



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

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Practicing Our Faith in the Voting Booth

The following article has appeared in this newsletter several times through the years at election time, with various edits and revisions. With this year's midterm election fast approaching and knowing how politicized so many things are in our cultural moment, it seems good to run this essay again. After all, our Christ-centered theology never changes and is always worthy of repeated consideration at times like this.

When we go to the polls, we will vote for leaders of our city, state, and nation as well as matters of policy or funding. Will we also use this privilege of voting to put our Christian beliefs into practice for good of our neighbors in society?

This may sound strange if we buy into the popular misconception of "the separation between church and state." We may be told that there should be an iron wall dividing church from state. However, that's not what God's Word teaches us (nor does it fit with our nation's founding, but that's a different topic).

Government & Politics: Gifts from God

The Bible and our Lutheran Confessions teach us to view government and politics as gifts from God. St. Paul exhorts, *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God"* (Romans 13:1). The Apostle also urges *"supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving,"* especially *"for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way"* (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

About "Civil Government" the *Augsburg Confession* says:

"Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God. They teach that it is right for Christians to hold political office, to serve as judges, to judge matters by imperial laws and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to engage in just

wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to take oaths when required by the magistrates, for a man to marry a wife, or a woman to be given in marriage" (AC, XVI, 1-2).

Since God gives us the governing authorities, we Christians are free to take part in the political process. Now you may ask: "Why would I want to take part in that ugly mess of politics?" Here's where the rubber of our Christian faith hits the road of our society.

Making a Difference in Society

We Christians are sometimes criticized for being "so heavenly minded" that we are of "no earthly good." However, God does want us to live in and make a difference in our society. That's why He has placed us in this nation, at this time in history. Our gracious God does want us to be of earthly good. After all, it's His earth, and He has redeemed us by the blood of Christ to make us salt and light in the world (see Matthew 5:13-16).

The Bible gives good examples of God's people getting involved in the messy stuff of politics and society. King David not only wrote marvelous Psalms and taught us how to worship our merciful God, but he also ruled and defended the greatest superpower of his day – the nation of Israel – for forty years.

A few centuries later God sent His people into exile in Babylon, judging them for their faithless ways of life and worship through the years. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God exhorted His exiled people to

“seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).

After the Persian Empire overtook the Babylonian Empire, God’s people were persecuted for worshiping only the one true God. Young Queen Esther belonged to God’s people. When she heard of the plot to exterminate her people, she took action. She risked her life by going into the king uninvited and telling him of the plot. (Going into the king uninvited usually brought swift execution!) Esther’s cousin, Mordecai, who also raised the beautiful young queen, encouraged her with these words: *“Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esther 4:14).

In the same way, you and I have come to our nation for such a time as this—to make a difference in the world. So, let’s seek the peace of the city, state, and nation where we sojourn, and we will have peace. We get to do that, first and foremost, by practicing our faith when we go to the voting booth.

Dr. Robert Kolb gives some good wisdom in his book *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching*.¹

“Believers are also called to make a difference in the formal aspects of societal life, in their political communities” (147).

“Christians are called to active involvement in the political life of their nation.

“However, they do not participate in the political process with a ‘Christian’ agenda; they rather seek the practice of civic righteousness, the righteousness which common sense should show all people is the best way to live.... We cannot impose faith in God through law upon the unbelievers, but through law and political persuasion we can impose external compliance with large portions of God’s design for our lives.

“Therefore, Christian citizens will not have any delusions about the possibility of making theirs a ‘Christian nation.’... Culture and Christ can never be bride and bridegroom. Christ’s bride is alone the church of believers.

“Nonetheless, God does want His people involved in the often ‘dirty’ and compromising work of making civil society more harmonious” (148-149).

For Such a Time as This?

It’s easy to lament the sorry state of our society—rising crime, inflation, unemployment, the undermining of marriage and our religious liberties, undesirable candidates, etc. We may ask, “What can any of us do about any of it?” But consider this: one likely reason we are in such a sorry state in our country is because we Christians have grown lax in participating in society and politics. We have left the “public square” to those who deny the true God.

We Christians, however, can make a difference. It is why God has put us here.

As we go to the polls, I urge and encourage you to put your faith into practice as you vote—no, not to make a “Christian nation,” but to keep and enforce God’s laws the best we can. Plan ahead and be informed on the issues. Study up on the candidates and know where they stand in their policy positions. It’s all part of being God’s salt and light in a dirty and rotten world.

As you vote for various officials and ballot measures, think specifically of how you can practice your Christian faith in the voting booth. Look for candidates who protect God’s gift of life from womb to tomb. After all, God’s gift of life is most sacred and He calls us to protect it. Look for candidates who defend marriage as God’s estate between one man and one woman. Look for candidates who respect and will restore our religious liberties as specified in the First Amendment of our nation’s Constitution. These are specific, concrete issues that call for our Christian faith to be practiced in the voting booth.

God has put us here for a reason—to work for the good of people all around us, even if they are not Christians. We certainly practice our faith as we participate in the political process, and we seek to improve all of society so that it can be more in line with how God designs all of life. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

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¹ Robert Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching: A Guide for the Study of Luther’s Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press), second edition, 2012.

Notes from the Kantor

As we enter the month of October our 10-month journey through the catechetical hymns of Martin Luther continues with his versification of Simeon's song, the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-32), in his hymn, *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart* (LSB 938). Here we are told of the servant Simeon, who was "righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," as he beholds the promised Messiah he has been promised from throughout the Old Testament. Simeon was aged, yet he knew he would see the Savior of Israel as, "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be presented at the temple, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

These words ring familiar in our ears as we sing them weekly at the end of the Divine Service. In Luther's setting he creates a versification of this text. While not word for word, the text retains its meaning while comfortably fitting the melody.

In Dr. Luther's sermon for the Presentation of Our Lord from 1527 he comments on the opening words of Simeon's Song:

"The pious Simeon boasted that he could depart in peace as if death were nothing. Yes, he doesn't even call it death since he doesn't desire to give it so much dignity as to name it but says, 'Now You let Your servant depart in peace.'"

The Christian who has seen Christ in the Word and received Him in Holy Communion can sing these words with confidence. At the end of stanza one we sing, "death is but a slumber." It should be noted that Simeon doesn't say, "Now let me die." He calls it a going and a departure. We daily are reminded of the sleep and resurrection cycle in our own daily lying down to sleep and rising again in the morning.

Stanza two begins with the words, "Christ Jesus brought this gift to me." The gift is death, obtained through faith. Again, from his sermon at the Presentation Luther writes,

"Simeon looks upon this little infant wrapped in shabby rags. By reasoned judgment he would have had to say, 'This is no King, but a beggar-child.' But he does not allow his reason to judge by what his eyes behold but denominates this child as a king, greater than all the kings in the world. For he calls him a Savior, prepared by God for all Nations and a Light to lighten the Gentiles all over the world. Indeed, for Simeon, this was to open one's eyes wide and look far beyond oneself! His eyes behold the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other. Wherever in the whole world, he says, there are peoples and Gentiles, there this child is a Savior and a light."

In stanza three we sing, "You sent the people of the earth their great salvation." What is this salvation? It is He whom Simeon bears in his arms. It is the child Jesus who will set the world free, take away sins, slay death, and give life to His people.

Stanza four refers to "those in blindness" and "those in night." These are common Biblical references to sin and unbelief. Again, we read from Luther's sermon.

"As Simeon says, since this child is to be the Savior of all people and a light to lighten the Gentiles, it follows that all peoples on earth are without salvation and all Gentiles without Light, that is, in darkness; they are blind, lost and condemned. For if they were not without light and salvation, lost and condemned in darkness, they would not be in need of this Savior and Light."

The origin of the tune is not as clear as the text. There were no attributions in the original printing by Johann Walter, although it is probable that either he or Luther composed the haunting tune in the Dorian mode. As with many Reformation-era tunes, there are some variations found in the many publications since the original.

In CHRIST,
Kantor Janssen



ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION'S FUTURE: WE WANT TO LISTEN TO YOU

YOU – YES, YOU! – ARE INVITED TO JOIN US. We'd like every communicant member of the congregation to participate in the upcoming series of Saturday morning prayerful conversations about the gracious gift that God has given to our church family: Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church. **SERVING IN GOD'S MISSION** is a next step forward in Hope's planning process. Using *Re:Vitality* resources developed in the LCMS Office of National Mission, the outcome of these sessions will be a strategic ministry plan that will capture what's on our minds and hearts regarding Hope's vision, mission and purpose. We'll also develop a set of specific goals designed to extend the

proclamation of the Gospel to the communities that God has called us to serve. **IMPORTANT:** Please mark your calendar now and plan to join your fellow Hope members in our fellowship hall on the following dates. ALL are welcome and encouraged to join us; we need your input.

Saturday, September 10, 9:00-11:15 am
Saturday, September 24, 8:00-11:45 am
Saturday, October 8, 9:00-11:30 am
Saturday, October 22, 8:00 am-Noon
Saturday, November 5, 9:00-10:30 am

P.S. Mark your calendar now with the dates/times shown above. . . and then come and contribute. Unable to make a specific session? No worries. . . just plan to join us for the others.

Basement Renovation Update

The third and final listening post to review, ask questions and comment on the proposed plan for the basement renovation was held Sunday Sept. 11 during the Bible Class Hour. At that time participants got to see the architects drawings and PowerPoint presentation. Additionally, the floors and other surfaces have been marked off with blue tape to indicate the proposed floorplan. We are eager to review the feedback thus far and hear any further thoughts, questions or concerns at this listening post. Following this event, the basement renovation committee will compile all feedback and share it with the architectural firm with the request to provide additional mock-up

drawings that include the feedback from the congregation. These new drawings will be presented at the October 30th Voters Meeting with a full presentation of where things stand to date as well as anticipated next steps as we continue to revise and refine what the congregation desires for these renovated spaces. Future listening posts will be scheduled as needed following the Voters Meeting.

Committee members: Pam Nielsen (chair), Kay Shoemaker, Julie Vigil, Julie Day.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article – October 2022

“We Are All Beggars”

In the early morning hours of Feb. 18, 1546, Martin Luther closed his eyes forever. Before that happened, the hand that hammered the 95 Theses into the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517, penned its final words: “We are all beggars. This is true.” And this is the truth that our Lord says makes you free.

Ironical, isn't it? In order to be free, you must be a beggar. You must be utterly dependent and reliant upon God. This makes us uncomfortable – the way we're uncomfortable when someone gets us a Christmas present when we haven't gotten them one. We feel we owe them. And we don't like being in someone's debt like that.

But what Luther would remind us is that we are all indeed beggars. And we're not just anyone's beggars. We're God's beggars. Christ came for sinners. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to heal the sick and raise the dead. He came for sinners, and He dwells only with sinners.

If we are to be where He is, we must be willing to be counted among the lost, the sick, and the dead. We must be willing to be beggars. We must cry out for mercy, for grace, and for his undeserved love and kindness. We must be dependent solely on Him and what He gives.

And here's the beauty: He gives us everything. Everything. Forgiveness of sins, salvation from death and the devil, and eternal life. This isn't because of any worthiness or merit in us. It is because of His divine goodness, mercy, and grace. On account of Christ's death and

resurrection, the Father forgives you, saves you, and is pleased with you. You receive His love, His righteousness, His holiness, His acceptance, and His inheritance. We are all beggars. This is true.

This is the heart and soul of Christianity and the lifeblood of the Christian Church. God justifies us and declares us innocent and righteous by His

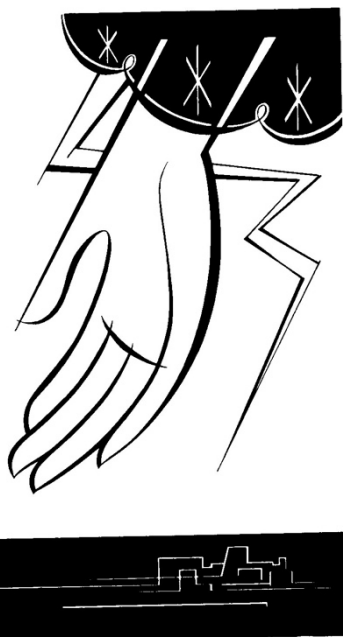
grace received through faith for the sake of Christ. This isn't because of our works but because of His work on the cross. We, who once were enemies of God, are reconciled to Him and made to be His children.

This is what Luther pointed us to when He took up his pen for the last time and scribbled “We are all beggars. This is true.” We are beggars, but we are beggars of the God who does not ignore us and who doesn't pass by us on the other side. We are beggars of the One who descended from heaven

to make His dwelling with sinners.

We are beggars of Him who deigns to dwell with us, among us, and – yes – still in us by grace for Christ's sake. For in the bread and cup that we bless we share together with Christ and each other the riches of God's grace. The riches of this grace – the Gospel in sermon and absolution, in Baptism, and in Holy Communion – are so inexhaustible that our cups overflow. We, who are God's beggars, are inexhaustibly satisfied, and we have something to give back in thanksgiving and praise.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



In the Sunday **Divine Service** God Himself comes in our midst to serve us through His Word and Sacrament. The *Augsburg Confession* makes this simple and profound statement about our worship: *“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ”* (AC, 24:3). That’s indeed what our liturgy does every Sunday. Here’s what we will hear and learn about Christ in the month of October:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
October 2	Anniversary of a Congregation	Luke 19:1-10	Congregation Anniversary - God promises to dwell with His people by means of His holy Word and Sacraments. Just as Jesus entered the home of Zacchaeus and thus brought salvation to him and other sinners around him, so also has our Lord entered our house of worship and continually brings salvation to us. We thank our gracious Savior, along with His Father and the Holy Spirit, for dwelling among us here at Hope for 106 years.
October 9	Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 14:1-11	Christian Freedom - Christ frees the man sick with dropsy for a life of love and humility. Christ frees us from pious narrowness (the Pharisees) and lets the living command of God shine forth again among men: that is the whole sense of the day of rest (Sabbath) for man and beast.
October 16	Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 22:34-46	The Foremost Commandment - Our Lord distills the richness of the Bible to the twofold command to love God and to love our neighbor. This twofold command cuts off all the ways that we slip into self-service and connects us to God’s love for us and our neighbor’s need before us.
October 23	Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 9:1-8	The Healing of the Paralytic - Jesus heals body and soul. This healing is the forgiveness of sins. Where the soul is healed in forgiveness, the body benefits too. Jesus forgives sins on earth.
October 30	Festival of the Reformation (observed)	Matthew 11:12-19	The Everlasting Gospel - The Church always needs to be reformed. That reforming comes only through the Word of God. God’s people may suffer scorn and persecution, but Jesus sustains and upholds His Church by the hearing of His Word.

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October 2022

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Elder: 2 – Scot Kinnaman 9 – Chad Rolland 16 – Scot Kinnaman 23 – Jim Frost 30 – Kevin Robson	Altar Guild: 2 Spyers/Truebe 9 Asburry/Bergdolt 16 Brown/Patton 23 Keller/Janssen 30 Brown/Patton					1 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
2 <u>Ann. of a Congregation</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation/Choir	3	4	5 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal	6 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	7	8 <i>Pastor's day off</i> Revitality 9-11:30
9 <u>Trinity 17</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation/ NO Choir rehearsal	10 7:00 Church Council	11	12 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal	13 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	14	15 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
16 <u>Trinity 18</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation/Choir	17	18	19 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal	20 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	21	22 <i>Pastor's day off</i> Revitality 8-noon
23 <u>St.James of Jerusalem</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation/Choir 4:00 Organ Vespers	24	25	26 5:00 Kantorei Rehearsal	27 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	28	29 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
30 <u>Reformation Day</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 12:00 Voters Assembly	31					