



From Pastor's Desk Everything Is Already Yours

By Rev. Jason M. Braaten

When it comes to stewardship, a favorite Bible verse is the account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1–4). It's a moving account. Our Lord praises the seemingly small gift of two copper coins given by a poor widow above the abundance of gifts given by the rich, saying, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them" (Luke 21:3). And that is usually where we stop. But the text goes on. "For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (Luke 21:4).

"She . . . put in all she had to live on." She gave everything. She held nothing back. She trusted that the Lord who made her and all creatures, who gave her everything she had, who redeemed her from her own sin, from death, and the power of the devil, who called her by the gospel and enlightened her with His gifts of Word and Sacrament, would continue to do this. He would provide her with all that she needed

for this body and life because that is the character of the God she had.

But this is not why we give small gifts. We give small gifts precisely because we don't trust the Lord to provide for us.

We give small gifts because we lack faith in the One who created us, redeemed us, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith. We give small gifts because we doubt that God will really give us what we need and desire. We give small gifts because we are not content with what God has already given.

We are not slaves, children of the slave woman, under the Old Covenant, who must give a tithe. We are adopted sons of the free woman. And since we are sons, we are also heirs. And heirs receive the inheritance. For everything is already ours in Christ. And thus moved by the willing spirit of adoption, we do the will of God in financial matters far beyond all that was done by those under the Old Covenant who were forced by legal demands.

So what have you decided to give? How do I decide what to give? Let the Scriptures be your guide.

We are to give proportionally to what we have received from God's giving to us (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2, 2 Corinthians 8:12). And what proportion is that? We are free, for we are not slaves but sons. Nevertheless, ten percent, the amount demanded for those under the Old Covenant, is a good starting point, unless there is a reason not to. For we have received more from God in Christ, and we are free now to give more also. So use ten percent unless there is a reason to use five percent or fifteen percent.

But you have not been set free to give nothing. See that you excel in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7)! We are not free to live selfishly outside the Gospel, without regard for God who gives us all good gifts, without generosity for our neighbor who needs us and our gifts, without supporting the community of faith in which we live, without care for our spiritual fathers and those who teach and help raise our children in the faith, without resources for the poor and needy—in short, we are not free to live unto ourselves, hoarding what God has given us only for us. For love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). And the sum of the law is this: Love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:34–40). We love because He first loved us. We give because He has given to us.

Luther once said “Possessions belong in your hands, not in your heart” (LW 14:240). There is a reason your ten fingers spread apart. You catch with your hands God's gifts for what you need so that the rest may fall through your fingers to your neighbors—your family, your friends, your community, your church.

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From the President Good for the Church

By Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

Not long after Johann Esch and Heinrich Voes were burned at the stake in Brussels on July 1, 1523, the news came to Luther. It disturbed him greatly that these two young men, monks of his Augustinian order, who had confessed the Gospel of free forgiveness, were the first to die. Luther, after all, was responsible for the uproar. Why had the Lord not taken him?

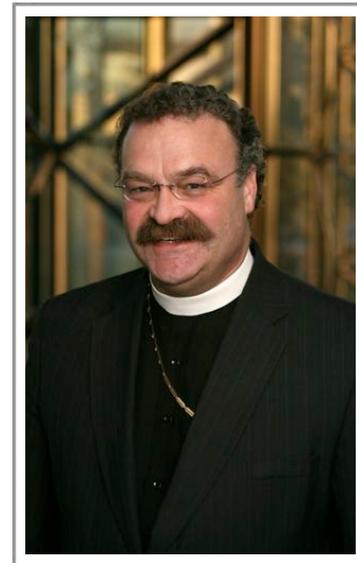
Deeply moved, the incident loosed his pen, and he wrote his first hymn: "A New Song Shall Here Be Begun." It's never made it into our hymnals because it is a type of ballad that the town minstrels would use, long before there were such things as newspapers, to take the latest news from town to town in sung form.

The 20th century was the bloodiest in Christian history with the death of tens of millions at the hands of Communist regimes. Now we are continuously shocked by Islamic radicals persecuting and killing Christians daily in the Middle East and Africa. Meanwhile, our consciences vacillate as we sense the cultural shift in the U.S. that has produced an increasing avalanche of harassment and is likely to get much worse.

I was in Ethiopia a few months back. In 1979, the leader of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (now approaching seven million Lutherans) was murdered by the Communist government. I chatted at lunch with the current president and general secretary of the church. The topic of persecution came up. Mind you, each of these men had themselves been repeatedly jailed in the Communist period for their confession of Christ. I cannot begin to

imagine the horror of an Ethiopian prison. President Wakseyoum Idosa leaned toward me across the table, raised his index finger and said with all gravity, "Persecution is always good for the Church. Always."

Since Luther's hymn of martyrs is so unknown, I offer it to you as a hymnic/devotional prelude as you consume this issue of the Witness. I bid you pray for the modern martyrs soon to face death in Nigeria and elsewhere today. I bid you consider that your own "light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17). From Calvary itself, we know that God works the very greatest things through suffering and martyrdom--a "new song," indeed.



A New Song Shall Be Begun

- 1 A new song now shall be begun,
Lord, help us raise the banner
Of praise for all that God has done,
For which we give Him honor.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
God proved Himself most truthful
And poured His gifts from open hands
On two lads, martyrs youthful
Through whom He showed His power.
- 5 Their cloister-garments off they tore,
Took off their consecrations;
All this the youths were ready for,
They said Amen with patience.
They gave to God the Father thanks
That He would them deliver
From Satan's scoffing and the pranks

That make men quake and shiver
When he comes masked and raging.

7 A paper given them to sign—
And carefully they read it—
Spelled out their faith in ev'ry line
As they confessed and said it.
Their greatest fault was to be wise
And say, "We trust God solely,
For human wisdom is all lies,
We should distrust it wholly."
This brought them to the burning.

12 Let men heap falsehoods all around,
Their sure defeat is spawning.
We thank our god the Word is found,
We stand in its bright dawning.
Our summer now is at the door,
The winter's frost has ended,
Soft bud the flowers more and more,
By our dear Gard'ner tended
Until He reaps His harvest.

--Tr. F. Samuel Janzow, 1913–2001, setting by
Carl Schalk, published by Concordia Publishing
House, 1982. Order "Martin Luther: Hymns,
Ballads, Chants, Truth" from Concordia Publishing
House to read all 12 stanzas.

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LCMS News The Changing Face of Mission Work

What does modern day mission work look like? Would you describe an image of men clad in khaki and pith hats, slashing through thick vegetation, living in mud huts and teaching and preaching the Gospel to indigenous peoples?

Today, the face of mission work, although connected to these past efforts, looks very different. Inexpensive airfare, cell phones and the Internet connect people from different cultures, lands and languages who interact in a way inconceivable to earlier generations.

Today, the number one request coming from our LCMS partner churches worldwide is, "Help us to train our pastors." Our reputation for robust theological education that fully equips a man to shepherd a flock is recognized around the globe.

Learn more at <http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/the-changing-face-of-mission-work>

LCMS News LCMS Hosts Infertility Ethics Symposium

An Infertility Ethics Symposium, sponsored by LCMS Life Ministry and the Concordia Seminary Life Team, will be held Saturday, Nov. 8, at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

"Infertility is important to address for the sake of the many women and men, wives and husbands, who struggle with grief and uncertainty in relation to this issue," Gibbs says. "The world around us offers 'solutions' to the 'problem' which may or may not be God-pleasing ones."

This ethical question of what is God-pleasing in the field of infertility medicine is at the heart of the symposium.

Learn more at <http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/infertility-ethics>



Immanuel's New Seal and Logo

By Rev. John Fraiser, artist

The Lord's promise of a Savior in Isaiah 7:14 is the source for Immanuel's namesake. Immanuel means "God with us," and it immediately invokes our Lord's incarnation in human flesh. The incarnation was not a temporary union of God and humanity. No, God has forever joined himself to human flesh in our Lord Jesus Christ, and never ceases to be with his people. As Jesus said just before his ascension, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19).

But how is he with you? He is with you in the same humanity of his incarnation. That same body of Christ which was crucified, died, and was buried is present with you each Lord's Day in the Sacrament of the Altar. To behold God's presence with you, look no farther than the Table in your own sanctuary, where crucified flesh and shed blood are

present in the bread and wine. Here is God among you with his saving gifts.

This truth is what I wanted to capture in your new parish seal. The chalice depicted in the seal is a representation of your parish's own magnificent chalice. The crucifix shadow cast by the chalice and the elevated host artistically depict what is present in these elements: the Son of God crucified for you. Furthermore, the truth of "God with us" is represented in the congregational name and location circled around the Sacrament. May this seal be a reminder to each of you that God is present with you through the Sacrament at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tuscola, Illinois.

JUNE 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00 AM Divine Service (Communion) 10:30 AM Bible Class 11:30 AM Confirmation Questioning Celebration Reception Day	2 7:30 AM Matins 8:00 PM Board of Elders John Ardal	3 7:30 AM Matins 7:00 PM LWBL	4 7:30 AM Matins Kenney & Tammy Nosselt Dawn & Tibery Couch Jacob Higdon Denise Hagle	5 7:30 AM Matins David & Maria Staughter Tom Williams Dolores Ford	6 George & Candy Osfield Mark Pollock Pastor's Day Off	7 9:30 PM Divine Service (Communion) Bryan & Marilyn-Jurgens David & Dolores Ford Michael Esklam
8 9:00 AM Divine Service (Communion) 10:30 AM Confirmation Reception 6:00 PM VBS Children's Summer Day Confirmation Day	9 7:30 AM Matins 9:00 PM Board of Mission & Evangelism 6:00 PM VBS	10 7:30 AM Matins 9:00 AM Matison Circuit Meeting 6:00 PM VBS Don Stanger	11 7:30 AM Matins 6:00 PM VBS	12 7:30 AM Matins 6:00 PM VBS Carol & Joyce & Alexander Jeffrey Johnson	13 Patsy Ingram Pastor's Day Off	14 9:30 PM Divine Service (Communion)
15 9:00 AM Divine Service (Communion) 10:30 AM Bible Class Don & Mary Ellen Burnett Celebration Reception Day Father's Day	16 7:30 AM Matins 8:00 PM Board of Education	17 7:30 AM Matins Bob Leonard Ed Rahn	18 7:30 AM Matins	19 7:30 AM Matins Chad & Angie Rube Barbara Mills	20 Cousin Probstinger Pastor's Day Off	21 9:30 PM Divine Service (Communion) Gary & Marilyn Mann Steve Higdon
22 9:00 AM Divine Service (Communion) 10:30 AM Bible Class 3:30 PM Nursing Home Service Eric & Stephanie Alexander Ernie Pothofenka	23 7:30 AM Matins Arlene & Mary Jane Jones Steve & Ann Higdon	24 7:30 AM Matins Ann Carst Linda Green	25 7:30 AM Matins 11:30 AM TABA Meeting Sue Snyder	26 7:30 AM Matins 1:30 PM Ladies Aid	27 Ruth Lewis Wade Cyrenyala Joey Pollock Thomas Lachge Pastor's Day Off	28 9:30 PM Divine Service (Communion) Bryan & Deborah Ruitback David & Michelle Stumser Mackenzie Bowles
29 9:00 AM Divine Service (Communion) 10:30 AM Bible Class 7:30 PM Youth Group	30 7:30 AM Matins					

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Immanuel's stained glass window in the Narthex.

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600 E. NORTHLINE RD., TUSCOLA, IL 61953
(217) 253-4341 IMMANUELUSCOLA.ORG

