



LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

The Holy Art of Dying

ARS MORIENDI

(The Art of Dying)

pg. 12

WHAT GREATER BLESSINGS CAN THERE BE?

While visiting our ELS churches this past year, I have noticed pictures (altar, stained glass, above the exiting doorway) and statuary of the ascending Lord Jesus. In asking whether this depicts the ascending Lord or the returning Lord, there is often silence. In truth, it can be both. Recall how the disciples were disrupted in staring into the sky by the angels. They were told, *“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). What was Jesus doing as He ascended? ...Lifting up His hands He blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them... (Luke 24:50-51).*

Those two images of Jesus blessing us as He ascended and upon His return make good book-ends to what goes on in our divine services in our houses of the Lord. Despite removing His visible presence among us, Jesus promised that He would be with us to the end of the age as we observe all that He has commanded us to do. As the gracious water of life is applied to the person being baptized in Jesus’ name, he or she is clothed in Christ. This is true for us all: gathered together in His name, living in our baptismal grace, hearing His Word preached for us and spoken of in our Christian conversations. Also, as we receive in the holy meal Jesus’ true body and blood given and shed for us, we receive the forgiveness of sins in this special form of presence among us.

Observing the ascension of our Lord on May 26 should hold great significance for you, dear Christian. Think of these two promises we have in regard to our Lord ascending to the right hand of the Father:

1. Jesus said: *“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).* The Church has received the Spirit in full measure at Pentecost (June 5) on account of Jesus’ ascension and He brings Jesus to us in the appointed means of grace.

2. *God seated [Christ] at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-22).* From this exalted position of power, our God/Man Savior, Jesus Christ, rules everything in this world so that even through the evil machinations of sinful mankind, we, Jesus’ Church, are blessed beyond measure.

These two festivals, the Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost, should hold great significance for you as you are served by your Lord, awaiting His return in blessing. Every time your pastor concludes the service with the benediction, holding up his hands in blessing, know that he represents your ascended and returning Lord. Lo, Jesus is truly with you always even to the end of time, just as His words and promises declare, giving you His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. What greater blessings can there be?

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"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit..." (Isaiah 57:15)

Where is Jesus?

by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor
THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, Norseland, Minn.

Where IS he? This is what we say when we're waiting for someone who is supposed to be present—near us—providing something for us that we can't provide for ourselves. It's what the child says as they wait for the ride from their absent father. It's what the aged grandma says as she's waiting for the ride to the doctor from her son. It's what the wife says as she waits for her husband to bring home the groceries vital for the evening meal. Where IS he?

The title of a devotion book I own serves up a similar question: Where in the World is God? Earthquakes ravage densely populated places, taking thousands of lives; trains go careening off railroad tracks at high speeds, killing some and wounding others; children suffer from deadly diseases, and the aged suffer even while praying to be taken to heaven. I believe in Jesus, but I do have questions... and chief among them is Where IS He?

To read the Epistle lesson from Acts 1 and the Gospel lesson, the closing words of St. Mark may leave us inclined to believe Jesus is retired: *A cloud received Him out of their sight – the disciples watched as He went away from earth and into heaven (Acts 1)*. Forty days after Easter, His Father received Him up into heaven and seated Him at His right hand. The answer seems pretty clear, right? Jesus is far away. He did all the dirty work His Father sent Him to do—live the life we can't and won't, die the death we ought to die for our sins, rose again champion over sin, death, and the tomb... It seems reasonable that He would get to "kick up His feet," so to speak. He has done all things well—and now He gets to rest comfortably, off the grid in Savior-retirement... That, after all, is how we know things, how we see and experience human life to go...

This is how the Lord (before He becomes human flesh and blood—Jesus) speaks:

"I dwell in the high and holy place..."

And according to these plain words and standard physics, that settles the matter—Jesus is there, high up. He set apart and we are here in the "middle of it," where the devil roams and taunts, where the world rages against us, where our own flesh wars against faith and a life of faith.

But the Lord doesn't leave this truth about Jesus and His location where sound physics must leave it. Our Lord says:

*"I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit..."*

Where you and I say with exasperation, "I can't be two places at once!" the Lord of heaven and earth not only says, "I can" but "I am!"

The contrite (broken) spirit is the one who knows that their body and life has been a body of "sin and death," as St. Paul confesses. The humble spirit hears "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" and longs for such perfection, all the while knowing their hunger for such goodness means they haven't, can't, and won't produce it for themselves.

The Jesus whose risen and ascended body occupies the high and holy place of heaven is also with such spirits. Are you one whose life is marked by every version of sin and immeasurable amounts of guilt? Be assured by Jesus, the "high and holy," that He is also with you. Are you one who loves the goodness and perfection God prescribes but recognizes how absent such goodness and perfection is in your mind, your hands, your tongue? High and holy Jesus is with your humbled spirit, too.

The Gospel gift of the Lord's Supper is perhaps the most poignant and lasting proof of this great and gracious mystery. The Son of God who reigns and rules with His Father also revives and restores the heart and conscience broken by sin and guilt. The communion hymn (written by T.H. Kingo but translated from the Danish by my dear grandfather) speaks most beautifully to this ascension Gospel:

*In heav'nly gladness dwells our Head,
Yet is He here in this blest bread.
There dwells He in His pow'r divine,
Yet gives Himself in this blest wine.*

*How this can be, I do not know
He has not willed the way to show;
Such streams my reason ought not ford;
I only need to trust His Word.*

Our ungodly, frail, and limited bodies must choose to be here or there. The One called Jesus is the Promised One—God in the flesh. Ascended Jesus who is at His Father's right hand ruling and reigning is also here with you and me, and with this power of who and what He is and the work done in His living and dying and rising, He is with us to revive Us—to give His Life to our ungodly, frail bodies, and to give His resurrection to our wilting spirits that we might live.

*In church, we ask God to create in us a clean heart. In Genesis 8:21, it says the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth. There are other passages speaking of evil proceeding from the heart. **How does a clean heart with Jesus in it coexist with evil? And are we talking about our actual heart or does it represent something else?***

Answer:

In the medical field, people receive “clean” hearts all the time. When plaque blocks the flow of blood in a coronary artery leading to the heart, the cardiologist can often re-open the blocked blood vessel, restoring heart function to the patient. Yet the physical heart is not the heart that concerns us. The “heart” that we wish cleansed is the seat of our desires and emotions. This is why Christians sing and pray these familiar words from Psalm 51, often as a response to the preached Word of God: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me* (Psalm 51:10, NKJV).

King David composed Psalm 51 after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. David had compounded his sin when he had Bathsheba's husband killed in the field of battle. Eventually, the prophet Nathan confronted David with the judgment of God's law. Realizing his fault, a repentant David confessed his sin, and Nathan assured David of the Lord's forgiveness. In Psalm 51, David confesses his sin to God and prays that God would wash him clean and blot out all of his iniquities (Psalm 51:7, 9). Yet David wanted more than simply to be declared forgiven. David wanted to be a new man. He wanted God to create a clean heart for him and renew a steadfast spirit within him.

A clean heart is something we ask for

Like David, we regularly ask God for a clean heart. We ask because we must. Our hearts are filthy with sin. God sees that *“the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth”* (Genesis 8:21). Christ our Lord says, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19). Every true evil that exists in this world springs forth from the desires of the heart. And these desires are constant. Every intent of the human heart is only evil all the time (Genesis 6:5). Even our righteous deeds are filthy rags in the eyes of God (Isaiah 64:6) because we are sinful from birth, “brought forth in iniquity” and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5).

Therefore, as the Book of Proverbs says, “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?’” (Proverbs 20:9). Nobody! We are incapable of cleansing our hearts. We might have more success performing heart surgery on ourselves than trying to cleanse our own hearts of sin!

A clean heart is something God gives

We entrust our physical hearts to the care of the cardiologist. Similarly, we entrust our spiritual heart, the seat of our emotions and desires, to the care of our Lord. We ask God for a clean heart, and in His grace, He provides us with what we ask.

God gave us a clean heart in the waters of Holy Baptism. Peter tells us that Baptism saves us with the guarantee of a good conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21). Through the promise of His grace, He sends the Holy Spirit to put a new heart and spirit within us (Ezekiel 36:26) that desires to live before Him in righteousness and holiness forever. Even Christ Himself dwells in our hearts by faith so that we grow in Christ's love and in the fullness of God.

As long as we live on this earth, however, hearts that were once clean don't necessarily stay that way. We are both saints and sinners at the same time: declared righteous and holy by God, cleansed in the blood of Christ, and yet still sinning every day. This life is a constant battle between our new life of faith in Christ that wants to please God and the evil desires that lurk in our hearts.

This is why God's Word and the sacraments are so important. As we hear the Gospel of Jesus, and as we come to the altar and receive Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, God sends us His Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts once more and to uphold and strengthen us in our faith. In this way, our Lord restores the joy of salvation to us (Psalm 51:12) until the day He takes us home to be with Him in life everlasting.



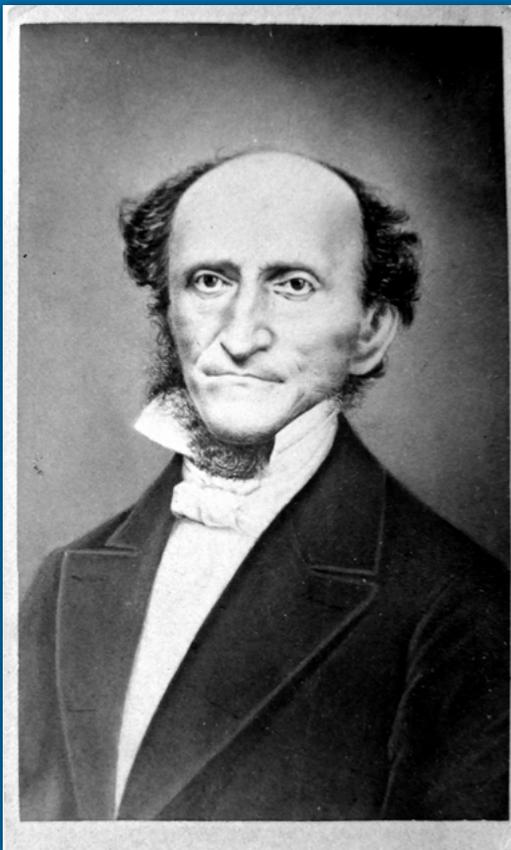
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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD 1847 – present

by **REV. THOMAS L. RANK**, ELS Doctrine Committee



C.F.W. Walther

In 1847, The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States was organized. This synod was re-named to what we know it as today, **the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod** (LCMS), in 1947. In 1853, when our own predecessor synod formed, the “old” Norwegian Synod, Norwegian pastors found confessional agreement with the Missouri Synod. So began close ties between the two synods, exhibited in declaring fellowship with each other in 1857 and also in their membership in the Synodical Conference (1872). (The ELS would join the Synodical Conference again after our reorganization in 1918.)

One of the most significant Lutherans of the late 19th century in America, Pastor **C.F.W. Walther**, served the Missouri Synod as synod president and seminary president. Under Walther's confessionally sound leadership, the synod was blessed with a firm commitment to the truth of Scripture as confessed and taught in the Lutheran Confessions. This commitment echoed what the Norwegian Synod pastors had been taught in Norway and brought with them to the new world.

In the 1870s, a significant theological discussion arose in the Missouri Synod and the Norwegian Synod. The doctrine of election became the focal point for heated debate. The theological struggle that ensued hit the Norwegian Synod particularly hard, bringing about its decision to leave the Synodical Conference in order not to bring division into that body, too.

Over the next decades and into the 20th century, the Missouri Synod grew significantly, becoming one of the largest Lutheran church bodies in America. After World War II, the rate of growth increased, going from 1.6 million in 1950 to nearly 2.8 million in 1970. Current membership is 1.8 million.

In the 1930s and 1940s, theological developments began to weaken the scriptural and confessional commitment of the LCMS. Discussion between the LCMS and the American Lutheran Church (ALC) were showing a drift toward doctrinal compromise (unionism) on major issues of the Christian faith, including the inspiration of Scripture, objective justification, and election. Concerns over these trends were discussed regularly in the Synodical Conference in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The ELS was particularly concerned with the LCMS's desire to seek fellowship with church bodies which promoted and allowed the very false teachings (specifically on election) that had led to the ELS leaving the merger of other Norwegian church bodies in 1917, a wound which had scarcely healed.

The ensuing discussions within the Synodical Conference led the ELS and the Wisconsin Synod to see growing and dangerous doctrinal weaknesses in the LCMS. In an address at the centennial convention of the ELS in 1953, the delegates heard this: "If Missouri decides to fellowship with the ALC, she will not be transgressing an isolated commandment occurring here and there in

the Bible—although that would be serious enough, she will be jeopardizing that which is the very source of her strength, she will be denying her faith" (Robert Preus, "Our Mission as a Remnant," quoted in *A City Set on a Hill*, 182). In 1955, the ELS suspended fellowship with the LCMS after nearly a century, a difficult but necessary decision. The WELS would follow suit in 1961.

In less than two decades, the LCMS would face perhaps its most significant challenge. In 1974, the decision was made to remove the current president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The resulting "walk-out" in support of the seminary president eventually resulted in a new church body, with 100,000 members leaving along with many pastors and professors. The new church body, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), would later merge with other church bodies to form the current ELCA (1988).

The issues which led to our suspension of fellowship with the LCMS in 1955 have not been

resolved in these subsequent seven decades. However, there are welcome signs of renewed commitment to Scripture and the Lutheran confessions within the church body. There is a common confessional "language" between some in the LCMS and the ELS. Yet it cannot be denied that within the LCMS of the 2020s, there remains a doctrinal divide. There are those who are very close to us in doctrine and practice, even while there are others who are far closer to the false teachings (e.g. women pastors, open communion) of the ELCA.

As we look over the landscape of American Lutheranism, the LCMS and our own ELS, it is good to heed the words which close our synod history book of 1968, *A City Set on a Hill*: "Truth, as a body of doctrine, can indeed be set before a people by a preceding generation, but each succeeding generation must, through the Holy Spirit, make this truth its own as a part of its very faith and life before it can actually be said to possess it... Each succeeding generation must start all over again. In this way alone is a synod spared from offensive pride, dead orthodoxy, and liberalism. In this way alone is a new generation enabled to sing: 'God's Word is our great heritage'" (265).

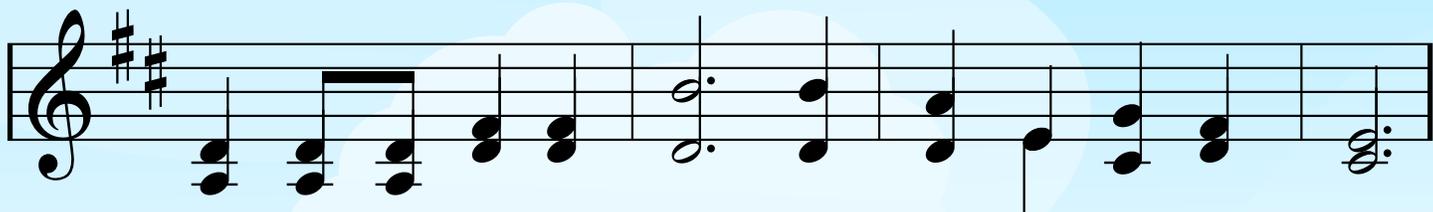
"..there are welcome signs of renewed commitment to Scripture and the Lutheran confessions within the church body. There is a common confessional "language" between some in the LCMS and the ELS. Yet it cannot be denied that within the LCMS of the 2020s, there remains a doctrinal divide."

Songs out of Zion

56

Ye Lands, to the Lord

11 5 12 9



What is less known about Koren is his work to promote Lutheran church music and hymnody. In 1866, he was appointed the chairman of a hymnbook committee for the Norwegian Synod. The committee concluded its work with the publication of the Norwegian language Synodens Salmebog (Synod's Hymnal) in 1874. Koren prepared a translation and a number of hymn revisions in this book. **John Dahle** in The Library of Christian Hymns wrote that Koren's efforts "show his unusual ability to strike the true spirit of the church hymn. They bear witness of his aesthetic taste and marked sense of rhythm and euphony" (Vol. 1, p. 30). The same source described Koren as "very musical and keenly interested in the older rhythmic form of church music."

The Synod's Hymnal also included an original hymn by Koren, "Ye Lands, to the Lord," based on Psalm 100. Psalm 100 follows a series of royal psalms which point to the coming King, the Messiah. The first verse of Psalm 100 repeats the words of Psalm 98: "Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!" (NKJV). We praise and serve Him because He is the mighty God who made us and who leads us, the sheep of His pasture (vv. 2-3). We give thanks to Him because He "is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations" (vv. 4-5).

Every thought in Psalm 100 is reflected in Koren's hymn. He did not make the specific connection to Jesus that often characterizes Lutheran hymns on the psalms. Some examples of this are Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" based on Psalm 46 (ELH 250/251) and **Anders Arrebo's** "The Lord My Faithful Shepherd Is" based on Psalm 23 (ELH 368).

But Koren did add an interesting refrain after the first and third lines of each hymn verse. The psalm calls for the people of all lands to sing praise to the LORD, so Koren includes a line of praise: "Glory be to God!" The angels sang these words outside Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth. Many Lutherans, including the great composer **J. S. Bach**, have added these words to their written manuscripts, often in Latin: Soli Deo Gloria!

After the third line of each verse, Koren gives the refrain, "Sing praise unto God out of Zion!" The original Norwegian version does not have the word "Zion." Koren writes that Guds menighed—the church of God—now praises the LORD. But the meaning in English is the same. "Zion" is the church of God, the bride of Jesus, which sings back to Him all the beautiful things He has done for her.

The translator of this hymn was **Harriet Reynolds Krauth Spaeth** (1845-1925). Whereas Koren moved to America from Norway, Spaeth's family had been in America for several generations. Her background was not Scandinavian, but she appreciated the rich hymns of the Scandinavian Lutheran tra-

dition. The Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary also includes her translations of Hans Brorson's "Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We" and Hans Sthen's "Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest."

The melody paired with Koren's hymn was composed by **Erik Christian Hoff** (1832-1894). He served as a choir director and organist in Christiania (Oslo) for many years and produced a book of church music in 1878.

I remember singing "Ye Lands, to the Lord" as a young boy. I turned to it often enough in the old Lutheran Hymnary (1913) that the number 11 still reminds me of it today. I can picture Koren working out the words of this hymn by candlelight at a wooden desk. Or maybe he composed it on horseback during his long trips through Iowa prairies and woods. But the words he wrote are not as much his as they are the inspired words of the psalm. If you learn Koren's hymn, you know Psalm 100.

All the major Lutheran hymnbooks retained this hymn through the 1900s, but it has been dropped in the most recent hymnbooks of the WELS, LCMS, and ELCA. It is not the most profound hymn we have or the most poetically impressive one. But I hope we will continue to sing this hymn for many years to come. Besides helping us to give glory and praise to God, it reminds us to thank Him for faithful pastors of the church who clearly confessed His truth (Hebrew 13:7).

*Ye lands, to the Lord make a jubilant noise;
Glory be to God!
O serve Him with joy, in His presence now rejoice;
Sing praise unto God out of Zion!*

*Not we, but the Lord is our Maker, our God:
Glory be to God!
His people we are, and the sheep led by His rod;
Sing praise unto God out of Zion!*

*O enter His gates with thanksgiving and praise;
Glory be to God!
To bless Him and thank Him, our voices we will raise;
Sing praise unto God out of Zion!*

*For good is the Lord, and His mercy is sure;
Glory be to God!
To all generations His truth shall still endure;
Sing praise unto God out of Zion!*

CREATION FALL REDEMPTION

In Search of Human Unity

by **REV. DANIEL RUIZ**, Contributing Writer
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, San Antonio, Tex.

The world makes a big deal about racial identity, often seeing ethnic or racial differences as being hopelessly divisive and the primary source of our identity. Terms such as “racism” and “anti-racism” have recently been redefined. As Inigo Montoya from *The Princess Bride* would say, “I do not think that word means what you think it means.” The supposed antidotes to racial prejudice, systemic racism, and oppression all too often fuel a new form of ethnic pride just as bad as the former. A biblical worldview puts this new “critical race theory” into proper perspective.

The racial tensions that rocked our country in recent years have led to numerous sad incidents and struck the hearts of many people. In season and out of season, a Christian should fall back on the Scriptures for the insight given by our Lord to properly understand in what ways humans are or can be united. There will always be differences or even divisions. Sin courses through our human nature, making up the thoughts, emotions, and actions bubbling out of the heart that separate us from God and each other. However, there is One Creator and One Reconciler for mankind.

Our alienation began at a time when only two people existed, and it spans into our own lifetimes today. How can such a huge problem be solved? Let us look at this question through the lenses of Holy Scripture: “What is the basis of human unity?”

Fundamental Unity — Imprisoned Under Sin No Matter Our Ethnicity

Fundamental unity began with Adam and Eve, established by God in Eden, when He breathed life into them, gave them a soul, faith, righteousness, holiness, and love. This was also to be our perfect unity with God as fellow partakers in their divinely created humanity.

However, perfect unity was shattered for all Adam’s descendants by the fall into sin (Genesis 3). Adam’s lineage is disunited by sin and severed by death (Genesis 5). Not one ethnicity, not one person is able to escape this brokenness without divine reconciliation.

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.
 (Galatians 3:22)

People seek unity in human relationships: family name, country, local birth, place of work, and many other senses of identity. But why is there disunity between employee and employer? Why is there disunity between neighbors? Why is there disunity among citizens of one country? Why is there disunity among people of similar culture? Why is there disunity between family members? There is no denying this simple but profound truth: sin erodes God’s good creation.

Consider families from my own Latino heritage: the stereotype is that blood is the reason for loyalty among family. Realistically, not everything is unified; the self-applied stereotype that family is everything is thrown out the window when we see that Latinos sin just as much against their own blood as other ethnic groups. Man’s own attempts to unify end up destroying what little unity we have. Are our families, our communities much different?

Paul reminds the Galatians, who faced tensions between Jew or non-Jew, that everyone was imprisoned under the law. Despite how you look, how civilized your people are, or how cultured you feel, there is no room for self-righteous moralism. God’s divine morality places all people under condemnation, all people equally united in sin, equally deserving of death. *There is not one who does good, not even one* (Romans 3:12).

So boldly, I write: despite our different physical traits and the history of our unique earthly heritages, the great equalizer under the law is sin. Let this be a humbling starting point for us all.

Still, even as different cultures war with each other, God providentially guides the nations so that He may save them. God the Son Himself would become the great equalizer, making sin His to suffer for all people, that all may be saved, “so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22).

One Blood to Unite Us All

Paul writes to the culturally diverse people of Ephesus, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love....” (Ephesians 3:14-17).

The Ephesians have their own ethnic tensions, yet are reminded that God is Father of all—that every family in heaven (the saints of every nation) and on earth has been established by the grace of God. Realize that these different people are united through faith in Christ. In anyone’s heart where Christ reigns, there His kingdom, His church, His family exists.

Paul teaches that Jesus’ blood tore down the wall of hostility between us and God (Ephesians 2:14). We are no longer imprisoned by the law. Jesus’ blood dripping from the cross assumed the guilt of all of Adam’s race, yet it is also the holy blood of God the Son. His blood releases us from the power of our racially charged ethnocentrism. His undeserved love calls us to fill His heavenly banquet hall from all the winds of the earth—to unite under one family head and name, Jesus.

Reaching Out to Reconcile in Christ

The Christian message deals with the obstacles blocking the way to Jesus. If you are a non-Christian coming at this topic with your personal views and equality is what you desire, then you will be repeatedly disappointed that human solutions always fail to reconcile us. God’s law is the great equalizer, placing everyone under wrath. But greater is the blood of Jesus to do the very opposite: it unites us together with

Him as forgiven sinners, as members of His new family, His holy people.

Jesus desires you to have equal salvation with Him regardless of ethnic heritage. For that very purpose, He became the victim of our racism today. Willingly God the Son was beaten, though He was innocent; He was murdered by Jews and non-Jews; He struggled to breathe on the cross; Jesus was dis-united from God in a most mysterious way—all this so that God would unite Himself to us. There has been no other redemption or reconciliation like this between people in history. However, you, dear believers, are united with all believers as one family, kingdom, and church—from every “*nation, tribe, people, and language*” (Revelation 7:9).

God’s grace toward us, no matter our heritage, is amazing! We have a gracious—a merciful—God who strengthens and roots us in the love of Christ. Therefore, you are changed and moved to love those who hate you for being black or white or whatever, and to be ready to suffer, not as a champion for the world’s social justice, but as a testimony for the Gospel of reconciliation in Christ. You are regenerated to speak in love to those who are hostile. Let us admit where sins have been committed. Let us also hold firm to Gospel proclamation, not moving from the Word that establishes us and sanctifies our culture—as we pray in our liturgy (ELH, p. 96).

The restoration of human unity begins and ends in Christ, who restores the good creation that was ruined by the fall. In Him, we are a new creation, rescued from the world’s racial mania to be united for eternity.

- Presenting evidence for the truth of Christianity
- Critiquing worldviews that oppose Christianity
- Fortifying believers with a proper interpretation of Holy Scripture
- Engaging unbelievers in conversations leading toward the Gospel proclamation of forgiveness in Christ



Recommended Reading:

Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe* (Salem Books, 2021)

Paul Dare, *Christians in a Woke World: A Call to Courage, Confession and Love* (2021)

Marvin J. Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (IVP, 2006)

Thaddeus Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice* (Zondervan, 2020)



Websites:

The Center for Apologetics and Worldviews:
blc.edu/apologetics

ELS Evangelism Resources:
els.org/resources/evangelism

The author would like to dedicate this series to the blessed memory of
Sigurd Lee (1926-2021),
 mentor, encourager, and dear friend.

The Holy Art of Dying

Part III:

ARS MORIENDI

(The Art of Dying)

by **REV. JACOB KEMPFERT**, Contributing Writer
GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH, Saginaw, Mich.

In my younger and more vulnerable years, the old-timers gave me some good advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. "*Ars Moriendi, Ars Vivendi*," they said, which means, "The art of dying is the art of living." This deceptively simple phrase conceals many deep and abiding truths. And I suspect fresh lessons yet await me.

As a young man, I took it to mean the art of dying is the art of living; that is, to truly live well, we must be aware that we will die. Life is best lived mindful of life's end. Therefore, "the more alive you are, the more you're aware of death," as a poet friend of mine was fond of saying.

But now, as I slouch ever nearer into middle-age, this advice has also begun to mean something else: the art of dying is the art of living; that is, living and dying well is not a given, but a craft, a cultivation of one's soul, a truly blessed art.

And the art of living is the art of dying because, like any form of art, to live and die well requires practice, practice, practice. If one wishes to paint, then one must paint, and paint, and keep painting, and paint again.

Now, becoming an artist is optional. Anyone can be an artist if they cultivate creativity. But dying is not optional: It is appointed for people to die once and after this face the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). You are going to die. It's not a question of "if," but a matter of "when." You are now irrecoverably closer to your death than you were when you began reading this sentence.

What is optional, however, is dying well. And while we all hope to die well, for many, that "hope" consists of some uncertain day in the ambiguous future when we will somehow be ready and prepared for it. But if we are not prepared for death every day, then we'll never be prepared. We will always delay until tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. But God cautions us otherwise: "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you" (Luke 12:20).

If you'd like to paint well, then practice painting every day; if you'd like to die well, then practice, practice, practice! (The old joke goes: How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice! We might also ask How do you get to the graveyard? and receive the same answer.) After all, if you've never practiced painting, when you're standing at the easel, you'll paint very nervously and poorly. Likewise, if you've never practiced dying—if you've never rehearsed your dying thoughts or contemplated what you will say and think when you face death—then where will your dying thoughts take you?

But this begs the question: How can we rehearse for death? How can we make dying into a practiced art when we don't know when or where or how it will come? The words of the hymn "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" (ELH #335, v. 8) prescribe the best method for cultivating the art of dying, the art of living:

*Be Thou my consolation,
my Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
when My last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee —
who dieth thus, dies well!*

We practice dying and learn to die well—and so also, we live and learn to live well—by taking to heart the living and active Word of God. This is the Word's purpose: But

these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31). Daily meditation on God's Word is a daily rehearsal for death and a daily preparation for dying well. Why else are you reading God's Word if not for eternal life? And when else do you have eternal life if you don't already have it today?

Ultimately, both the art of living well and the art of dying well are cultivated from this sacred fact: You are a beloved creation of the divine Creator, forgiven of all your sins and redeemed by the blood of Christ. In life and in death and in eternity, we are all creations of divine artistry, living tapestries of God's wondrous love and redemption: For we are God's handiwork (Ephesians 2:10); You wove me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14); in Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28); and our Lord Jesus Christ is "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Thus, the closer we are to life in Christ, the more fully we exist and the more beautifully we live. This is for the simple reason that, by Word and Sacrament, through the work of our Redeemer we are drawn more closely to our Creator. As Simon Peter confessed when many of Christ's disciples turned away from Him, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

God's Word applied to you in your Baptism has already trained you how to die well: Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him by this baptism into His death, so that just as He was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

Thus, the art of dying is the art of living, and "whether we live or die we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8). For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (Romans 14:9). The more we see our death as God sees it—not as our bitter end or final defeat or our return to formlessness and void, but instead as the portal to our truest life, our own eternal victory, the everlasting radiance of the living God's gracious presence—then the more alive we are, the more truly and deeply and beautifully we live. And "who dieth thus, dies well!"

by **REV. CHRISTIAN EISENBEIS**, Contributing Editor
FIRST TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Marinette, Wisc.

CROSSING PATHS

ON THE ROAD TO JERICHO

PART THREE

The Good Neighbor Who Got Involved (Luke 10:25-37)

His battery had died. His wheelchair was stuck in the intersection at the peak of rush hour. Commuters were not pleased. “I’ve called about this twice,” one of them said. “When is an officer going to get here?”

Prudently, the 911 operator chose not to explain that officers “get there” by automobile—not by parachute or teleportation. “We’ve received several calls about this,” the operator said. “Is anyone trying to help this person?”

“That’s your job,” the caller replied. “I’m not getting involved.”

The lawyer who tried to test Jesus had failed. He had asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life, only to find out that he hadn’t done it. Love for God and love for one’s neighbor weren’t just a matter of saying the right words. “*Do this*,” Jesus had said, “*and you will live*” (Luke 10:28b ESV).

The lawyer, “desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (v. 29)? “After all, Jesus, love must have its limits.” The Parable of the Good Samaritan was the Lord’s reply.

As they walked down the road to Jericho, the priest and the Levite saw the half-dead man and “passed by on the other side” (v. 31b, 32b). Those six English words come from a single word in Greek: one verb of motion with two prefixes attached, highlighting how both men made doubly sure to stay out of the way and not get involved. Maybe they wanted to keep themselves clean for work (see Leviticus 21:1-3). Maybe they didn’t want to end up in the same condition. They certainly didn’t want any inconvenience. So on they went—clean, safe, and justified in their own minds. They had committed no sin against this man. Why should they risk sharing in his misfortune?

Loving our neighbors is not limited to the prohibitions found in Commandments like the Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth. As Luther’s Catechism explains, keeping those Commandments involves the willingness to share in our neighbor’s misfortune, to protect and care for our neighbor’s life, property, and reputation, even if it involves inconvenience or risk. But the sinful

flesh prefers to pass by, justifying itself by saying, “It’s not my fault his battery died. I just want to get home. I don’t want to get involved.”

The Samaritan got involved. Without a word, he moved toward the helpless victim and became a neighbor to him. The Samaritan’s compassion covered over both kinds of sin: the sin that left the man half-dead and the sin that was willing to leave him half-dead. No wound was left uncleansed or unbandaged. No cost was left unpaid. Still the good work wasn’t finished—the Samaritan promised to come back and do more!

Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil (Isaiah 1:5b-6 NIV). This is our half-dead state: spiritually dead in sin since conception, waiting for the eternal death we deserve, helpless to save ourselves. Even the best neighbors in this world, willing as they might be to help, are unable to save us.

Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was willing to become our Good Neighbor and get involved with us. He touched the man with leprosy before He spoke to him (Mark 1:41). He touched the bier of the widow’s son (Luke 7:14). He took on our flesh and bore our infirmities, griefs, and sins. He suffered and died to pay the cost of our salvation.

The Risen Savior has not only come into our world. He has also come into our hearts by His Holy Spirit, bringing His healing Gospel, which covers over all our sins. Jesus is still willing to share in our misfortunes, and He teaches us to “*go and do likewise*” for our neighbors (Luke 10:37b). Only by His Spirit do we see our neighbors as they are and love them as God commands. We see their troubles, the chief of which is sin. We see their needs, the chief of which is forgiveness. We don’t pass them by. We get involved.

Good neighbors share the Good News! They “*bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2).



“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word”

June 26–30 | Bethany Lutheran College | Mankato, Minnesota

ANNOUNCING:

the 105th Convention of
**The Evangelical
Lutheran Synod**

the 7th Annual Meeting of
**The Lutheran Schools
of America, Inc.**

the 66th Annual Meeting of
**Bethany Lutheran
College, Inc.**

June 26 | Synod Sunday

- 4:00** **Synod Sunday Service:**
Including installation of seminary president **Timothy Hartwig**
Preacher: Rev. Thomas Kuster (New Ulm, Minn.)
- 5:30** **Dinner** (free will donation)

June 27 | Monday

- 9:00** **Opening Convention Service**
- 1:00** **Anniversaries Observed:**
Adolph Harstad, 50 years
Larry Vinton, 50 years
Gregory Haugen, 40 years
Bradley Homan, 40 years
David Thompson, 40 years
Joseph Abrahamson, 25 years
Randy VanMehren, 25 years

June 28 | Tuesday

- 9:00** **Devotion**
- 10:00** **Election of President and Vice President**
- 1:30** **Convention Essay**
Essayist: Rev. Piet Van Kampen (Green Bay, Wisc.)
- 5:00** **Communion/Memorial Service:**
Preacher: Rev. Steven Sparley (Tacoma, Wash.)
Lois Petersen (1927–2022)
Martin Doepel (1933–2022)
Pat Meyer (1939–2022)
Norman Madson (1932–2022)

June 29 | Wednesday

- 1:30** **Convention Essay continued**

June 30 | Thursday

- 8:00** **Convention continues** (*if needed*)



THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ELS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

“When the Christian is Called to Arms”

A Brief History of How the ELS Has Prepared and Supported Her Members in Military Service

Sunday, June 26, 2022 7:00 p.m.

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

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

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

Christ Lutheran Church

Klamath Falls, Oregon

by **REV. GLENN SMITH**, Contributing Writer
CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH, Klamath Falls, Oregon



Christ Lutheran Church was formed in 1986 by Lutherans in the Klamath Falls area who had left a former congregation with concern for faithfulness to scriptural teaching and practice. Yearning for a more confessionally sound, conservative, and traditional Lutheran Church, they gathered together and sought out the support of a national church body. President George Orvick met with the members that year, and in 1987, the congregation officially joined the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

For the first several years, the congregation met in rented spaces. In 1991, the building in which the congregation had rented a worship space was purchased, and congregation members undertook an extensive remodeling of the facilities. The building was dedicated in May 1994, complete with a beautiful new sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, office, and classrooms.

Pastors who have served the congregation include Rev. Hugo Warnke (retired WELS – 1986, 1989-90); Rev. William Mack (1987-1989); Rev. James Braun (1990-2007); Rev. Michael Muehlenhardt (2007-2014); and Rev. Glenn Smith (2014-present).

A relatively small but dedicated group continue to meet every week around God's Word and Sacraments, encouraging one another in the faith. Among other forms of outreach to the community, the Sunday morning radio program begun in 1994 continues to proclaim the good news of God's grace in Christ, who has come as the Savior for all people.