

TABLE TALK

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...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall
teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



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The Use Of The Word Of God

The November, 2008, issue of this periodical, (*Table Talk*, Vol. 15, Number 4) included an article titled, *God's Word*. That article spelled out in some detail what God's Word (the Bible) is, and the uniqueness of that Word.

As Confessional Lutherans, we make much of God's Word to us as we have it in the pages of Holy Scripture, or as we generally refer to it, the Bible. We, as the LMS-USA speak of the Bible in these words, "We believe the Bible is God's Word and self-revelation to us, and as such, it is without error in all it touches, whenever and however it speaks whether in matters of faith, doctrine, history, geography, or science." All this is fine and good, but what use do we make of it?

Is it sufficient that one believes that holding to a high view of Scripture is important? Is it enough that one belongs to a church that holds to a understanding of Scripture such as that just quoted? Is it adequate that one makes a point of listening to sermons preached by someone who holds firmly to a high view of Scripture? or that one reads a devotional published by a publisher who holds to a high view of Scripture?

It is questions such as this that this issue of *Table Talk* wishes to address. The first article (page 2) addresses our Lord's use of Scripture. This, it would seem, is a good place to start in that we, who wish to be followers of Christ, are called to be imitators of Him. Paul challenges his readers, "Therefore be imitators of God..." (Eph. 5:1). In First Corinthians 11:1, he words it this way, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." In the same vein, the Apostle John writes, "whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he [Jesus] walked" (First John 2:6). And Peter also deals with this same issue and speaks of Christ "leaving [us] an example, so that [we] should follow in his steps" (First Peter 2:21). The point being that the use our Lord made of God's Word should be an example for us as to the use we should be making of God's Word.

The second article, beginning on page 5, has to do with Luther, whose life and work were central to our celebration last year of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. He has been described as "a theologian of the Word." What does that mean for us, who claim to be following in his train, now in the 21st century?

And finally, on page 8 we come to where "the rubber meets the road." What about *our* use of the Word today.

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Christ and His Bible

by
Jacob Tanner

JESUS CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

The Old Testament books were the Scriptures Jesus used. They were His Bible.

Jesus knew His Bible. He was thoroughly at home in it. He quoted the Old Testament freely and at will, and frequently clothed His thoughts in its words and phrases. This familiarity was a result of long careful study.

God-fearing parents among the Jews began to instruct their children in the Scriptures at a very early age (Deut. 6:4-9). Father and mother told the stories of the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the kings, and the prophets as soon as the children could understand what the parents said. At the ages of four or five they commenced a systematic memorizing of the Scriptures. This memorizing was continued in the synagogue schools. The result was that a gifted child at the age of twelve or fourteen practically had the Old Testament stored away in his memory. If that was the case in ordinary pious homes, we can understand with what love and zeal Mary, with the assistance of Joseph, took up this work with her unusually gifted son.

His study of the Old Testament was not a mere intellectual exercise. There He found food for His spiritual life. The Scriptures became His spiritual home.

The Old Testament was the history of His own people. And it was a captivating history. The character of the leaders of the past and their work, battles, and sufferings for Jehovah's cause were such as to fascinate any warm-blooded youth. And it was the history of His Father's work to prepare for His own coming. From the moment He became con-

scious of His relation to the Father, the Scriptures must have taken on an added significance and been studied with new interest.

Thus He penetrated deeper and deeper into the Scriptures. There He found the material He needed for the development of His intellectual and spiritual life.

TO JESUS THE SCRIPTURES WERE GOD'S WORD

When the Jews accused Him of blasphemy because He declared Himself to be God's Son, He quoted the 82nd Psalm, and declared it to be God's word (John 10:22-39).

Being God's word the Scriptures were authoritative. Heaven and earth will pass away but the law will not come to an end until all things that it declares shall be accomplished. What the Scriptures say must be fulfilled for they are God's word (Matt. 5:18; 26:24, 54).

HE APPLIED THE SCRIPTURES TO HIMSELF

We have mentioned before that Jesus at the age of twelve was conscious of a relation to God the Father that was different from the relation of ordinary human beings. From then on this consciousness must have increased in clearness until it was fully developed at the time He took up His work. Hand in hand with this development must have gone an increasing understanding of the work He had to do. In the Scriptures He found His work set forth.

When He read in the synagogue at Nazareth the Messianic program Isaiah had outlined. He applied the prophet's word to Himself. He was the Messiah and it was His work the

prophet had described (Luke 4:16-21).

In the conversation with the two on the Emmaus road He explained the Scriptures to them concerning Himself. In the Scriptures He had found the full program for His work (Luke 24:27).

EVEN THE DETAILS

Not only did He find the broad outlines of His work in the Scriptures, but even the details.

Malachi had foretold that there would be the closest relation between the Forerunner and Christ. When Jesus was ready to begin His work He came to John to be baptized of him "to fulfill all righteousness." In obedience to the plan God beforehand had made known, He connected His own work with that of John (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 3:15).

He now received the Holy Spirit in the measure needed for His work. While we are unable to explain this mystery, the first effect of the coming upon Him of the Holy Spirit gives us some light. He at once went out into the wilderness where He stayed forty days all by Himself.

What did He do? Though the gospels tell only of the temptation at the end of the stay, it seems safe to say that He now, in the light that the Spirit shed upon the message of the Old Testament, restudied His whole program. At the end of the forty days His course was clear to Him even in details. In His public ministry He follows a path that is chiseled clear-cut in His mind.

When Jesus began to teach in parables, He seems to have done it in obedience to the prophecy of Isaiah. In His answer to the disciples He refers to this prophecy as being fulfilled by the results of His speaking in parables (Matt. 13:10-15).

From the gloomy dungeon of the prison John the Baptizer sent his disciples to Jesus asking Him whether or not He was the coming Messiah.

In His answer Jesus refers them to the details of the Messianic program as given by Isaiah. Jesus was doing just what the prophet said He should do (Is. 35:5; 42:6-7; 61:1; Matt. 11:2-6).

The Scriptures said that Messiah should be betrayed by one of His closest friends. In obedience Jesus tolerated the betrayer in the circle of His nearest friends (Ps. 41:9; John 13:18).

Jesus even found the length of His stay in the grave foretold in the Scriptures (Matt. 12:40). He came to earth to carry out the plan of salvation agreed upon in the eternal council of the triune God, and revealed in the Old Testament. He was dependent upon the Scriptures for the plan as well as the details. He must fulfill every part of that plan.

If Jesus Christ found it necessary and was willing to subject Himself in obedience to the Scriptures, is it less necessary for us, and should we be less willing to obey God's word?

THE SCRIPTURES FURNISHED HIM WITH ANSWERS TO THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL PROBLEMS

We are unable adequately to trace the process by which the Son of Man in the Scriptures found an answer to every problem of life. However, that He had done so He himself makes evident.

The Sabbath question was one of the ever-recurring problems. How should the Sabbath be observed? Had God given it to man as a burden, such as the Pharisees had made it, or as a blessing? Jesus had the answer ready. He had found it in the Scriptures. "Have ye not read?" He asked His accusers. Then He told them what the Scriptures said, and there was the answer (Matt. 12:1-8).

The question of divorce, of duty to parents, of the rank of the com-

mandments, and all the other questions He answered either by directly quoting the scriptures or by stating their teachings in His own words (Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 15:3-6; 22:35-40).

Once He asked His enemies a question that throws light on how Jesus had studied the Scriptures. The question was whose son Christ was. It must have been early in His life that Jesus had met the two facts in the Scriptures, that Messiah was a descendant of David and that David called Him Lord. The Scriptures gave the answer, but the Scribes and Pharisees had been unable to find it. Jesus, however, had gone to the bottom of the problem and found the answer. Messiah was David's son because He was born as a descendant of David. At the same time He was David's Lord because He was also God's Son (II Sam. 7:16; Ps. 2:7; Matt. 22:41-45).

HE FOUND COMFORT AND STRENGTH IN THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus constantly sought comfort and strength in communion with His heavenly Father to carry out His super-human task. The Scriptures were an all important factor through which God gave Him such comfort and strength.

We can see this in His many references to the Scripture when He spoke of His sufferings and death. It was a comfort to Him and gave Him strength that He was fulfilling the Scriptures (Matt. 26:31, 54, 56; John 13:18; 17:12).

Especially on the cross did Jesus live in the Old Testament and draw comfort from its words. Of His seven words on the cross, two were direct quotations from the Old Testament. His first word is a fulfillment of the description that Isaiah gives of the dying Messiah. The fifth word, "I thirst," gives expression to the thought in Ps. 69:21. (Compare Ps. 22:1 and Matt. 27:46; Ps. 31:5 and

Luke 2:46; Is 5:12 and Luke 22:37; Ps. 69:21 and John 19:28.)

We can see how He in His last hours lived in the Scriptures and how they supported Him. It needs only to be mentioned that what was so evident in His dying moments must have been His practice throughout His whole life.

THE SCRIPTURES WERE HIS WEAPON

In the mighty encounter in the wilderness between Jesus and the Devil, the Scriptures play an important role. Even the tempter finds it necessary to use the Word of God. However, being a liar from the beginning he cannot use it in its true meaning but must pervert it. Therefore, his use of the Scriptures does not help his cause when he meets one who knows their true meaning and who with His whole heart lives in and is guided by them.

All three times Jesus meets the attack of the tempter with the answer, "It is written." It is as if He in this terrible hour feels it even more necessary than ordinarily to plant His feet on the solid rock of God's word (Matt. 4:1-11)

In order to understand the victorious power of the Scriptures as used by Jesus, we must remember that this was not a battle of wits. It was not a test of who was most ready with quotations. What defeated the Devil was that the issue was a question of obedience. It was not only because Jesus had ascertained the true meaning of God's word, but also because He unflinchingly obeyed the word, that the Scriptures in His hand were an irresistible weapon.

For those who will not obey the word of God it is no power unto salvation. May we remember this when we read and study the word.

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Luther: 'The Word Did Everything'

By Erik Herrmann

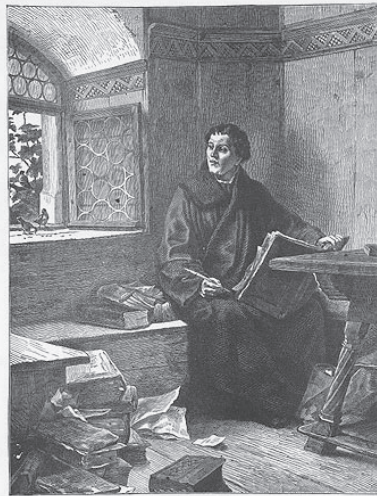
Martin Luther is often described as a theologian of the Word. One can understand this in several ways. First, Luther's formal vocation was "doctor in Biblia"—a teacher and professor of the Bible. It was not an uncommon calling, yet Luther transformed his work at a small university into a platform for widespread church reform and the reshaping of Christian life and piety across Europe.

In the university, Luther brought the Bible into the center of theological instruction by changing the focus of the curriculum and, for the common person, Luther produced his magisterial German translation of the Bible. His work with the Bible became the touchstone for new forms of worship, hymns and catechisms, alongside a renewed appreciation for the sacredness of domestic life and the workplace. All of this was kindled by Luther's profound conviction that the Bible was the Word of God.

Such a view was not in itself unusual in his day. What was unusual, however, was his singular focus on the Word as the source and goal of the Christian life. While the medieval church tended to focus its faith and piety on devotional and liturgical ritual—both priestly and lay—Luther believed that the Church was born and sustained solely by the Word—preached, heard, read, sung and believed. As we remember Luther and the Reformation 500 years later, we do well to remember clearly that the religious core of his work was his deep love and reverence for the Word of God.

Luther's concept of the Word of God permeated his entire theology; it always included the Bible, but it also was much more than this. For Luther, God's Word was, first of all, the pri-

mordial Word of creation that brought into being all things from nothing: "and God said, 'Let there be' ... and there was." Yet this Word of creation was not simply a thing from the ancient past but continued to sound throughout the creation, sustaining, making new, making life possible without which no life could



Luther translating the Bible

be. Not just "God has made the heavens and the earth," but "God has made me, my eyes and ears and all my senses" (Small Catechism). And it is this same creative Word that, incomprehensibly, also became flesh (John 1:14). This means that the very life and light of creation became inseparable from Jesus who embodied and proclaimed this creative, Spirit-filled Word to a broken, dark and chaotic world. This was, for Luther, the primary sense of "the Word of God." Jesus was a preacher; this was not accidental or incidental. It was the crucial core of how God deals with his people:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

(Luke 4:18-19; Is. 61:1-2 ESV).

Thus, when it came to the Bible, it too was the Word of God, but especially because it was a witness to this same Jesus. Through its recorded histories, its laws, its poetic and prophetic utterances, and its apostolic testimonies, the Bible is the Word that urges us onward toward Christ, or as Luther put it, “was Christum treibet.” Thus, the Old Testament was like the “swaddling cloths” of Christ, clothing God’s great plan of salvation with age-old acts of judgment and deliverance. The ancient people described therein appear to us as a kind of “mirror of life,” indicating by their encounters with God and His Word the range of responses in both faith and unbelief. All of this would point to God’s definitive act of judgment and deliverance exhibited in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This Christ-centered view also holds for Luther’s understanding of the New Testament. For Luther the New Testament is not so much a book, as we are accustomed to think — (I suppose we owe that to the printing press as much as anything) — but it is first and foremost a divine promise. The New Testament is God’s promise to save humankind from its own destructive path — a promise that stretches back to Eden

and runs through the lives of the patriarchs, prophets and kings until its fulfillment arrives in Christ.

Another word for promise is “covenant” or “testament,” and Luther especially latched on to this last word. This promise is God’s “testament” — his last will and testament, in fact (cf. Hebrews (9:16f.) — and in making it, God has set forth the scope of the whole redemption of Christ: “For if God is to make a testament, as he promises, then he must die; and if he is to die, then he must be a man. And so, that little word ‘testament’ is a short summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ.”



Christ Himself has not written anything, nor has He ordered anything to be written, but rather to be preached by word of mouth.

At its heart, then, the New Testament is not only a set of writings but God’s faithful fulfillment of a promise, a declaration of grace, an announcement of good news — that God has reconciled us in His Son: “It is the manner of the New Testament and the Gospel that it must be preached and performed by word of mouth and a living voice. Christ Himself

has not written anything, nor has He ordered anything to be written, but rather to be preached by word of mouth.”

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Luther’s dealings with the New Testament books are largely in his sermons rather than lectures or commentaries. In the sermon, the living voice of the New Testament finds its home, that is, in the faith of the one who hears. The promise that was ful-

filled in Christ spills over and is fulfilled again and again in the hearts of those that believe. Consider this excerpt from Luther's Advent sermon in 1522:

[Christ's] taking upon himself of humanity would have profited no one had it not meant the proclamation of the Gospel. The Gospel was to present him to the whole world, revealing the fact that he became man for the sake of imparting the blessing to all who, accepting the Gospel, should believe in him. Paul tells us the Gospel was promised of God; from which we may infer God placed more emphasis upon the Gospel, the public revelation of Christ through the Word, than upon his physical birth, his advent in human form. God's purpose was concerning the Gospel and our faith, and he permitted his Son to assume humanity for the sake of making possible the preaching of the Gospel of Christ; that through the revealed Word salvation in Christ might be brought near — might come — to all the world. ... How can Christ profit us unless he be embraced by faith? But how can he be embraced by faith where the Gospel is not preached?

Preaching, then — when it rightly proclaims Christ — is every bit as much the Word of God as the Bible or that which brought the world into existence. Through the proclamation of the Word — whether publicly by a pastor or by any brother or sister baptized into Christ — God continues to destroy our presumptions, idols and false pieties in order to create new hearts that cling to “the one thing needful” (Luke 10:42). Through hearing the Word, we are brought to repentance, receive forgiveness and find reconciliation to God in Christ and with one another. Even

the Sacraments are such a proclamation of the Word, bringing the faithful into a new world and new kingdom in which the Savior's supper and story are celebrated until He comes again.

For all of Luther's lofty language about the Word, he also celebrated the lowly, quotidian, even fragile means through which God's Word comes to us. The “swaddling cloths” mentioned above are “shabby and poor, yet precious is the treasure wrapped in them for it is Christ.” The preacher, too, is just one sinner among many — a clay vessel carrying this same treasure. God's Word takes up no uniquely divine language, but clothes itself in what seems all too human and too foolish to accomplish such great things. Nevertheless, both prophet and apostle profess the same: the Word of God endures forever.

As we commemorate Luther and the Reformation, there is much to remember and celebrate. But nothing gives us greater cause for confidence, humility or gratitude, than the life God gives us by His Word.

What is Luther? The teaching is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone ... How did I, poor stinking bag of maggots that I am, come to the point where people call the children of Christ by my evil name? ... I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.

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<https://www.csl.edu/2017/03/luther-the-word-did-everything/>

Our Use of God's Word

Rev. John Erickson



As to following the example of Christ with regard to God's Word, it seems that Paul's admonition to the Colossian Christians says it well. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16a).

To dwell means to "feel at home." One commentator writes, "The word 'dwell' means to keep house. We should live in the Word of God like we live in our homes. We are familiar with our home where all the closets are, where we have items stored. We must thoroughly acquaint ourselves with the Word. The Word should become so familiar to us that we know it like the back of our hand. The idea is to let the Word of God dwell inside and live at home in our lives. The Word of God needs to inhabit us. This is more than just reading the Bible. God wants us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Col 3:15) and the Word of Christ dwell in our hearts." [Grant Richison].

Therefore it would seem Paul's desire for his readers was that the message of God's Word... that the message of the Bible... would fill their lives... would infuse their very being, and thus be the motivation for their living. Paul did, and he would want us also, to have a relationship with God's Word such that we feel at home with it, and it with us.

As a little aside - Paul has it, "let the Word of Christ..." As I understand it, this is the only time the phrase "the Word of Christ" is found in the New Testament. The more

common way of phrasing the idea of the Bible is "the Word of the Lord" or "the Word of God." In connection with this, John Gill writes in his commentary, "The Alexandrian copy and Arabic version read, 'the Word of God'; by which may be meant the whole Scripture, all the writings of the Old and New Testament, which are by inspiration of God, were edited by the spirit of Christ, speak and testify of Him, and were written for His sake, and on His account, and therefore may be called His Word."

Paul would have the Bible to be at the very heart of our existence. If this is going to happen, then we must have contact with the Bible, and that contact must, as far as it is possible, be direct not second hand contact. Not this is what so-and-so said the Bible said, but this is what the Bible says. In other words, if we are going to truly know the message of the Bible, we need to be in the Bible ourselves. We need to read the Bible.

I remember reading some years ago that the Bible can be read, at pulpit speed, in about 80 hours. The other day I came across the following. "Did you know that half of the books of the Bible can be read in less than 45 minutes each, and many of them in less than 20? It has been demonstrated that the entire Old and New Testaments can be read aloud in less than 71 hours. Do you realize that this means that in less than fifteen minutes a day we could read the Bible cover to cover in under a year?"

But of course there is more involved than merely 'reading' the Bible, or in merely 'listening' to the Bible being read. It is also the case that the message of Scripture be understood. Now this does not mean it is wrong to read a portion of Scripture while not understanding it. But it is wrong to read and not want to understand what is being read... or worse yet... to read and refuse to take to heart what is read. Any student of the Bible soon learns that the meaning of a portion of Scripture or a teaching of Scripture can 'lay there' for a time, maybe even for years, and not really make sense. And then... all of a sudden... one day... it takes on meaning. And one might wonder why it was not understood for a long time previous. But God very often gives to his children what they need to know, exactly when they need to know it.

When it comes to Scripture, as is true in any relationship, we need to be involved in active listening. We need to make sure we are reading and hearing correctly. We need to interact with the Word to make sure we are understanding what is being said. And we need to apply what is read practically. It was Mark Twain who said, "Most people are bothered with those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I have always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand." He had it right. The Bible doesn't teach concerning forgiveness so that we might discuss the subject. It teaches about forgiveness so that we seek to be forgiven, and so that we will forgive. The Word is dwelling within us richly when it makes for some difference in our lives... when our lives are effected as a result of our taking its message into our hearts and minds..

Something else that is important here is the Apostle's use of the little word "let." "Let the word of Christ..." It seems clear from this

that the "word of Christ" is available, ready, and waiting for us. Christ desires, and is willing, that His "word" should dwell in us.

When our Lord was on the Mount of Transfiguration, and when, on that occasion, Moses and Elijah had disappeared from their sight so that Peter, James, and John were left alone with their Lord, they heard a voice from heaven, "This is My Son, listen to Him." The admonition from heaven was that the disciples were to listen with their ears and take what was heard into their hearts and minds. Paul here admonishes the same... namely, that his readers would take the teachings of Scripture, and especially the gospel, into their very persons. And how were they to do this? They were to do so by means of faith. "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, *because it did not meet with faith* in the hearers" (Heb. 4:2). Without faith a person may indeed hear, but it will be to no avail, i.e., the Word will not be made efficacious.

It is possible for the Word to enter into one's life as a stranger and not abide. It can enter, but if not comprehended, it does not enlighten. John states it this way in his Gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (1:5). Paul speaks of this in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (4:4), "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Another example of this would be the experience of King Herod, in listening to the Word as spoken by John the Baptist, "he liked to listen to him" (Mk. 6:20).

There is little question but that Grant Richison, who I referred to earlier, is right when he comments how that some "treat the Word of God like a rabbit's foot or charm, but

we cannot use the Bible that way. We cannot rub the Bible on warts and they disappear. We cannot flip the pages of the Bible and blindly put our finger on a verse and claim it. The Bible is no prayer wheel or magic book. We must systematically study the Bible and memorize pertinent verses to deal with weak areas of our Christian life."

Paul's hope was that the Word of God might be carefully, thoroughly, and earnestly searched... willingly and joyfully received... carefully heeded. Scripture itself speaks as to the use we should make of it: Deut. 6:6 - "...these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart."

Joshua 1:8 - "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

Ps. 1:1-2 - Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

John 20:31 - "...but these are written

that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 17:11 - Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

2 Tim 3:16 - "...and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Collect for the Word that is used in many of our churches speaks to this very thing.

"Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen."

The Annual Gathering of the LMS will be held June 9 and 10

at

Christ Lutheran Church
Chetek, WI



For information contact Rev. Tylan Dalrymple - 715-924-2552

God's Word is Our Great Heritage

God's Word Is Our Great Heritage was written in 1817 by Danish Pastor, N. F. S. Grundtvig. Grundtvig's understanding of the Word paralleled that of Luther. Luther said, "...while printed words are dead, spoken words are living;



N. F. S. Grundtvig
1783-1872

on the printed page they are not so forcible as when uttered by the soul of man through the mouth." [Graves, Frank Pierrepont: A History Of Education During The Middle Ages And The Translation To Modern Times; The Macmillan Co., 1919, p. 187]. This speaks to the understanding of the Word and the Church held by both men. For them, the Church was not merely something built on a written book (the Bible). Rather it was built on a Living... Preached... Confessed... Sacramental Word that is drawn from the Scriptural Word. This means the Word of God is something that is alive... is spoken... and is sung.

Grundtvig was a prolific hymn writer. His "strongest hymns are those that deal with the Church and the sacraments. The divine character

of the Church is continually stressed, for Christ not only founded it, but, as the Living Word, He is present in it and in the sacraments to the end of time. "Built on a Rock, the Church doth stand" is probably his most famous hymn. [Ryden, E. F.: The Story of Christian Hymnody; Fortress Press, p. 216].

Grundtvig wrote *God's Word Is Our Great Heritage*, as the 5th verse to Martin Luther's, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. The hymn was translated into English by Ole Gulbrand Belsheim in 1909. In 1916, Friedrich Otto Reuter, then a professor at Dr. Martin Luther College, put the hymn to a tune of his creation. While a number of hymnals use Reuter's arrangement, others have carried over Grundtvig's original setting of the hymn to Luther's EIN' FESTE BURG.



Luther's EIN' FESTE BURG

*God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant while worlds endure,
Throughout all generations.*

The LMS-USA is Lutheran Church body describing itself as *Biblical, Confessional, Evangelical, Liturgical and Congregational*. It is a 'Forum' in which there is an on going discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike. The LMS-USA meets annually for a Theological Conference and this publication, besides carrying news of the Ministerium and Synod, functions also as a vehicle for this continuing dialogue.

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