

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

—Martin Luther,
Heidelberg Disputation,
Theses 19-20

(www.augustana.edu/religion/lutherproject/HEIDELBU/Heidelbergdisputation.htm)

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Ich lasse dich nicht los, wenn du mich nicht segnest.

I will not leave you, if you will not bless me (personal translation).

—Gen. 32,27

When all appearances suggest that the world itself is warring against you, sheer logic tells you that the last thing you need is for God himself to be against you, to be contrarian toward you, to pick a fight with you. After all, if not even God is on your side, then truly no one is.

Then again, perhaps not. Perhaps during those very times when seemingly everything is waiting to pounce on you is actually the precise time when you need God to enter your circumstance and make you really sore. It is at that precise moment that the world-at-your-neck is kept at bay. It is at that precise moment that God shows you what he can do. It is at that precise moment that God shows you that he is powerful enough to lose, and that you are weak enough to win. It is at that precise moment that faith in its most visceral form comes out of the woodwork—a faith that is bold and confident enough to push God back hard enough and hold him down long enough until a hoped-for blessing emerges. It is at that precise moment where, by all appearances, you've got God exactly where you want him, which means that, ultimately, God has you exactly where he wants you.

As is all too often the case in life with God, here sheer logic will superlatively fail you. But that's really no problem. What good is logic when you've got hope that will stop at nothing until the blessing that you know is there is finally yours? What good is retreat from the world's scorn and derision when you can limp around in plain sight for the rest of your life, confessing before all that victory is yours, that you have "striven with God and with humanity and have conquered" (Gen. 32.28)?

None whatsoever—and that's good news.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God's grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all his creatures.

—Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. J. T. Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), xvii.





Let Us Pray . . .

- For thanksgiving for our shared status as God's children in Holy Baptism
- For ears that are ever attentive to the Word of God
- For gratitude for God's continual daily provision
- For an increase in lawful government throughout the world
- For God's continued blessing in the *Lukaskirche* efforts and the eastern European evangelization



Lukaskirche, Leipzig, Germany
(Photo: Rick Steenbock, LCMS Eurasia)

Vielleicht zu beschäftigt!

Life certainly has not slowed down for us following the entry into *Lukaskirche*. Our congregation has begun a rather aggressive weekly calendar of activities: several bible studies, social engagements, a new regular Saturday Vespers. More to musical outreach were two concerts that we hosted: one on Apr. 25 by *Vokalensemble Ostinato*, a young adult a cappella ensemble from within our SELK Eastern District; the other on May 7 by Concordia University Choirs of Concordia University, Portland, Ore., who made *Lukaskirche* an international choir tour stop, to our privilege and with our gratitude. Currently we're in the planning stages of a German national broadcast of our Holy Communion service on Sep. 6. Even as the extraordinary things occur, the "ordinary" things are magnifying, under God's blessing. Even since moving into *Lukaskirche*, we have had three baptisms, with three more coming on Pentecost. The first of several Confirmations has occurred. Our regular Sunday attendance has already increased by approximately 15 persons—many of them new faces!

Additionally, during the past month, I was heavily involved in the musical aspects of the Dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, more popularly known as the "Wittenberg Project." Essentially, I served as service (and then conference) organist, also assisting in dedicating the Chapel's *Truhenorgel*, which I also assisted in securing, as well as singing in the Luther-era sacred and folk concert in the *Stadtkirche*. A lot of preparation and work went in those inclusive two weeks, with a superlative result that followed. In case you're interested, consult this link to view the Dedication Service:

<http://livestream.com/thelcms/wittenberg>

On another front, as a family, next on the horizon was getting Helene registered both with the City of Leipzig and then with the US Embassy in Berlin (Consular Report of Birth Abroad, Social Security, and Passport), the latter requiring short trip to Berlin. A big "Thank You" goes to Elizabeth's mother, who visited us for 6 weeks and made a lot happen at Helene's birth and thereafter!

Much awaits in the near-term: a Russia tour, the SELK Eastern District *Sängerfest* being held at *Lukaskirche*, a musical lecture for members of the US Military, hosting the Valparaiso University Chorale and Leipzig Baroque Orchestra, and then some time later, a series of lectures in central Russia in August. Sometime in between, thankfully, is some much-needed vacation time. Please pray for clarity of mind, the ability to prepare well, strength to perform, and safety during travels.

May God in Christ through the Spirit bless you now and forever.

Christopher & Elizabeth

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