GOOD NEWS
FROM CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2023

FROM CHAD BIRD

1 John 5:13-21: The Front Porch of Our Father's Home

From the beginning to the end of his letter, John really wants one thing: for us to be in Jesus.
In the substructure of our world, deep in the dark corridors of hell, there is a room full of scribal devils whose one job is this: to make up words.

Linguistic Lucifers, we might call them. Dictionary devils.

It is to their diabolical minds that we owe the rhetoric of racism, the sterile descriptions of what abortionists do to living babies in the womb, the political slang of totalitarian states. They make up words to mask evil and sugarcoat lies.

Also on their resumé are words that sound true and logical and obvious, but when merely touched, burst into nothing more than smoke and vapor. One of their most successful creations of this variety is the word "secular."

In the myriad of ways in which I see that word used, I hear posited *a fundamental impossibility*: that there are spaces in this world from which religion is excluded. The "No Religion Allowed" cubicles of politics, education, work, entertainment, and more. "Sure," they say, "religion is fine inside the temple or mosque or church, but it is entirely alien to these secular arenas of life."

I've got a word for that: Hogwash.

In a world suffused with the glory of God, polluted with legions of demons, and peopled by men and women who bear the imprint of the divine image, a "secular sphere" is as possible as a sea void of water or a fire absent flames. "Religious humans" is another way of saying "humans."

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FLOWER CHART

The 2023 Flower Chart is pinned to the bulletin board in the Narthex for those who would like to provide altar flowers for a particular Sunday.

If you have any questions about providing flowers, please contact Cheri Zehendner.

BIRTHDAYS

FEBRUARY

02 Benjamin Fick
04 Philip Fick
05 Monica Andreasen
07 Eloise Fick
15 Lawanda Meyer
29 Scott Clauson

Lutheran Doctrine:
Christ-Centered,
Cross-Focused

Issues, Etc.

Talk Radio for the Thinking Christian

www.issuesetc.org

Sacred Music

lutheranpublicradio.org

LIFE THOUGHTS IN THE CHURCH YEAR FROM LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

February 5 ~ Septuagesima "How sad as we hear of the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* by the Supreme Court that so many are acting like this is the worst thing that could happen in our world. Stop and think of what they are arguing about. They want the right to kill a baby in their womb. They want the right to do what they want with their body. It is such a selfish, sinful, and demented way of thinking. Yet, as you hear the arguments and as your kids go off to college, you often feel like you as a Christian are such an uncaring person. My friends, we are all sinners. Imagine what Jesus must think of this. He loves every soul!" *Pastor Darren Green, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota (6-26-22) – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

February 12 ~ Sexagesima "When God tells us He knew us before we were born in our mother's womb, we can hardly say life doesn't begin at fertilization. When God tells our days are numbered and He will decide when our life is over, we can hardly ask for our life to be taken prematurely rather than dying a natural death. As you ponder God's Word and stand up For Life, your witness will have remarkable power and you, only you, will be impactful in your response. So, even if you are going it alone, you can and should contribute to the message For Life, and God will bless your efforts." *Virginia Flo, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

February 19 ~ Quinquagesima "'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit' (John 15:16). Those words are meant for every one of us. We should never cease to be amazed at God's gifts and timing to bear the fruit of God's love." *Lynette Auch, former President of Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

February 26 ~ First Sunday in Lent "Going to be with the Lord is not meant to be an escape from the responsibilities and good works God has prepared in advance for us to do!" *Barbara Lane Geistfeld, D.V.M., Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

SPECIAL VOTERS' MEETING

There will be a special voters' meeting on February 5th, following Divine Service, to take up two Synodical issues: Nominations for LCMS President and Vice Presidents. Christ/Trinity Parish's Lay Voting Delegate who will cast our ballot for Synodical President. A member has expressed a desire to become a voting member of Christ Lutheran and we will take up his request also on February 5th.

Thank you. Michael Grooms

Don't Replace "And" with "Or"

We've all heard that stewardship means giving to the church of our time, talents and treasure. This alliterative trinity helps us see that giving is not just about money, but about our whole lives. As we confess in the Small Catechism's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle's Creed, God gives us everything we have and enjoy. First we confess that God gives us "our body and soul, our eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses" (SC II). Then we confess that He gives us material things. The time, talents, and treasure trinity places before our eyes the fact that we are to give something of all three of these things toward the mission of the church in thanksgiving for what God has provided. For everything we have, and indeed, everything we are, comes from God's fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

The problem with this alliterative trinity comes when we replace one little word with another little word — when we replace the word *and* with the word *or.* It is always written with the *and*, but when we read it, we read it with the *or*. Thus this quite helpful trinity, which extolls that everything that we have and are is a gift from God, to be given back in service of His church, turns into a trinity that we can pick and choose from when we serve God. The giving of our time, talents *and* treasure turns into the giving of our time, talents *or* treasure.

Then the question arises: Can we give of our time and talents instead of our treasure? Or perhaps it is the other way round: Can we give of our treasure and not of our time and talents? But these are the wrong questions. The right question is, can we give of our time and talents in addition to our treasure? Yes, indeed, we are called to give of all three. The things that God gives us are not to be pitted against one another. Rather, they are given to us, and we are to press them all into God's service for benefit of His church and our neighbors in need.

Thus, we give all three. We give our treasure in the form of a generous, first-fruits proportion of our income. We give of our time in generosity for the benefit of Christ's holy church. We give of our talents in the same manner. Since God gave us all these things, we are called to give generously of all these things in faith toward Him and in fervent love to our neighbors.

For God has provided all these things for us. Out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, He gives us each time, talents *AND* treasure as a means to bless those around us. We serve our neighbors with these things, blessing them with the blessings with which God has blessed us. We give of our time, talents and treasure to our families, our society, our church and our local congregations. And we do this because we know that we are not our own. Rather, we belong to God. We have been bought with a price: the holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave everything — His time, His talents and His treasure — to have us as His own and to live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. We have these things as gifts and blessings from God. Let us then press them all into service for the sake of His love — time, talents and treasure together.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

To all the women of Christ Lutheran Church
You are Invited to a Women's Brunch

When: Saturday, February 11th
Where: Christ Lutheran Church
4801 E 6th St.; Sioux Falls, SD
Time: 10 am

Come join us for a delicious Brunch, a time of fellowship and also a devotional lead by Pastor Nix. We are hoping to see if there is an interest in doing this periodically through the year. We hope to see you there!

Please RSVP no later than Sunday, February 5th to Lisa Johnson at 605-521-8519/ flynhome2003@yahoo.com

Salvation unto Us Has Come

Appointed for Septuagesima (ONE-YEAR), Lutheran Service Book 555
study by Christopher I. Thoma

Introduction

If you take a test and fail it because you didn't study, do you deserve an A? If you studied all week and memorized all of the necessary information and answered all of the questions correctly on the test, do you deserve an A? These are not difficult questions to answer because it is natural for man to play by the rule which says quite simply, "You get what you deserve."

Today's hymn, like the Gospel theme it supports, gets this rule a little mixed up. In fact, it turns it around completely.

- What do you believe to be the focus of the hymn?
- In your opinion, what is a "good work"? Read Article IV of the Augsburg Confession:

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21-26; 4:5]). (Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, 2nd ed. [CPH, 2006], 33).

- What light does this quotation shed on your understanding of good works in the Christian life?

Exploring the Scriptures

Read Matt. 20:1–16. In this Gospel Reading, Jesus makes it clear that God's fairness is different from the fairness of man. He tells us that the reward of heaven is not based on what we do; rather, God gives to us something other than what we deserve.

- After working all day, how would it make you feel if you received the same amount of pay as someone who worked for only an hour?
- Remember that Jesus tells us that this parable represents the kingdom of heaven. With this in mind, what do we learn about the generosity of God?
- Read Is. 64:6. If we were to demand from God what we deserve because of our acts, what would we receive?
- Read Eph. 2:8–9. Salvation is referred to as what in this text?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Paul Speratus (1484–1551), a colleague of Luther and a significant contributor to the efforts of the Reformation, fashioned this hymn from the gut- wrenching threads of experience. Speratus was an ordained preacher who was expelled from several cities for his evangelical preaching. He was excommunicated for preaching salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and was eventually arrested, imprisoned and condemned to death. He did manage to escape his captors, and in this freedom was used by the Lord to great ends.

- During Speratus' time, what were the widely held views regarding good works? What role did monasticism play in this?
- How might the title of this hymn reflect the situation of the Reformation and the feelings of those hearing the pure Gospel through men like Luther and Paul Speratus?

Text

The language and tune of this hymn are borne along with what is seemingly a sigh of blissful relief. There is so much joy, it appears that Speratus cannot stop writing stanzas, and so we are given a hymn with ten stanzas of great substance. Let's consider a few of these stanzas.

Stanza 1 does a wonderful job of telling the reader the purpose of the joyful hymn to follow. Stanzas 2–4 drop us into the dirty reality of the Law's requirement, our sinful condition, and our helpless standing against it.

- According to stanza 1, for whom did Christ die?
- Who else might have been considered as an advocate and/or redeemer (which is contrary to the Christian

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CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
TREASURER'S REPORT
January 25, 2023

	11/2022	12/2022	01/2023
Deposits:	$ 31,689.58	$ 45,385.86	$ 11,206.25
Disbursements:	$ 12,687.76	$ 28,348.84	$-65,472.09
,			
Deposit Breakdown:			
General Fund:	$ 26,290.99	$ 38,580.80	$ 8,649.25
Designated Funds:	$ 5,398.59	$ 6,805.06	$ 2,557.00
Monthly Budget Requirement:	$ 12,876.80	$12,876.80	$ 18,926.37
Mortgage Balance as of 01/30			$184,617.39

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faith) by the people and Church of Speratus' time? Which statements in stanza 1 make Christ's role in the Church abundantly clear?

- What is the stance of stanza 2 toward those who would seek to purify themselves by monastic living? Describe in your own words the burden of the Law to sinners (particularly those who believe they must do good works to get to heaven). Is there certainty of salvation in this?
- Read Rom. 3:10–20. How does this text shed light on stanzas 2–4?

Stanza 5 is a significant turning point in the text of the hymn, setting the stage for the Christian to sing the remaining stanzas with confidence and certainty.

- Who is the focus of stanzas 2–4? Who is absent in stanzas 2–4 and introduced as the focal point in stanza 5?
- With this introduction, how is the direction of the hymn changed? The spirit of its tune? Christian certainty? The remaining stanzas (6–10) reintroduce the Church to familiar terms.
- Read again the text of Eph. 2:8–10. What ancient and yet radically new theology is presented here?
- Consider the following terms in the remaining stanzas: Atonement, baptized, ransom, the cross, trust, peace, justify. How does "saved by grace through faith in Christ" theology change their substance? (For example, Baptism as taught in the Roman Catholic Church removes only original sin. Actual sin remains.)
- Look for and discuss other words. The hymn ends with a Trinitarian conclusion.
- Consider the First through Third Articles of the Apostles' Creed and their meanings in the Small Catechism (LSB, 322–23). In his explanations, how does Luther make clear God's redemptive plan in Christ?
- Read John 14:8–11, 23–28, and 15:26. How do these texts reflect upon not only stanza 10 but the entire hymn?

Making the Connection

Reflect on the parable in Matt. 20:1–16. Perhaps we often grumble to the Lord as the workers grumbled to the landowner.

- Why is it this way for us?
- Read Luke 15:3–7. What do these words reveal to us about others? About ourselves?

In Closing

"Salvation unto Us Has Come" seeks to reveal a right understanding of God's Law, and it refreshes and strengthens the sin- and guilt-wearied heart with the Gospel. Ultimately, it reveals that this Gospel message truly is "foolishness" and a "stumbling block" as it

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KIDS IN THE DIVINE SERVICE



What is the "Sanctus"?

The Sanctus (pronounced sahnk-TOOS) is a hymn of praise sung during the order of Holy Communion. The word "sanctus" is the Latin word for "holy." The Sanctus begins "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God of power and might: Heaven and earth are full of your glory." We sing the same words sung by the angels in Isaiah 6, about the glory of our God who has come to be with us. Then we sing "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." These words from Psalm 118 were sung by the crowds when Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Why do we sing the Sanctus?

The Sanctus proclaims that our Savior Jesus comes to be with us physically in His very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. He is really and truly present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion! When we sing the Sanctus, the angels in heaven along with those who have died in the faith join us in a hymn of praise to God. Wow! That is amazing!

Parents: The Sanctus proclaims the presence of Christ in the Sacrament while praising God and confessing the unity of God's Church in every time and place. Encourage your children to sing the Sanctus with the congregation. Remind them that Jesus is really here and that they are singing the Sanctus with people and spiritual beings they can't even see!

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UPCOMING

2023

- Feb 22 Ash Wednesday Divine Service, 7pm
- Mar 01, 08, 15, 22, 29 Midweek Lenten service, 7pm (Dinner prior)
- Mar 12 Daylight Savings Time Begins, 2am
- Mar 12 Voters Meeting
- Apr 06 Maundy Thursday Divine Service, 7pm
- Apr 07 Good Friday Tenebrae Service, 7pm
- Apr 09 Easter Sunrise Matins Service, 7am
- Apr 09 Easter Breakfast, 8am
- Apr 09 Easter Festival Divine Service, 9:30am
- May 14 Mothers' Day Breakfast
- May 18 Ascension Day Divine Service 7pm
- June 11 Voters Meeting
- July 23-27 VBS
- Sept 10 Voters Meeting
- Nov 05 Daylight Saving Time Ends, 2am
- Nov 23 Thanksgiving Day Divine Service, 9:30 am
- Dec 06, 13, 20 Advent Services, 7pm
- Dec 20 Children's Christmas Service 7pm
- December 24 Christmas Eve service, 5pm
- December 25 Christmas Day Service 9:30 am
- No New Year's Eve/Day Service

Position Available

The voting assembly of Christ Lutheran approved the hiring of a paid office and custodial assistant. The position may require a maximum of up to 19 regular hours per week with a flexible schedule. Responsibilities will include developing, printing, folding of church communications (i.e., bulletins, newsletters, reports), answering phone calls, updating, and maintaining various church records, light general cleaning and assisting the pastor as needed. The position is open to members of Christ Lutheran Church. Excellent verbal and written communication skills with attention to detail are necessary. Interested parties should contact Paul Schilf at 605-376-0981 or via email at pauls@popplersmusic.com.

2023 CHURCH OFFICERS

President: Michael Grooms

Secretary: Carl Deardoff

Finance Secretary: Pastor Phil Andreasen,
Assistants: Luther Brack & Dustin Preheim

Treasurer: Marty Johnson

Elders: Paul Schilf, & Kirk Meyer, Les Britson

Trustees: Andrew Brack, Steve Counts, & Jonathan Fick

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We live in a world that is 100% religious in every way. There is no minuscule element of existence that is non-religious. In our divinely saturated cosmos, the only question is this: which God or gods or dark demonic forces hold sway over our hearts, inform our understanding of the purpose of life, guide our morality, and provide our methods of forgiveness in these inescapably religious lives.

Mercy: Our Constant Need

"We know that we are from God, and the world lies in the power of the evil one." So writes St. John (1 John 5:19).

If the whole world sways to the music of the evil one, we would do well to let the holy dance of prayer be ever on our lips and hearts. John tells us that "we know that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us," and that "we have the requests that we have asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

In other words, we have a God with ears.

So we see a friend sinning and pray for him (1 John 5:16). That's one example that John gives. And it's a beautiful one. Unlike the Pharisee who stuck out his chest and boasted—boasted!—to God that he was not "like this tax collector" (Luke 18:11), we see a friend and co-opt the prayer of the tax collector himself. We pray, "God, be merciful to my friend, and to me, for we are both sinners."

We are prone to make prayer more complicated than it needs to be**.** If the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, then we all lie in need of divine mercy**.** So pray for mercy.

When you pass a coworker, pray in your heart, "Lord, have mercy on her." Last week I saw a father and son walk into the gym together and I prayed, "Lord have mercy upon them." When I see a sad face, a troubled smile, a heavy silence weighing upon someone, I ask the Lord to shower them with mercy. Family? Yes. Friends? Yes. Strangers? Yes.

Mercy is our constant need so let mercy be our constant request.

Life on the Front Porch

This world is what George MacDonald delightfully named, "the front porch of our Father's home."

It's often very dark on this porch. That's what we would expect since the world is under the sway of dark forces.

It's also very lonely. In the darkness, we feel isolated, like we're the only one feeling "this pain" or "that heartache."

Clothed with the mercy of Jesus and filled with his love, we live on this porch with a keen perception of reality. John says Christians have "understanding" or know "him who is true" (1 John 5:20). Part of that understanding or knowing-him-who-is-true is also having his light to bring some illumination to this "front porch."

That light takes the form of love. We love others who are caught in the web of religious lies that crisscross this porch. We speak the truth to them in love, beckoning them to flee from idols and to come to Christ who is "the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20-21).

That light takes the form of wisdom. With ears full of the wise words of God, we filter out the half-lies and full-deceptions of the father of lies—and his minions—clinging to the ancient truths.

Truths such as this: this front porch, on which we spend 10 or 21 or 70 or 90 years, is a blink in eternity's eye. In the short lives we have, let us know and rest in Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the

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Life. In him, we know that we will move from the front porch into the Father's resurrection mansion.

Truths such as this: though we sin in this life, when we are in Jesus, all our sins are and will remain forgiven, drowned in the sea of his cruciform suffering.

And truths such as this: to find human flourishing, true joy, lasting peace, and a clear way forward through a world awash in false religious thinking, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, be baptized, and find in the Father's Son the answer to all our deepest longings and needs.

Little Children
From the beginning to the end of his letter, John really wants one thing: for us to be in Jesus. To walk in his light. To be filled with his life. To have fellowship with the Father through his incarnate Son.

Every other issue and question and problem comes back to Christ. He is the center around which everything revolves. All is bound up in him for he is the full revelation of who God is and what God thinks of us.

We are the Father's children. Brothers and sisters in Jesus. We are walking through this passing world, ready to leave the front porch, and step inside. There, awaiting us, is our Father and our Savior.

So, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Be filled to the full by the true God, Jesus Christ, our Life, Love, and Lord. Amen.

Chad Bird

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flies in the face of the human understanding that "you get what you deserve."

By Christ's life, death and resurrection we are spared from what we deserve. In fact, the Innocent pays for the guilty, and the guilty are declared free. By the power of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, faith and the merits of Christ's innocence are given to us. What a joyful declaration of justification for the believing heart, a heart now strengthened to cling to the Lord and not to self.

❙ Sing or read aloud together LSB 555, "Salvation unto Us Has Come."

Prayer

Lord God, heavenly Father, since we cannot stand before You relying on anything we have done, help us trust in Your abiding grace and live according to Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Proper 20A).

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