

TABLE TALK

Official Publication of the LMS-USA
...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall
teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



August/November 2011

Vol. 18 Nos. 3 & 4

The Who, Why and How of Ministry

A Summary of Presentations
from the 2011 LMS Annual Conference
Saturday, June 25, 2011

Christ Lutheran Church Chetek, Wisconsin

by Arik Johnson

The theme of the 2011 Conference was based on the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28. Jesus came to them [the Apostles] and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The *Who* of ministry are those who Christ calls to ministry. Christ addressed himself to his disciples, "You go and make disciples of all nations..."

The *Why* of ministry, the reason for ministry, was and continues to be the making of disciples.

The *How* of ministry speaks of the means by which ministry was and is to take place. It was to be by means of baptizing and teaching (Word and Sacrament). [Summary, continues on page 2]



Christ Lutheran Church, Chetek, WI was incorporated in June of 1987. It is one of the founding congregations of the LMS-USA.

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The first conference paper presented was that by seminarian, Tylan Dalrymple. The paper was titled, "The Divine Call." It was appropriate that Mr. Dalrymple present this paper in that he, having received a call to the office of Word and Sacrament by the host congregation, Christ Lutheran Church, Chetek, WI, would be ordained into the office of the Holy Ministry at the Convention Worship Service on Sunday, and be installed to that office during the same service.



The call to the Divine Ministry of the Word is something that must be affirmed by a call to serve a congregation. God instituted the Pastoral offices that "the Word might be preached and the sacraments instituted in an orderly way." Yet, rebellion against order and leadership has become the norm. Scripture tells us that we are to "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5). However, we have changed the standard of conformity to the exception rather than the rule, and the exception has become the rule. Unfortunately, pastoral ministry has followed this road to Hell, the wide path leading to destruction, in making just the unjust ways of social progress. The congregation is to call a pastor to teach, preach, and administer the sacraments on their behalf.

But, what is the difference between the Divine Call to Pastoral ministry of the Word and the priesthood or ministry of all believers? We must all minister to one another, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Yet, the emphasis placed on individual ministry today has some speaking to a god that always affirms their presuppositions. The Divine Call is not intended for a "superior" person, but simply a person called for a particular role. We must remain vigilant not to put more or less emphasis on either the ministry of all believers or the Divine Call of the pastorate.

The second presentation was by Rev. Dr. Ralph Spears. His paper was titled, "What Happened to the Original Eleven?" The Bible shares with us some of what happened to some of the original Apostles. But it is also interesting to consider what Tradition has to say with regard to these men themselves as well as to where they ministered.



The Apostles were those personally Called by Christ, referring to the 12 disciples of Jesus, Matthias later replacing Judas Iscariot, making for 11 originals. But what was the true nature of education for these "Delegates of Christ" and who were those "sent" by Jesus to proclaim this new gospel of life?

Jesus' use of parables to teach about the "secrets of the Kingdom of God" led directly to the Gospels that instruct us how to live more like Christ as disciples ourselves, but also teaching faith itself through demonstrations like the feeding of the 5,000 with the

two fishes and five loaves, where the lesson became: begin with what you have, and look to God for the increase.

Andrew, who made the fish and loaves offering, seemed to be there just when he was needed. Bartholomew (aka, Nathaniel) was a "Son of Ptolomy" and was a scholar who studied the Scriptures as his guide to the Messiah. James the Great reportedly traveled widely, from Spain to India, also preaching to the 12 Tribes. James the Less preached in Syria, where he was Bishop of the Syrian Church. James the Brother of Jesus, though not one of the 12, was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. John the Beloved, even before he authored Revelation in exile on Patmos, was the "first to believe" as he was first to enter the tomb and said he must have risen from the dead, not knowing the prophecy.

Judas Iscariot, though not often listed with the Twelve, had his thirty pieces of silver used to buy the plot of land where he was buried following his suicide after his role in the Passover Plot. Matthias, who replaced Judas, eventually travelled to Tyre and Armenia to preach. Matthew (aka Levi) must have taken great account of the ministry of Jesus, for the Gospel of Matthew so carefully documented how Jesus fulfilled Jewish Scriptural prophecies of the Messiah. Philip, whose only references were in the Gospel of John to the man with the Greek name, was present at the feeding of the five

thousand and took certain Greeks to be introduced to Jesus, worked very closely with John in Ephesus. Simon Peter, or Cephas, endured the trials and tests of the devil, even of denying Christ and doubting a faith that could walk on water, became the rock on which the Church was built, even the namesake of the great basilica in Rome built on the spot where he was crucified on Vatican hill.

Simon the Zealot, preached and taught in Armenia, Egypt and Mesopotamia, some say even to Britain but finally to Persia to meet St. Jude where he was martyred. Thomas, or Didymus, was the great doubter, but was insistent that, when Jesus went to Jerusalem to certain death, it was Thomas who insisted the Apostles should go along to suffer the same fate, but established the church in Babylon and India as part of the eastern tradition there. Thaddaeus is said to have taken the Shroud of Turin to King Apgar I of Edessa in Syria, also has a rich history in the Armenian church and preached the gospel by land and sea.

Peter's crucifixion upside down and his brother Andrew's crucifixion on the X-shaped cross which led to the symbol of the British Isles, appearing on the flags of England and Scotland, were notably different from John the Beloved, who of all the Apostles lived into his 90's in Ephesus. But for all of the Apostles the impact they had after Jesus' calling on the world has been tremendous.

Lori Bibbee, a pastor's wife, works in the health care field as a nursing supervisor. She gave the third presentation, "Making Disciples - A Brief Essay on the Meaning, Origins, and Practice of Discipleship." Her complete presentation is found on page 8.

Jesus commanded us in the Great Commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). But how important is discipleship to Christian

faith and what does it mean?

Although we, in the modern era, may no longer define a disciple as one who forsakes all worldly preoccupations in order to follow or study

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under a teacher in ascetic seclusion, as the ancients did, we do consider true discipleship to be equally costly, demanding a forsaking of the world and its priorities for those of God. Bonhoeffer's notion of "Cheap Grace" shows that real discipleship (e.g., "costly grace") demands a commitment many who call themselves Christians are unwilling to make, turning aside from the comforts of the world, "It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life."

Luther suggests a leader of the church cannot make disciples of others until they become disciples themselves. Indeed, becoming a disciple involves action on the part of the student, not mere following, but a re-

placement of one's old life for a new life in Christ. That new life will be the marker of discipleship - indeed, evidence of faith, rather than some abstract currency which earns our salvation if enough positive account is accumulated. As a cooperation between the Christian and the Holy Spirit, we need not perfect our discipleship in order for Christ's light to be shown to a sinful world.

This reminded me of Paul's account in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Discipleship is concerned with our earthly perfection, but more about our testimony that Christ was necessary for our salvation and understanding our powerlessness to do anything but believe through the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Dr. John Erickson delivered the next paper: The Apostles were told to make disciples by means of Baptizing and teaching. Rather than dealing with Baptism in the traditional sense, Dr. Erickson encouraged participants to consider the practice of baptism in connection with the encounter between Jesus and the sons of Zebedee.

What might Mark's account of the request by James and John in asking Jesus to let them be "baptized with the baptism (He was) baptized with" (Mark 10:35-49) suggest as to our practice of baptism today?

It has to do with the misunderstanding of James and John of what the baptism they were so anxious to receive. And, are today's parents any different from the mother of James and John in her seeking of special honor for her sons? Do we (church members and pastors alike) fully understand what we are asking of God when it comes to our desire to have our children baptized?

For Jesus to drink the cup meant for him to accept and to endure, the intense suffering (and death) that awaited him. Jesus asks the disciples if they can be baptized with the baptism he is baptized with. And they are quick to answer, "Yes." What they failed to take into consid-

eration is the fact that the baptism Jesus was speaking about would involve suffering.

When we baptize children into the family of God, we are baptizing them into the name of the most beloved, and at the same time, the most hated name in the history of the world.

The benefits of baptism are the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation through the Holy Spirit of God. But as Jesus clearly warns, there is this too: The baptized child of God will be brought face to face with the hatred of the world. And in addition to this, they will experience difficulty which God himself sends. For God



punishes his children as a father does a son he loves.

The road of the baptized child of God will not be an easy road to walk. It will not be easy for our little ones or for us as adults. How many who seek baptism for their little ones give this any thought? How many of us think of this in connection with our own baptism?

All this explains why those who are true followers of our Lord will always find themselves in the minority. Their gatherings will seldom be of great numbers. The road is narrow and difficult that leads to life. Noah and Elijah both are examples of a dwindling down at times to practically nothing, the number of true believers. The lesson of this for us and for our young people - the way that leads to heaven is often a very lonesome road. Religion will always be popular, even in a world focused on wealth or power or pleasure as their gods, but righteousness confronts our worst desires for these

empty objects with the command to be like Christ Jesus, to follow Him in spite of the promise of trouble and maybe even persecution. All this is true for young children, adolescents and students, as well as those entering the workforce: *the world's standards are not Christian* and this means that the Christian at any age will often be very much alone. As easy as it might be to stumble on the narrow road in order to fit in with society's expectations of us, Christ Jesus, who walked this same road, understands, and will be there to help us back on our feet.

Let us not, therefore, in remembering the price Jesus paid for our salvation forget the price we must also pay to be His children. Let us not be misled that in accepting God's gift, as freely as it is offered to anyone, demands submission as acceptance and a change of heart for the believer that might not make many friends on earth, but "oh, what a friend they have in Jesus!"

The final conference presentation was given by seminarian, Ken Howes. Central to the making of disciples is proper use of what has been referred to as the primary Means of Grace, i.e. the Bible, Holy Scripture. Mr. Howes' paper was titled, "Johann Gerhard, the Word and the Laity."



In his paper Mr. Howes demonstrates the Lutheran position on the authority, power, and efficacy of the Word (the Bible) in the work of the church in the calling and making of disciples.

There are those who believe the handling of the Word is the role of the clergy. However one of the great contributions of the Reformation was that the layperson could have the Bible in his or her own hand and in a language that could be understood. Gerhard quotes a plea of Chrysostom "Please listen, all you laypeople, get Bibles for yourselves. That is healing for your soul." Chrysostom also writes, "It

is clear that with spiritual reading the soul is sanctified and the grace of the Holy Spirit is poured out abundantly;" and: "A great bulwark against sin is the reading of Scripture. Ignorance of Scripture is a great, deep pit. This is what gives rise to heresies, that breeds a corrupt life, Now it cannot happen that anyone attains salvation without being involved in a permanent spiritual reading."

Mr. Howes points out that the best way to accomplish the use of the Bible in the congregation is by means of a well-structured Bible study program.

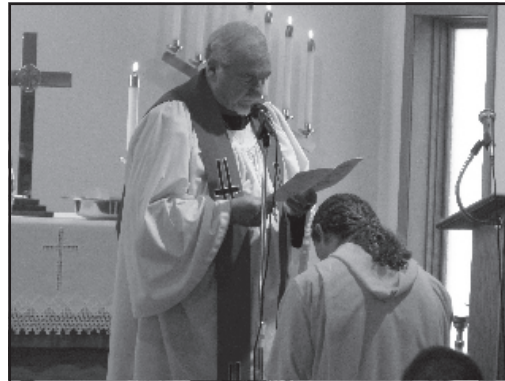
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The people might, for example, be encouraged to read a specific text during the week, with a class some time during that week in which that text is discussed. There should be some order to these 'texts' (from the same book of the Bible, or pertaining to a particular topic), and always considered in context.

"Classes are best led by the pastor, that is, after all, his office. On the other hand, he cannot be everywhere and do everything. It may be necessary to delegate this task to... some theologically proficient layman. If the pastor does delegate this, however, he must never forget that while one can delegate authority; one can never delegate responsibility. The responsibility of 'giving attendance' to the reading of the Bible is the pastor's. It is he who has the care of souls, of feeding Christ's sheep.

This means following up with those reading these things to see that they have grasped the text and are able to understand and apply it. With such care, the sheep will indeed be fed with the gospel..." Ω



The highlight of the June 2011 Conference/Convention was the Sunday morning worship which included the ordination service for Mr. Tylan Dalrymple. Rev. Dr. Ralph Spears, Synod President, officiated at the ordination.



Clergy in attendance, join in the 'laying on of hands' and prayers for the newly ordained.



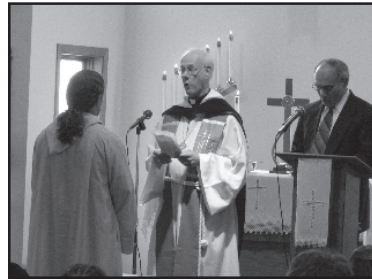
Newly ordained, Rev. Tylan Dalrymple, addresses the congregation in his response. Pastor Dalrymple grew up as a member of Christ Lutheran, did his internship there, and now his ordination took place there also. It was a special day!



The church was filled for the morning worship, ordination, and installation service.



Retiring pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Rev. Dr. John Erickson, was the preacher.



President of Christ Lutheran, Mr. Jim Jerabek (on left), presented Pastor Dalrymple to be installed as the new pastor of Christ Lutheran Church. Rev. Dr. Robert Hotes, President of St. Timothy Seminary, officiated at the installation.

A catered dinner followed the Sunday worship service. It was a beautiful day. Many ate indoors, and many ventured to eat in the tent that was set up outdoors.



MAKING DISCIPLES:

(A Brief Essay on the Meaning, Origins, and Practice of Discipleship)

by Lori Bibbee

The Great Commission

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”¹ The subject of discipleship is indeed vast and it raises many questions for Christians. Matthew 28:18-20 is commonly referred to in Christian circles as “The Great Commission.” According to Gomez, “The word disciple/s is found in approximately 250 occurrences, 29 times in singular (Matt. occurs 4 times, Lk. 4 times, John 16 times, and Acts 5 times), and 244 times in plural (Isa. occurs 1 time, Matt. 71 times, Lk. 34 times, John 65 times, and Acts 26 times) in the KJV.”²

Yet, many of the so-called religions of our time are ignorant of the importance of discipleship. As Lutheran Christians we are taught the importance of all of God’s word in accordance with II Timothy 3:16, 17 which asserts: “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”³ Those that have been raised in the faith have been taught this from a young age through church, Sunday school, parochial education, the study and memorization of scripture and the individual profession of faith at Lutheran Confirmation.

Therefore, it seems that this



scripture is foundational to our very faith and the reason for our Christian existence. Unfortunately, many of us perhaps have not treated this scriptural injunction and the concept of discipleship with the serious attention and devotion that it deserves. This essay is the product of a humble and meager attempt by a Lutheran layperson to comprehend what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This discussion will approach the topic with the assumption and understanding that “The Great Commission” does indeed apply to all who consider themselves “Christian.”

What is a Disciple?

The Cambridge Dictionary of American English (online version) defines “disciple” as [noun]: “a person who believes in the ideas of a leader, esp. a religious or political one, and tries to live according to those ideas.”⁴ In common secular society the term disciple is used to refer

to the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. In fact, the average person if asked to define the word might well state that it is an archaic word referring to a particular group of twelve men who followed Jesus, but has little meaning or relevance to most men of today, saving perhaps for those who choose to devote their lives to the ministry or who choose to take monastic vows and live in seclusion devoting their entire existence to the things of God. The term "disciple" can also be used to describe adherents or followers of a particular cult leader, religious sect or political ideology such as: the followers of Charles Manson, Hari Krishna or Nazism. Therefore, in some circles a disciple may be nothing more than a follower or a "groupie."

The Hebrew (Old Testament) word for disciple is *talmid*, which means student or follower. It stresses a vital relationship between the teacher, *rabbi*, and the pupil, *talmid*. It was traditional ancient Jewish practice for the *talmid* to forsake his entire life and home and go to live with a *rabbi*, so that he could fully absorb and emulate his teachings. It was not enough to simply have cognitive understanding. To be a *talmid* was to live the life of the *rabbi* fully.⁵ The first century Jews also had their own concept of a disciple. For example, the Pharisees claimed to be disciples of Moses (See John 9:28-29). Also, before his conversion, Paul studied under Gamaliel, a famous *rabbi* in Israel (See Acts 5:34 and 22:3).

The New Testament Greek term for "disciple" is *maqhtu* (*mathe* - *tes*) which means any pupil, learner or apprentice. As in ancient times, it was common practice for first century male Jews to study and be taught the Torah in the home by their fathers until age thirteen, at which time they left home to study under a *rabbi* or scholar, if they aspired to become involved with further reli-

gious duties.⁶ A review of all of these definitions leads one to the understanding that a disciple is at the very least an adherent or follower of a particular persuasion or person. But is this the sum total of what it means to be a disciple?

Christian Theology and Discipleship

Numerous theologians past and present have pondered and expounded on the meaning of discipleship. For example, an excerpt from "The Cost of Discipleship" written by the great Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer indicates that true discipleship is costly, whereas "cheap grace" is a seductive counterfeit.

"...Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate... Costly grace is the hidden treasure in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God. Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and

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not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living word, the Word of God, which he speaks as it pleases him. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'" ⁷

The famous Quaker writer, Richard Foster stated in his book, "Celebration of Discipline," that discipleship requires the practice of certain "disciplines". He wrote that these spiritual disciplines are, "a means of receiving God's grace... [They] allow us to place ourselves before God so he can transform us."⁸ Foster further stated that "superficiality is the curse of our age.... The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people."⁹ Notably, the words disciple and discipline share the same etymological root.

Finally, Dr. Martin Luther admonished the would-be Christian leaders of his day to become disciples before trying to make disciples of others: "In holy and divine matters one must first hear rather than see, first believe rather than understand, first be grasped rather than grasp, first be captured rather than capture, first learn rather than teach, first be a disciple rather than a teacher and master of his own... Therefore, whoever in the church wants to become an eye and a leader and master of others, let him become an ear and a disciple first. This first."¹⁰ Apparently, there is more to Christian discipleship than merely believing in and following Jesus and His teachings.

Questions and Reflections

on Discipleship and the Christian Life

Having made a brief study of the origins of discipleship and several theological ideas, one naturally comes to some conclusions. First, that to be a disciple of Jesus seems to require action on the part of the student, rather than mere passive learning and following. Thomas Merton once wrote that "The spiritual life is first of all a life. It is not merely something to be known and studied, it is to be lived."¹¹ But this also raises some questions. Must a believer perform certain good works in order to earn the rank of disciple? Does this nullify the Lutheran Christian's steadfast belief in God's divine grace being the sole source of salvation? James 2:18 says "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds."¹²

Still other questions come to mind, such as: Is sanctification the same as discipleship? At what point is one sanctified enough or godly enough to call himself a disciple? The apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians wrote, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14). It would seem that true discipleship demands personal sanctification and sanctification causes one to become a better disciple.

Finally, The Great Commission instructs us to make disciples of all nations. At what point can one say he is ready to make disciples of others? Leo Tolstoy once wrote: "Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself."¹¹ Jesus Himself admonished us to first remove the log in

our own eye before we try to remove the speck in a brother's eye. (See Matthew chapter 7 and Luke chapter 6). How does one accomplish this mighty task of helping others to become disciples when one's own spiritual walk is fraught with the difficulties and frailties of the human sinful condition? And whose responsibility is it to fulfill The Great Commission? Is it to be the work of ministers and those formally trained, called and ordained to preach the Gospel?

These are some of the many questions that came to mind during this study on discipleship. I have drawn the conclusion that discipleship is for all who claim to know Jesus Christ. I have also concluded that it is a cooperative effort between the Christian and the Holy Spirit. My preliminary understanding is that salvation is by grace alone yet discipleship requires cooperation and attention to Christian practices such as hearing and studying the word of God, partaking of the Sacraments and the like. Not that observing these things will earn the right to be a disciple, but rather, they will prepare the heart to receive the work of the Holy Spirit which leads to discipleship. I pray that God in His infinite grace and mercy will provide further enlightenment and instruction so that I can become a disciple worthy of His Holy Name.

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Mark Your Calendars Now -

The 2012 Annual Conference and Convention of the LMS will be held June 23-24 at Christ Lutheran Church in Chetek, WI. As in past years, the LMS Ministerium will meet Friday afternoon (June 22).

A Thanksgiving Meditation

by
A. Bernard Gravdal

A number of years ago after a Thanksgiving Day service a lady in one of my congregations gave me a copy of a poem which she thought I could use sometime and somewhere—to her it seemed to fit in with my message that day which dwelt on the text of the ten lepers. The poem is simple and maybe even naive, but the reader will find therein a great deal of wisdom and common sense. It is entitled “Overheard in a Garden.”

Said the robin to the sparrow
I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.

Said the sparrow to the robin
Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me.

It would appear to many of us that of late years the emphasis at Thanksgiving time has been altered or detoured. In the good old days (and how we long for them in many ways) our fathers and mothers stressed the Giver of the gifts, in daily life in the home and occupation and surely in the Church in sermon and song. But (and many of these *but*s are tragic) fathers and mothers today would try to make this season somewhat similar to Christmas in a material sense through the emphasis on gifts we have or have not received. And that has too often been the spirit of some of our messages in sermon and song. We have given the impression many times that the world could not get along without us and that God in heaven would just about ‘give to give up too should we decide to take a vacation for a few weeks or months. It has been the tragedy of the *I* as over against the

necessity of God first in all things!

This wrong kind of emphasis may lead us into what psychologists today call complexes—the first of superiority. The Pharisee thought he possessed the horn of plenty in just about everything and so he proceeded to blow it in everyone’s face. Thinking he was being smiled upon in a special sense by God, he erred into the path of thinking also that the less fortunate were living in disfavor with Him. In our own spiritual temples we can stand proudly and proclaim “I thank Thee that I am not as other men” and then proceed through the catalogue of other folk’s sins. This has happened to us as a nation many times and is happening today: it has happened in many lands to the Christian Church; it has happened to our own Lutheran Church in some places where the scope of our mission has been dimmed by our great heritage; it has happened to many a consecrated pastor and faithful lay worker, for too often the devil points the glory road to the exclusion or at least the diminishing of the grace road, a vital need every day for those of us who see stark and damning; sin between God and us. Thank God, He is not inconsistent, partial, biased, imperfect, subject to human whim and fancy. “He is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

The second complex which surely inhibits is that of seeing someone else do good (or at least we think they are better than we), and becoming envious. Again, it is the old story of thinking our lot in life is much worse than our neighbor or friend. But our vision is limited without the grace of God and abiding faith and trust in Christ! I read once of a young couple who were like most young couples in that they had difficulty meeting the necessities of life

the first few years of married life. Out walking one Sunday afternoon they chanced by a mansion in their city owned by a well-known and wealthy family. As they saw the stately house, the large porches, the velvet lawn, the beautiful windows, rooms for everyone and every purpose, and the limousine at beck and call of the chauffeur, they imagined themselves in such surroundings. As their imagination ate on them and the bites grew harder and deeper through thoughts of their daily struggles, they envied the owner and succumbed to the sin against the ninth commandment. But they knew only one side of the story and the least important, the outward appearance. They did not know that the man who owned the mansion had been dead for many years and now his widow, although living in the lap of luxury, was sad, sick, and lonely. Her bed had been pushed near the window so that she might absorb some of the sun's warmth and as she lay there she saw this young couple out walking. She saw their youth, the glow of health in face and step, and memory took her back to the days of her youth with her husband and life before them—and tears of envy came, envy of the young man and woman who envied her. She would have given everything to be back in those days with her husband and glorious youth!

So you and I see the dangers of wrong emphasis at Thanksgiving! Let us "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," forget the things we have lost through our own sins, and through the precious forgiveness in His full redemption ponder the blessings and opportunities facing us in the present and future. Let us not miss the cream of the morrow while we cry over the spilled milk of the past! Let us labor for the meat that does not perish; let us build up those treasures which do not corrupt, which cannot be stolen, and which do not fluctuate either up or down.

In recalling history we will re-

member that the Pilgrims celebrated the first Thanksgiving in the midst of cheerless circumstances. The first three months in America found half of their number dying. They made seven times as many graves for the dead the first winter as they made houses for the living. Only four of the fifty-five survivors were women. And yet within sight of the graves of their loved ones they could say with the Psalmist, "It is good to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy Name, Most High: to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night." That must have been gratitude born of faith for we just can't reason or figure ourselves into a Thanksgiving attitude! Thankfulness of the true sort is never conceived in circumstance alone but is the personal possession of the one who in unwavering faith believes that "All things work together for good to them that love God." True thanksgiving makes a soul feel overwhelmed by his debt to God and brings the reality that His mercies are to be received as unmerited gifts, for we can never pay God back.

Have we the true spirit of *Thanksgiving*? In Jesus' day the ratio of the thankful was one out of ten. And we wonder within ourselves if the proportion has improved much in our church, our organization, our community, our homes? Thanksgiving Day will not make us any more thankful by having a big dinner or perfunctorily attending worship or closing the store and office than shooting a few firecrackers on the Fourth of July will make us more patriotic. The spirit of this month of November which embodies the one day especially set aside for Thanksgiving is an attitude one always carries with him - a faith in, and service for God that is constant. *Thanksgiving* is *thanksgiving*! As Christians freed from the slavery of sin through

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Christ, we will be eternally grateful to God for having been claimed by Him and His all-embracing love, and that faith implanted by Him, will through the Holy Spirit, produce works befitting the truly thankful. With the hymn writer we say:

*To God, the gracious Father
Who made us "very good":
To Christ, who, when we wandered,
Restored us with His blood:
And to the Holy Spirit,
Who doth upon us pour
His blessed dew and sunshine,
Be praise forevermore.*

"Now Thank We All Our God"

Martin Rinkart was the last of the great Lutheran hymn-writers belonging to the period of the Thirty Years' war. It was one of the most creative decades in the history of Lutheran hymnody, and of all the well known hymns written during this time, there is none that surpasses Rinkart's "Now thank we all our God."

At the age of 31, Rinkart was offered the position of arch deacon in his native town of Eilenburg in Saxony. A year later, in 1618, the Thirty Years' War broke out in Europe. Interestingly Rinkart died one year after the war ended so his official career for Christ coincided with the duration of the war itself.

Throughout the years of the war, Rinkart stood with his flock helping them in every kind of distress. He even had to endure the quartering of soldiers in his home and the plundering of his little supply of grain and household goods.

The plague of 1637 visited his hometown with great severity. The town was crowded with fugitives from the surrounding country where the Swedes were spreading devastation, resulting in 8,000 deaths. The town council (with the exception of

three), many school children, and the clergymen of the neighboring parish were all carried off which meant that Rinkart had to do the work of three men. He ministered to the sick and the dying and buried more than 4,000 persons (sometimes doing 50 funerals a day). Remarkably,

through it all, he remained perfectly well. Then came the famine. The famine was so severe that 30 or 40 people could be seen fighting in the streets for a dead cat or crow. Rinkart along with the burgomaster and one additional man, did what they could to organize assistance. Everything that could be given away was (except for the barest rations for his own family). His door was constantly crowded by the starving who found it their only

refuge.

When you would think it couldn't get any worse, the Swedes came once again, this time demanding a tribute of \$30,000. Rinkart pleaded for mercy but was refused. He then turned to his people and said, "Come, my children, we can find no hearing, no mercy with men, let us take refuge with God." Rinkart fell to his knees and prayed with such earnestness that the Swedish general relented, lowering his demand to 2,000 florins. Rinkart's own loss



through all of this was such that he had much difficulty in finding food and clothing for his own children and was forced to mortgage his fu-

ture income for several years.

But clearly his spirit was not broken by all these calamities as is evidenced by his hymn:

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills,
in this world and the next!

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given;
The Son and Him Who reigns
with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God,
whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

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