Eugene Lund
Jan Galland (3)	Steiner Flaa

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-31, 2018

FUND	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$49,379	\$49,379	\$36,250
Evangelism	12,162	12,162	8,631
Youth Ministries	20,482	20,482	5,793
Parish Education	20,920	20,920	10,963
Seminary	41,232	41,232	17,710
Bible School	58,968	58,968	24,346
Home Missions	53,208	53,208	39,686
World Missions	53,588	53,588	29,655
Personal Support	67,309	67,309	40,553
TOTALS	\$377,248	\$377,248	\$213,588
For additional financial information for each department, go to <a href="http://www.aflc.org/giving">www.aflc.org/giving</a>			



# EASTER, REJOICE WITH TREMBLING

Our Lenten meditations in this issue strike a somber note. The hymns that we sing during this season of the church year are usually quite mournful, too, and that is as it should be. Several years ago many of us viewed a film that sought to portray the reality of what it meant to be crucified, and we were moved to tears at the thought of the price that Jesus paid for our sins ... for my sins ... through His suffering and death on the cross.



Pastor Robert Lee

But then comes Easter! The hymns, the anthems, the messages all emphasize that this is truly a festival of joy. This is as it should be, too, for the words of the angel to the women at the empty tomb may be addressed to us as well: "Do not be afraid" (Matthew 28:5).

And yet ... what was it about the first Easter that created fear in the hearts of those who were there? What did they see and hear? Why were they afraid? Perhaps as we try to understand, our resurrection worship might also move us to grasp in part what the Lord meant when He commanded us through the words of the psalmist to "worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11).

The events of Good Friday and the first Easter were fearful in their power over nature. Holy Scripture tells us that nature itself grieved when Jesus died. The earth shook and tombs were opened (Matthew 27:51-52); the sun was obscured and darkness fell over the whole land (Luke 23:44-45). Surely this was frightening enough, but perhaps even more fearful was the severe earthquake on Sunday that literally shook the earth, caused by the angel of the Lord who descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the doorway of the tomb (Matthew 28:2).

The first Easter was fearful in its power

over the unbelievers. The appearance of this heavenly messenger caused a physical earthquake, as well, for the guards also shook like the earth and became like dead men (27:52-54, 28:4). Oh, yes, there's something fearful about angels, too, for the glimpses that the Bible gives us of them does not resemble in the slightest those lovely glittering creatures that the artists like to depict. People who saw them were terrified!

But what about believers? The women on that first Easter morning believed the words of the angel, "He is not here, for He is risen, just as He said" (Matthew 28:6). Then they ran from the empty tomb to report it to the disciples "with fear and great joy" (v. 8). Here it is, a combination of emotions that may seem to be a contradiction, but which is close to the heart of true worship. Spurgeon in his *Treasury of David* commented on Psalm 2:11 that there should always be a holy fear mixed with the Christian's joy: "This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption."

The power of Christ's resurrection in the life of a believer should also cause us to tremble. The Apostle Paul called upon the Christians in Philippi to work out their salvation "with fear and trembling," together with the encouraging word that it was God who was at work in them (Philippians 2:12-13). And how was God at work in them? In the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (3:10). This power is described by Paul in the first chapter of his letter to the

believers in Ephesus:

"I pray that the eyes of your heart might be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which

*Here it is, a combination of emotions that may seem to be a contradiction, but which is close to the heart of true worship.*

He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places ..." (v. 18-20).

The first Christians on the first Easter rejoiced with trembling. There was too much to comprehend, there was so much that they did not understand, they had so many questions, and yet with a touch of resurrection power they ran to tell others the good news.

The grave could not hold Him. He is not here. He is risen! Go and tell. Amen.

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Periodicals

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*something to share*

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# THE WORD, A SWEET GIFT

BY AILA FOLTZ

**M**y grandparents were caught in the turmoil of the Russian Revolution when it broke out in 1917. Emil Edvard Saarnivaara was pastor of a church in Ingria, an area surrounding St. Petersburg. It was populated by descendants of Finnish Lutherans who had migrated there in the late 1600s. The clergy were particularly targeted as enemies of the Revolution, many being imprisoned and even killed. The Bolshevik leader Vladimiroff came to Grandfather daily, threatening to have him shot that day. He was even arrested several times and imprisoned.

One night, as he returned from visiting a sick parishioner, militia surrounded the house. Grandfather managed to escape to the roof, where he hid in a chimney. He prayed: "... call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:15). The militiamen searched the house but did not investigate the chimney; after they left, Grandfather fled through

the forests to Finland, nearly 20 miles away. Shortly afterward, my grandmother loaded the children into a horse-drawn wagon, and the family miraculously escaped with the aid of sympathetic parishioners along the way.

At the end of the 1960s a foreign couple showed up at a church service in Helsinki, Finland. It turned out that they were Ingrians who had been deported to Siberia in the 1930s. Their faith held fast in all of their trials and sufferings, and surprisingly, they were now allowed to visit Finland. My parents invited them to stay in their apartment. Many other Christians showered them with kindness, and they were blessed spiritually.

Before the Ingrians left, they were asked what they would like to have by way of remembering their Finland visit. The man picked up a Bible from the table, stroked it longingly, and replied, "If only we could have our own Bible, we would be happy." His wife tearfully sighed, "We don't dare take a Bible. We would be arrested at the border." And so they left for their return

journey without their dearest wish being fulfilled.

A group of people gathered at the railroad station to see the Ingrians off on the Moscow train. They were handed a parting gift: a box of the finest Finnish chocolates wrapped in cellophane. This they accepted gratefully.

There was an anxious period of awaiting word from the Ingrians. At last a letter arrived from Siberia with the message: "The chocolates did not melt on the way." Thus they knew that customs had not detected the Bible in the box of chocolates. What rejoicing and praising God there was among the givers!

Do we, in this land of religious freedom, treasure God's Word like these precious persecuted believers did?

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105).

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*Foltz, of Plymouth, Minn., is the daughter of Uuras Saarnivaara, former AFLTS instructor.*