

LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

THE POTPOURRI ISSUE





Each Day – a Day The Lord has Made

As we make our way through the calendar year, are you ever struck by some of the more bizarre days of recognition that have been set aside? Now to be honest, I do identify myself with these two observances: *World Introvert Day*, Jan. 2, and *National Middle Child Day*, Aug. 12. But even though I can find myself reflected in those observances, I have to admit they are still bizarre. Celebrating them, especially with others, is not something I would naturally find myself doing.

Or how about these two: *National Houseplant Appreciation Day*, Jan 10, and *National Do a Grouch a Favor Day*, Feb. 16? Not that there is anything wrong with those sentiments, but the question remains: Why observe them? There are obviously those who can identify with them in some way and find satisfaction that attention is drawn to them by others. At some point, and maybe we have already reached the saturation point, with so many days set aside, have we in the end only highlighted their insignificance? It appears as sensory overload, and the danger is that it becomes as unnoticeable as white noise.

Now do not misunderstand, observing many religious and secular holidays and even birthdays and wedding anniversaries would not be considered strange. Unlike the Jehovah Witnesses, who consider mostly all holidays, including birthdays, “pagan holidays” not to be recognized, Christians have freedom to observe special days.

Year after year, we enjoy many days given to us by the hand of the Lord, especially the festivals that mark the history of our salvation—Christmas, Easter, Pentecost. But at the beginning of every week, Sunday, most saints on earth join the timeless praise of heaven to rejoice in Jesus’ triumph over death by His resurrection from the dead. It is what the Psalmist in Ps. 118 declares it to be—the day the Lord made, and every week we rejoice in it!

The Church from ancient times has used this Psalm on Easter Sunday to extol God’s work of our salvation: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.” (vv. 22-24)

But this Easter joy is not lost for us from Monday through Saturday, after all Jeremiah takes note: “*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*” (Lamentations 3:22-23) Based on this glorious truth, every day this year is special for you. We often sing this hymn on Sunday morning, our little Easters throughout the year. Blessed are you every day, my fellow redeemed for Jesus’ sake:

*This is the day the Lord has made;
He calls the hours His own.
Let heav’n rejoice, let earth be glad
And praise surround the throne.*

*Today He rose and left the dead,
And Satan’s empire fell;
Today the saints His triumphs spread
And all His wonders tell.*

(ELH, #32, vv. 1&2)

The Lord makes every day significant for His baptized children; every hour is truly His own. Paul, writing to the Romans in regard to those insisting Saturday alone must be the day observed as the Sabbath, made this point: “*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.*” (14:5)

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by **PASTOR JAMES BRAUN**, Editor, *The Lutheran Sentinel*
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The theme for this issue is “Potpourri.”

The word potpourri comes from the French and literally means “rotten pot.” It was used to describe a stew of over-ripe meats and such which, when thrown together in a pot and cooked, became at least marginally edible.

Then, in the 1970s another kind of potpourri became quite popular. They were made up mostly of dead stuff. Leaves, twigs, flowers that aesthetically were past their prime but then were mixed together and put out in the open air to make a room smell sweet. Thus, the word also came to denote a pleasant mixture of nice-smelling stuff.

Now, in the publishing world, it has a different meaning, at least in my experience. A “potpourri issue” of a publication meant that the editors likely couldn’t figure anything else out for their theme. Now, I’m not going to cop to that sentiment with regards to this current, though late, issue of *The Lutheran Sentinel*; but if it fits, it fits.

What we don’t have here, though, is a rotten pot. The articles we are publishing have a variety of topics. One a cinnamon stick, another a clove, still another perhaps the dried peel of an orange. Yet here combined they present to you, the reader, with a sweet smell. They could be thought of as a perfume that, yes, covers over the aroma of death and sorrow that so pervades this world; but they do much more than that.

Think of the women on Easter morning. They were heading to Jesus’ tomb with the “spices” they had bought with which to embalm our Lord’s body. They were bringing things that smelled nice so that the decay of their Teacher wouldn’t assault anyone’s nose. Yet to their surprise and ultimately their

joy, there was no need for their ministrations. Jesus not only was no longer there in that tomb, but, as they found out, He had risen! He had risen indeed!

In this way was fulfilled what was stated in Psalm 16:10 “(Y)ou will not abandon My soul to Sheol or let your holy One see corruption.” Though He died, Jesus’ holy body would not, could not decay. Rot only happens as a result of sin. Jesus had none of that even though He carried the world’s iniquities to His death, suffering as though guilty of them all.

You see, a potpourri covers over a smell, it doesn’t get rid of it. Perfume on a pig and all that. But God’s Word does much more than that for us. And based on that Word, our authors this month give teachings that actually remove the smell of death and even death itself.

And though ancient, the words used in this issue are not out of date. They are not the theological equivalent of macramé, harvest gold kitchens, shag carpeting, or “groovy man” Boomer spirituality. (Though, sadly, many of these things are coming back in “style.”) They are not trendy according to the vagaries of our flesh’s desires.

No, what God says through His Church is relevant both for now and forever and produce in you a trust in Him that becomes for Him something that smells better than any potpourri. Through the Prophet Ezekiel He said: *“I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles”* (20:41).

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**“Bondage of the Will:
‘I Cannot by My Own Reason or Strength...’”**

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Question ...

As you pointed out in one of your recent columns, we often speak of the writers of the New Testament as “the apostles and the evangelists.” It’s pretty obvious why the church recognized the apostles as qualified to write Scripture, but what about the qualifications for “evangelists”—people who were not apostles—to write Scripture?

Why do we consider the writings of some men to be Scripture even though they are not apostles?

Answer:

The question is worth considering, especially in light of those books of the Bible where we are uncertain who the human author is. Works of fiction such as *The Da Vinci Code* have long perpetuated the myth that the church “decided” from councils on high who the writers of the Bible would be and which books would be included. The process of determining Scripture was much more the opposite. Towards the end of his book, *The Word of the Lord Grows*,¹ Martin Franzmann put it this way: “The book that was destined to remain the sacred book for millions of Christians for century upon century came into the church without fanfare, in a quiet, shuffling sort of way.”

Consider the evangelists, the writers of the four Gospels. Two of them were also apostles: Matthew and John. The other two had close connections to the apostles. For example, people recognized Mark as an associate of Peter who had even visited Paul in prison. Luke also had close ties to the apostle Paul, accompanying him on some of his mission journeys. Since we know who they are, their authority seems obvious.

The Letter to the Hebrews, however, presents a special problem: we do not know who the author is. The author’s relationship with Timothy (Hebrews 13:23) suggests someone who knew the apostle Paul. While Tertullian of Carthage believed Paul’s companion Barnabas to be the author, hundreds of years later, Martin Luther suggested Apollos was the writer. Either man would be a suitable candidate, but this side of heaven we will probably never find out who the human writer of Hebrews was.

Yet to recognize Scripture—writing given by divine inspiration—one doesn’t have to know the writer. The evidence for inspiration rests in the writing itself. And in the case of the letter to the Hebrews, that evidence was plain to see as congregations circulated the letter amongst themselves. It didn’t take long for early church fathers, such as Clement

of Rome (d. AD 101), to cite the epistle to the Hebrews in their own writing. Even early heretics, such as the Gnostics, cited Hebrews and other New Testament Scriptures (erroneously, of course) in support of their false teachings.² The church eventually came to recognize the Letter to the Hebrews, along with all the books of the New Testament, for its divine teaching and character. Authorship, ultimately, was not the deciding factor.

Notably, not all of the apostles’ writings were regarded as inspired. For instance, we know that Paul wrote a third letter to the Corinthians, but this letter has been lost to history and did not become part of the New Testament. While beneficial for the church in Corinth at the time, the letter did not have the same divinely inspired character as the others.

Ultimately, God receives all the glory. The true author of Scripture works to preserve and perpetuate His Word, not through a “top-down” hierarchy of church leaders, but through a “bottom-up” bubbling up of His Word through many congregations, allowing the “cream” to rise to the top. The Holy Spirit receives all the credit for leading people to recognize what they were reading: that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21), and that these words of Scripture are the words of eternal life in Christ (John 6:68).



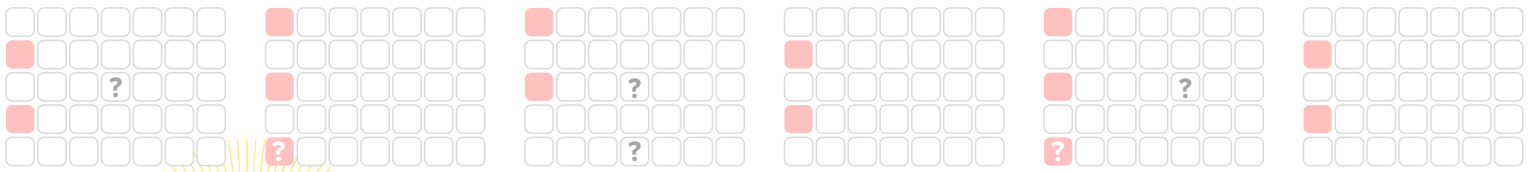
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¹ Franzmann, Martin H. 1961. *The Word of the Lord Grows*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

² Pagels, Elaine Hiesey. 1975. *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline letters*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. p. 141-155.



This do, as often as you drink it.

by **PASTOR DAVID JAY WEBBER**
Bethany Lutheran Church, Princeton, Minn.

Over the past several decades, the frequency of Holy Communion in most congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod has been gradually increasing. Some older members might be able to remember a time when the Lord's Supper was celebrated only about six times per year. For a while, it was common for the sacrament to be observed once per month. A large number of congregations now offer Communion twice per month. And an increasing number of churches in the synod have gone to a weekly celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar.

As the frequency of Communion in a typical congregation has been increased, incrementally and over a span of years, each time of transition may have caused a certain amount of anxiety and stress among some communicants. They greatly valued their participation in the Lord's Supper, and cherished the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that Jesus' bestowing of his body and blood upon them brought. They were also aware of St. Paul's warnings against an unworthy reception of this sacrament, and they knew of his exhortation to communicants to examine themselves, and to receive the sacrament in true repentance and faith, so that they would not sin against the body and blood of Christ and thereby bring God's judgment upon themselves as they communed (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). Some communicants no doubt feared, therefore, that if they were to receive the Lord's Supper too often – or at least more often than what they had been accustomed to – then the seriousness of their preparation for it would be diminished, and the blessings of participating in the sacrament that God wanted them to receive and enjoy would be less appreciated.

These were legitimate concerns. These may be your concerns, at a time when your congregation might be making a change in how often the Lord's Supper is offered. How can you navigate through these concerns, so that the Lord's Supper will remain for you the special and meaningful divine gift

that it has always been in the past? For some helpful guidance, let's take a look at how these questions were handled at the time of the Reformation.

In the Lutheran Church of the sixteenth century, the most common practice was that the Lord's Supper was offered by default on every Lord's Day and festival, unless there was no pastor available to preside, or unless no communicants had indicated to the pastor beforehand that they wished to commune that day. So, sometimes there were non-Communion Sundays, but this was not something that was planned out as such in advance. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession states that the Divine Service of Word and Sacrament "is celebrated every Lord's day and on other festivals, when the sacrament is made available to those who wish to partake of it, after they have been examined and absolved."

To the Lutheran Reformers, the question of how often the Lord's Supper should be made available, and the question of how often an individual should receive the Lord's Supper, were two distinct questions. Martin Luther advised the Lutherans in the city of Nürnberg that one or two Communion services "should be celebrated on Sundays or on the days of the saints in the two parish churches, depending on whether there is a great or small number of communicants." He added that during the week, Holy Communion "could be celebrated on whatever day there is a need for it, that is, if there are some communicants present who ask for it and desire it. In this way no one would be forced to come to the sacrament, and yet everyone would be served in an orderly and sufficient way." And in this letter, he also wrote that:

If the ministers complain about this, ... I would tell them that no one compels them except God himself through his call. For since they have the office, they are already obliged and compelled (on the basis of their calling and office) to administer the sacrament when it is requested of them.

Luther clearly wanted the Lord's Supper to be available often: every Sunday, or even more often than that if there was a desire for it among the communicants of a parish. But he understood this to be a matter of giving individual communicants an opportunity to commune – in keeping with their own spiritual discipline, personal preparation, and sacramental custom – and not in any way to be implying that they are obligated to commune just because others may be doing so. In fact, he emphasized that no one should “be forced to come to the sacrament,” or be made to feel that they must commune even if they have not prepared themselves to do so for that occasion.

In the Large Catechism, Luther unfolds the implications of the Lord's statement that the sacrament of His body and blood should be celebrated and received “often,” noting that Jesus here means to say: “I am instituting a Passover or Supper for you, which you shall enjoy not just on this one evening of the year, but frequently, whenever and wherever you will, according to everyone's opportunity and need, being bound to no special place or time.” And in the Preface to the Small Catechism, Luther emphasizes that “we should not compel anyone to believe or to receive the sacrament and should not fix any law or time or place for it. Instead, we should preach in such a way that the people make themselves come without our law and just plain compel us pastors to administer the sacrament to them.”

Also according to the Small Catechism Preface, a pastor would be concerned about the spiritual health of a member if that member did not commune at least three or four times a year. But otherwise, communicants are to be allowed to follow their own sacramental piety, as God's law impresses upon them personally their need to repent of their sins, and as God's gospel draws them personally to the comfort of the means of grace in general and of the Lord's Supper in particular.

While Luther did call for the weekly availability of the Supper, he himself did not commune weekly. His friend Veit Dietrich recalled that “it was always Luther's practice that he generally went to the sacrament every 14 days or at least every 3 weeks, and desired absolution beforehand.” And while Luther did usually seek out an opportunity for private confession and absolution before going to Communion, he also declared: “And I, Doctor Martin Luther myself, sometimes go unconfessed, just so that I shall not myself make it a necessary habit in my conscience.”

If Luther did not receive the sacrament every week, you certainly don't need to, either! But if you do want to and are properly prepared, and if your congregation is now making the sacrament available each Sunday, you may do so. “In this way” – to quote Luther once again – “no one would be forced to come to the sacrament, and yet everyone would be served in an orderly and sufficient way.”

The Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz offers a few thoughts on how communicants might come to some decisions about the frequency of their reception:

Christ...says: “As often as,” in order that we may eat of that bread and drink of that cup as often as we recognize and feel that that medicine and remedy which our Good Samaritan pours into our wounds is useful and necessary to us, so long only as we examine ourselves lest we receive it to judgment. For the rule about when and how often one should go to Communion must be taken: I. From the teaching about the fruit and power of the Eucharist, namely, when and as often as we recognize that we have need of this power; II. From the teaching about self-examination, lest we receive it unworthily. ...because Christ says: “As often as you do this,” it is wholly His will that those who are His disciples should do this frequently.

Precisely what “frequently” means to each person is, however, not a dogmatic matter. The Lutheran theologian Johan Gerhard provides us with a good summary of how we should think about this: “How often this sacrament should be taken every year cannot be prescribed definitely and by some general rule, but must be left free for the approval of each one's conscience and for his piety.”

As each communing Christian comes to a personal conviction of what is best for him or her, Chemnitz adds an admonition – addressed to pastors – that “those are not true and faithful ministers of Christ who in any manner whatever lead or frighten people away from more frequent use and reception of the Eucharist.” He also shares some interesting history:

There are beautiful examples of frequent use of the Eucharist from the true antiquity. Some had the custom of receiving the Eucharist daily; some twice a week; some on the Lord's day, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; some only on the Lord's Day.

In a congregation that might be in the process of transitioning to a more frequent sacramental observance, the pastor would no doubt encourage his people to consider more deeply the great blessings that are theirs when they in faith partake of the Lord's Supper. But he should also emphasize that members are not to feel compelled to commune more frequently if that is something they are not ready to do. He should likewise emphasize that no one should judge those who sometimes “sit out” an observance of the sacrament, while helpfully contributing to the devotional atmosphere of the celebration by robustly singing all the distribution hymns from beginning to end!

Holy Communion, and the way it is observed, must always be a source of comfort and blessing to those who partake of it, according to a sacramental discipline and pattern with which each communicant is comfortable. Holy Communion, and the way it is observed, must never be allowed to become a source of tension or ill feelings within God's family. Everyone's faith and conscience is to be respected, as we rejoice together in the goodness of God and in the love for one another that His Spirit has placed in our hearts. “*For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread*” (1 Corinthians 10:17, NKJV).

Consolation & Forgiveness for Sinners (for us)

by **PASTOR THOMAS RANK**
Associate Professor of Religion, Bethany Lutheran College



Psalm 91:

- ¹He who dwells in the secret place of the
Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- ²I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."
- ³Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.
- ⁴He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;
His truth shall be your shield and buckler.
- ⁵You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
⁶Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.
- ⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.
- ⁸Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.
- ⁹Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
- ¹⁰No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
- ¹¹For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
- ¹²In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
- ¹³You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
- ¹⁴"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
- ¹⁵He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.
- ¹⁶With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

There is no one in the history of this world who was surrounded by more enemies than Jesus. As an infant, the soldiers of King Herod sought Him in order to murder Him. And now here, just hours before His death on the cross, He was once more sought out by soldiers who sought His life. Has the fowler finally snared his prey? Has the pestilence infiltrated the Incarnation of God's Son? There, in the night of Gethsemane, does terror stalk our Savior?

I agree with those who believe that the prayers of our Lord on this night of His betrayal included the Psalms. In particular, I can hear our Lord saying these words of Psalm 91 as He prepared Himself, as His bloody sweat dripped from His forehead, as He prayed that, if possible, the cup of suffering pass from Him, but that not His will, but His Father's be done on earth in heaven.

Soon, Jesus would be treading upon the lion who walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Soon, Jesus would crush the head of the cobra, the serpent-- the promise God made so many thousands of years earlier to Adam and Eve now coming to pass in the work of the Second Adam, Jesus the Christ.

Our Lord went through all of this with confidence in His Father, the One who promised that His Holy One would not see corruption. The angels themselves were there for our Lord, giving Him comfort and strength as He carried the burden of our sin, as the Son of Man was betrayed into the hands of sinners. Certainly, Jesus was surrounded by enemies more than any other.

If we were to stop the Passion History of our Lord right there as the soldiers and Judas surround Jesus to lead Him away to trial and death, we might wonder about God's promise in this psalm: "No evil shall befall you, I will deliver you, I will answer you, I will show my salvation." It looks like great evil had come to Jesus. He was not delivered to safety but into the hands of sinners. The answer from God the Father seemed to be silence, and the long life promised seemingly would fall short, lasting only thirty years.

It may seem to us, with our limited line of sight into the future of our lives, that we also end up in the same situation as Jesus. Surrounded by our sins that continue to haunt our memories and bring us grief; with death pursuing us unceasingly and apparently unchecked by divine mercy; with no angels but only demons that seek to possess us, bombarding us with all manner of temptations. These enemies are not only spiritual, but often physical, too. Those who seek to wound, cripple, and destroy God's people look more fearsome, more likely to win, than to those who strive to confess Christ, to be steadfast in faith.

But we do not stop at the suffering of Jesus there in the Garden of Gethsemane, nor in the courts of the high priest, King Herod, or Pontius Pilate. We do not stop at the shouts to crucify Him and their fulfillment on that hill named Golgotha. We keep going, because that is what Jesus did. The end of the story is not His suffering, but His victory over His enemies, which are our enemies. Jesus kept going, with

complete trust in His Father, knowing that no cross would be His end, no tomb would enclose Him for long. The evil which looked to win the day would not.

This is our confidence in our lives of faith in Jesus Christ. It is truly a matter of faith because our experiences so often run contrary to what we expect to receive as God's children. But that is why we call our theology, our hearing God's Word and confessing it, the theology of the cross. Martin Luther put it like this in his commentary on Genesis:

"When [Jesus] wants to ascend into heaven and to enter into His glory, when He is about to overcome death, sin, and the devil, He is nailed to the cross, dies, and is buried as the most rejected of all men and demons. This is not an entrance into glory or a victory and triumph over death, is it? It surely is; for these are God's hidden ways, which must be understood not according to the flesh and human understanding but according to Scripture and Christ Himself, who says to His disciples (Luke 24:26): 'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?'" (LW 5, 185)

Faith is exercised, increased, and strengthened when it is forced away from all the props, all the scaffolding that we think we need. Faith relies on Christ alone, on the promises of God's Word in the midst of being surrounded, in the midst of being targeted by very real enemies and very real danger. That is when the words of the psalm echo in our hearts and minds: "I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.'"

When the struggle is long and you feel worn down, little by little, as even your faith seems to erode, know that you are precisely the one covered by the promises of this psalm. You are the "you" to whom the divine assurance of protection, salvation, and rescue are given. "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you."

Jesus Christ went through all this and more, for each of you, so that you may trust that God is on your side, not against you. God grant you faith in His truth that endures forever, for that is why the Son of Man, Jesus, was betrayed in the hands of sinful men, to defeat sin, to forgive you, to bless you with His victory.

SALVATION COMES AMIDST TRIALS

by PASTOR JERRY GERNANDER
Hope Lutheran Church, Leander, Tex.

Paul Speratus ▶



◀ Cover of the First Lutheran Hymnal

*Salvation unto us is come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.*

One day in 1524, Martin Luther heard someone singing these words. He cried tears of joy. Go back to 1523: This hymn was not yet written. Paul Speratus sat in a prison cell, sentenced to burn to death as a "Lutheran heretic."

Speratus missed his wife of three years and their children. He thought of the congregation he was forced to leave in the mining community of Iglau (present-day Czech Republic). He was on his way to a different place when he stopped in their town. The congregation made him stay. They loved the

Gospel of grace and recognized that he truly preached it! How did this thirty-eight-year-old pastor come to be in that prison?

Speratus was born one year after Luther, ordained a priest one year after Luther, and like Luther, served as a priest for ten years. He, too, began to see that his church was teaching contrary to Scripture. For instance, the Bible says that God instituted marriage, but the church was saying it was a

sin for priests to marry. The first Lutherans, Speratus included, preached that this was against God's Word. He also practiced what he preached. In 1520, he married, five years before Luther did.

On January 12, 1522, he stepped into the pulpit of the cathedral in Vienna and preached on Romans 12:1-8 (epistle for the first Sunday after Epiphany) that the vows of monks, including the vow of chastity, were wrong and that marriage was God's holy institution, and God-pleasing. The congregation listened gladly, but church officials judged Speratus to be a "guilty heretic."

He and his young wife fled for their lives. They came to Iglau, and the same thing happened: Many were overjoyed to hear the Gospel, but Speratus was persecuted. He was put in prison, sentenced to death for preaching the Gospel.

Now after three months in prison, thinking of his family and his church, did tears come to his eyes? He had written fervent letters to them. Now he wrote his best one of all, this hymn that would comfort many Lutherans way beyond his own family.

This hymn does the pastoral work of grounding Christians in the faith of Romans chapters 1-3. It leads us through a patient look at our sinful condition. The hymn especially emphasizes not only the sins we do, but the sinful corruption that leads us to do the sins:

Stanza 2: *"The law demands a perfect heart ... And lost was our condition."*

Stanza 3: *"The law is but a mirror bright To bring the inbred sin to sight That lurks within our nature."*

Stanza 4: *"From sin our flesh could not abstain ... None can removed sin's poisoned dart Or purify our guilty heart, So deep is our corruption."*

Then we are ready for the Gospel! Stanza 5 begins the full-blown preaching of the Gospel. We hear in this stanza how God sent forth His Son to redeem us from sin. The first part, which we sing in this verse, is Jesus' active obedience, that *"He all the law for us fulfilled."* He came between us sinners and *"His Father's anger ... which over us impended."* What a beautiful picture of God's love!

Then in stanza 6 we review this comforting truth: *"Christ hath full atonement made and brought to us salvation."* We hear about Jesus' passive obedience, His suffering and death. He died for you. We go forward (in this same stanza) to using this faith in our prayers, letting it determine all our faith, hope, and confidence:

*Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death now is my life indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.*

The Gospel also teaches that are we are to do good works; it is not a condition for salvation, but shows our faith: *"the faith that by good works is shown"* (v. 8). We sing of this in stanza 10 also, that it is from faith that *"good works must spring,"* and: *"Works serve thy neighbor and make known The faith that lives within thee."*

Speratus, sitting in prison, also included these pastoral verses for comfort in times of affliction (which are omitted in some hymnals but are included for our full benefit, along with all the original verses, in our *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*):

*Hope waits for the accepted hour
Till God give joy for mourning;
When He displays His healing pow'r,
Thy sighs to songs are turning.
Thy needs are known unto thy Lord,
And He is faithful to His Word,
This is our hope's foundation.*

*Though it may seem He hears thee not,
Count not thyself forsaken;
Thy wants are ne'er by Him forgot,
Let this thy hope awaken;
His Word is sure, here is thy stay,
Though doubts may plague thee on thy way,
Let not thy faith be shaken.*

Because Speratus married and fearlessly preached the truth of the Gospel, he lost his church and his freedom. This is how it goes. An attack on marriage and the family is an attack on God's Word. If we believe the Gospel, and show fruits of faith in our life, we must bear the cross like Speratus.

After three months of imprisonment, Speratus was set free but had to leave Moravia. He and his family went to Wittenberg. Luther welcomed him and put him to work. That year, Luther wrote the Lutheran liturgy in Latin; Speratus put it into German so everyone could use it! The next year (1524), the first Lutheran hymnal was published, and Speratus helped Luther prepare it.

Speratus did not remain in Wittenberg. Luther so valued him that he sent him to lead the Reformation in Prussia, where he lived from 1524 until his death in 1551. "Pastor" was not his only vocation or the only reason to remember him. His brave confession of God's institution of marriage is another reason. He was a husband and father. The vocation of parent is serving God in the home, providing for your children's souls and bodies. From his hymn, we learn to confess our faith in our words, life, and home.

Meditation:

*Come to the cross, look up and live!
The law no peace to thee doth give,
Nor can its deeds bring comfort.
Faith to the cross of Christ doth cling
And rests in Him securely. Amen.*

(ELH 227, v. 9b & 10a)

The Seventh Annual
Apologetics and Worldview Conference

UNSURPASSED CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS

June 18–19, 2025
Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.

THE LEGACY OF:



**John Warwick
Montgomery**
(1931 - 2024)

C.S. Lewis
(1898 - 1963)

**Early Church
Apologetics**
& Beyond

The work of defending the truth of Christianity has been ongoing throughout the church's history, resulting in many great apologists. With the death of Dr. John Warwick Montgomery (September 25, 2024), the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (CAW) realized now would be a most fitting time to honor his remarkable work and that of other prominent apologists. As one surveys the history of the church and understands the present time, it becomes clear that the need to defend the truth of Christianity remains equally necessary today.

Most Christians readily recognize C.S. Lewis, and rightly so. But many are not as familiar with Dr. Montgomery, even though his knowledge, insight, practicality, and productivity at least rivals Lewis. Those who have studied Montgomery acknowledge a great debt. For example, Dr. Sean McDow-

ell of Biola University, in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (coauthored with his father Josh McDowell) writes, "This book is dedicated to the scholars who compiled the initial research that challenged my father to consider the claims of Christ. My personal thanks to John Warwick Montgomery, Wilbur M. Smith, George Eldon Ladd, Norman Geisler, Bernard Ramm, Carl Henry, F. F. Bruce, and many more." Dr. Montgomery's first-billing in this list is not accidental. His and Lewis' apologetic contributions complement each other and remain extremely valuable to the church of today, and will continue to do so until Christ returns.

But of course, their contributions would not exist at all without the labor, wisdom, and crosses of the first apologists, including the disciples, and most importantly Christ himself.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18

6:30p* **The Legacy of John Warwick Montgomery** (1931-2024)
Atty. Craig Parton | International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism & Human Rights | Strasbourg, France

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

9:00a* **The Legacy of C.S. Lewis** (1898-1963)
Dr. Joel Heck | C.S. Lewis Scholar; Interim President - Concordia Lutheran Seminary | Alberta, Canada

11:00a* **The Legacy of Early Church Apologetics & Beyond**
Dr. Adam Francisco | Director of Academics/Scholar 1517; Adjunct Prof. of History - Concordia University | Chicago, Illinois

1:00p* **The Legacy of Early Church Apologetics & Beyond** (*continued*)

2:00p **Table Talk with the presenters**

Registration: apologeticscenter.org/events/

Questions? apologetics@blc.edu

Livestreamed? Yes.

* Presentation periods include time for Q & A and sufficient breaks including over an hour for lunch.

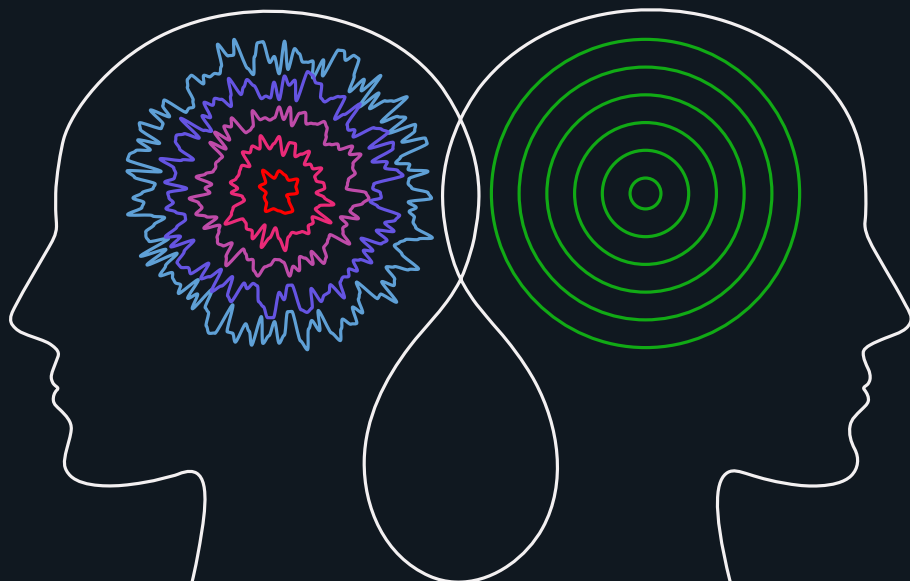
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Why do I have bipolar disorder?

by **PASTOR SAMUEL JOHNSON**

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, Minn.
& First Shell Rock Lutheran Church, Northwood, Iowa



This thought can plague me as I lie awake at night, trying to make sense out of everything. Having been diagnosed with Bipolar I Disorder a little over a year ago, I have been going through a time of adjustment, acceptance, and learning.

While, overall, things are going much better thanks to medication, counseling, leaning on friends and family for support, and reading books and articles online, there are still times when I begin to question things all over again. In fact, on days that I don't feel great, I can feel despair seeping into my soul. Not only that, but I'm also a pastor. Being a pastor is a strenuous job. It means constantly being on call. It means producing a sermon every week. It means being placed in situations that challenge my strength and bravery. It's impossible to sugarcoat the job. It's grueling, to say the least.

On my bad days, I find myself wondering why I have this calling. I always knew life was hard, but now I have a diagnosis. It's easy for the disorder to become my one and only identity. And if I'm bipolar, why am I in a position to help others? I have a hard enough time taking care of myself. Why do I put up with all the difficulties associated with the work? The stress is enough for a "normal" person. So why not just quit and do something else? These are thoughts that I have wrestled with.

Once, when writing a sermon, I realized something that changed my perspective. In the assigned text, Jesus was talking about how He is the true vine, and that we are the branches. He continued to explain that the branches need "pruning." This pruning can consist of all the hardships and difficulties that God allows into our lives. The result of this is that we hold on more firmly to Jesus. The pruning is ultimately done out of love, and the end result is that our faith is strengthened.

This was a lightbulb moment for me. I finally realized that, while I don't understand why I have bipolar disorder, God is using this illness to prune me. It makes me strong, because it causes me to hold on more firmly to Jesus. Just as the apostle Paul said: "When I am weak, then I am strong." That is the best position to be in when serving as a pastor. The weaker I am, the more firmly I hold unto Jesus, who is my life and salvation. The end result is that I can more effectively minister to those under my care. It's a paradox. In a way, it doesn't make sense, but it is true.

And so my encouragement to you is to think about bipolar disorder, or whatever struggle you face in your own life, as something that gives you strength. Weakness isn't bad. Because of your own struggles, you can have a strong empathy for others. I know that I have an understanding of people I wouldn't otherwise have. Because of your hardships, you can look to Jesus for strength and hope. I know that He has given me strength in difficult times. For if He was willing to die upon the cross for our sins, then surely He will be with us during everything else in our lives.

So much has changed since I have been diagnosed with this disorder. I have been through a process of learning, and I would say it has all been for the better. Sure, I still have bad days. And yes, I still occasionally question if my job is right for me. But at the heart of it all, I remember these words: "When I am weak, then I am strong." Now when I ask myself, "Why do I have bipolar disorder?" it no longer brings the confusing swirl of emotions. Bipolar disorder is not my one and only identity. Instead, my identity is firmly rooted in Christ. I am a baptized child of God. And I have changed.



THE HOLY FAMILY

[Jesus] went down with [His parents] and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Luke 2:51–52

by **PASTOR ALEX RING**

Christ Lutheran Church & School, Port St. Lucie, Fla.

We may at first feel a twinge of jealousy over the family situation of Joseph and Mary. Mary may have been forced to give birth in a stable, Joseph forced to move his family to Egypt in the middle of the night, but other than that, we see two first time parents blessed with what no parent has had since: a perfect Child. We are grateful for children who are mostly good and usually obedient in our homes and classrooms. But what would we give for a Child who was perfect? A Child who always acted toward His parents and teachers with perfect love and respect. Who always did as He was told the first time, who never talked back, or even sighed or rolled His eyes. A Child who would never need to be corrected, because He could do nothing wrong. A Child who never needed to be disciplined, because He was the embodiment of holiness. A Child whose actions were always purer, always more righteous than His parents, because He is perfect.

A sinless child in the home would have been a mixed blessing. Jesus may never have presented a discipline problem to His parents, but He would have been a constant reminder to Mary and Joseph of their sinfulness and inadequacy as parents. They must have worried about the safety of their Son, as parents often do, but added to that was the burden of knowing their Son was the Messiah. Joseph and Mary dearly loved their Son, but there must have been many times when they wished this blessing upon someone else. Parents who were wealthier, or smarter, or more patient, or more devout; parents who were better.

But God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. He chose Joseph to be a father to Jesus. To them, God the Father said, "This is My Son, whom I love, and now He is your Son as well." For all their sinfulness and inadequacies, by His placing of Jesus into that home, God declared them to be fit parents, the perfect parents for Jesus. Like all parents, Joseph and Mary had plenty to repent about in their parenting, but they could also take comfort in fact that it was God who in His wisdom had seen fit to give them Jesus to begin with, who had made them parents, and then be comforted by the forgiveness that would be won by their Son.

And God chose to give us our children as well, to put those little ones under our care. And for all the love we have for our children, there are many times when we feel our inadequacy as parents, recognize our shortcomings and sins against our children, feel unworthy and unfit for the gift of children. And it is just as well that like Joseph and Mary, we are not perfect parents or perfect teachers, because God does not look for perfection from us. He expects it from Jesus, who lived a life of perfection not to shame us, but so that He could give it to us. So that by faith we could claim His perfection as our own and be changed from sinful parents, sinful brothers, sinful sisters, to perfect children of God. So that every Christian family can call themselves holy families, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Installation of Rev. Lee Kuhn

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sebring, Florida



Back row left to right:

Vicar Skyler Hepler, Pastor Charles Keeler, Pastor Daniel Wagenknecht, Pastor Alex Ring, Rev. Wayne Schoch

Front row left to right:

Pastor Jonathan Madson, Pastor Herb Huhnerkoch, Pastor Lee Kuhns, Pastor Mark Faugstad

The **Rev. Lee Kuhns** was installed as pastor at New Life Ev. Lutheran Church in Sebring, Florida on Sunday, February 16, 2025. The **Rev. Wayne Schoch** was the preacher, the **Rev. Daniel Wagenknecht** served as lector, and the **Rev. Mark Faugstad served** as liturgist and performed the rite of installation. The congregation welcomed Pastor Kuhns and his wife **Pam** with the ladies of New Life providing a meal after the service.



The Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the ELS Historical Society

“The First Decade of ELS Growth”

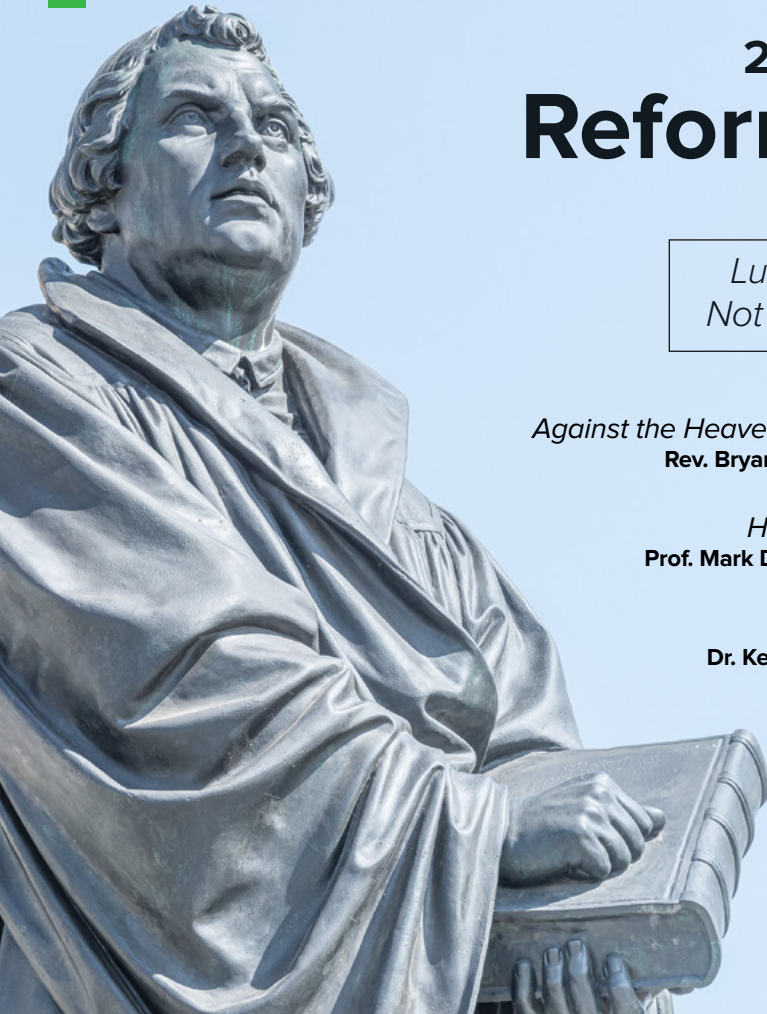
Presented by Pastor Paul Webber | Hymn by the Norseland singers

Sunday, June 15, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

Bethany Lutheran College | Lee Theater of the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center
Mankato, Minnesota

A brief business meeting will follow the program. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SYNOD NEWS



2025 Bjarne W. Teigen Reformation Lectures

October 30–31, 2025

*Luther's Great Treatises of 1525:
Not by My Own Reason or Strength*

Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments
Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

How Christians Should Regard Moses
Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN

The Bondage of the Will
Dr. Keith Wessel, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

Bethany Lutheran College | Sports and Fitness Center
Mankato, MN | October 30, 10:30 a.m.