



From Pastor's Desk An Apology from the Church

by Rev. Jason M. Braaten

With the festivities of Lent and Easter, culminating in Holy Week and the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord, the church usually sees a spike in attendance. The Sunday after Easter, however, is back to normal, and sometimes below normal. And for this reason that Sunday has received the moniker “Low Sunday.” And thus this question arises: Where have all those Christians from Easter now gone?

If you are one of the multitude that calls yourself “Christian” but believes that attending the services of God is not necessary, that it’s optional, that it’s only for those who want to go to church or like church or get something out of church; if you’re one of the multitude that thinks

church nice for women and children, for youth groups and potlucks, but not for men or for those with common sense and American morals; if you’re one who thinks the Church is little more than a comfort center to give spiritual hugs, then the Church owes you a big apology. The Church needs to heed the word of the Lord spoken to the prophet Ezekiel: “If you do not warn the wicked in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his guilt, but his blood I will require from your hand” (Ezek 3:18).

So, as a servant of the Church of Christ, and in holy fear of the Lord, I hereby apologize to you who have been so misled. I’m sorry. I’m sorry that the Church allowed you to believe that attending the service of God in His House is optional; that going to

church is not a matter of salvation but one of personal choice and preference. I'm sorry the preachers of God have let you believe that you can love God, even please Him, and not gather to where His Son has promised to be. I'm sorry the Church failed to impress upon you the words of Jesus, "Whoever does not gather to me scatters" (Matt 12:30). I'm sorry that the Church has not paid as much attention to your salvation as she has to your sensitivities and personal tastes.

I'm sorry that the Church has let you believe that as long as you're a good person, as long as you don't intentionally hurt others or are otherwise uncouth, that you have nothing to fear from the Lord. I'm sorry that those who are to preach the word of the Lord seem to have failed to preach the whole council of God that not only says, "God loves you," but also says, "The Lord rebuke you," and, "Come unto me." I'm sorry that we have let you believe that you can gather to Christ in your heart, even though that is not written anywhere in the Scriptures, that which we are called to preach. I'm sorry that the Church has let you believe that your faith is nothing but a spiritual matter; that it means little else than how you feel about God and yourself.

Repent and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:14). Turn from the path that leads to death and

follow Christ into eternal life. Be gathered to Christ, holding fast to the promise of God in Christ that for His sake you are reconciled to God. Do not turn a deaf ear to the Lord but hear the word of the Lord. The Son of God suffered and died and was buried that you would be reconciled to God. God is not at enmity with you. He does not hate you. He was crucified; he died because our sins put Him there. But here is the great surprise of Easter. Not simply

that He is risen from the dead, but that He is risen from the dead and is not angry. He bears no grudge. He seeks no vengeance. He comes instead to bestow peace, with mercy and forgiveness, with salvation. He does not want you to be separated from Him. He sent His Son to redeem you, to buy you back from sin and death. Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, has purchased you with His precious blood and with His holy and innocent suffering and death. He has purchased you that you may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom. He has earned eternal life for you.



Gather, therefore, at the House of the Lord for He gathers those whom He has chosen, gathering them out of the world that they would not be destroyed with the world. For the Christ will appear again, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him (Heb. 9:20). And we wait where His name is proclaimed and that is in church (Matt 18:20).

From the President The Joy of Everyday Life

by Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

At the heart of virtually every problem in the church, at the bottom of every strained relationship, at the center of every reason an inactive member stays home on Sunday or leaves the LCMS is the issue of the proper distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel.

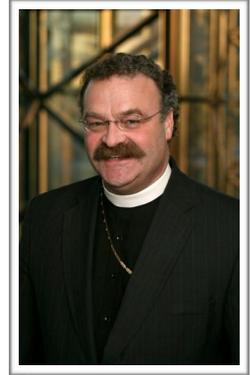
Without this understanding, the Scriptures make no sense, we will have no idea why we go to church (or worse, the wrong idea) and we will have no clue as to why orthodox Lutheranism reflects New Testament Christianity in the best sense. We may well be a royal pain and terror to those around us. Even worse, without a clear understanding of Law and Gospel, we'll be of no use to people around us struggling with spiritual and life issues. Worse still, we may even become a millstone round their necks, helping them (and ourselves) on the way to hell!

The Lutheran Reformation began when the Lord God Himself, through the Scriptures, opened Luther's mind to the scriptural distinction between the Law and the Gospel.

The Law makes demands, which we could not, cannot and never will fulfill. "No one is righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10). "Even our righteous deeds are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). If St. Paul laments about himself, "The good that I would do I do not do" (Rom. 7:19), where does that leave you? You have not a thought, an action or any of your physical, psychological or spiritual being that is not affected by and tainted by the reality of sin. And sin damns.

The Gospel, however, makes no demands and even gives the faith needed to believe it

(Eph. 2:8–9). The Gospel is the forgiveness of sins. Christ was slain from the foundation of the world for you (Matt. 25:34). Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament for you (Isaiah 53). Christ was conceived for you (Luke 1:26). Christ was born for you (Luke 2). Christ was circumcised and fulfilled the Old Testament ceremonial law for you (Luke 2:22). The boy Christ taught in the temple for you! (You get the credit for His diligence in the catechism! See Luke 2:41.) John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)—for you. Jesus was baptized for you (Luke 3:21). Jesus was tempted for you (Luke 4). All of Jesus' miracles, healings, words, promises, His Passion, His trials, His beating, His betrayal, His crucifixion, His ridicule, His words on the cross—"Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do!" (Luke 23:34); "Today you will be with Me in paradise!" (Luke 23:43)—His death, His descent in victory to hell and His glorious resurrection and ascension are all, all of it, for you! And that's all Gospel!



But there is even better news, and this is the point where the devil bedevils us. What Jesus attained for us some 6,000 miles away and 2,000 years ago is delivered in the word of preaching, in Baptism, in absolution and in the Supper. "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian." Oh, yeah? God says you do. "Do not give up meeting together." (See all of Hebrews 10.)

But better than the Law (which says you should go to church) is the blessed Gospel! We cry like the tax collector at church, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). And the pastor says, "In the stead and by the command of Christ, forgiven!" (see John 20:21–23). He makes the sign of the cross to remind us that we're baptized, forgiven (Titus 3:5). The Scriptures are read, and they contain both Law (demand, threat) and Gospel (forgiveness, promise).

The sermon is preached, and the texts explained. The Law threatens and drives us to Jesus! The Gospel is not merely described or spoken about, it's delivered! "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), right now, for you!

Most people who stop going to church or get church wrong think it's about ethics. They think it's about following the rules (i.e., following the Law). No, it's finally about sinners receiving forgiveness (Gospel). And blessed by the Benediction ("The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you"—Gospel!) and all the forgiveness given, forgiven sinners head back into their vocations in life to be a beautiful leaven. If I know I'm a real "hard-boiled sinner" who's been forgiven (Luther), I cannot be an unforgiving jackass to those around me. It's a matter of Law and Gospel. I cannot but speak forgiveness—the Lord's own forgiveness—to others.

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On True Faith

by Leo the Great

You, dearly beloved, whom I address in no less earnest terms than those of the blessed apostle Peter, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," built upon the impregnable rock, Christ, and joined to the Lord our Savior by His true assumption of our flesh, remain firm in the faith, which you have professed before many witnesses and in which you were reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, and received the anointing of salvation and the seal of eternal life.

But "if anyone preaches to you anything besides that which you have learned, let him be anathema"; refuse to put wicked fables before the clearest truth, and what you may happen to read or hear contrary to the rule of the catholic and apostolic creed, judge it altogether deadly and diabolical . . . Indeed, they put on a cloak of piety

and chastity, but under this deceit they conceal the filthiness of their acts, and from the recesses of their ungodly heart hurtle shafts to wound the simple . . . A mighty bulwark is a sound faith, a true faith, to which nothing has to be added or taken away, because unless it is one, it is no faith, as the apostle says, "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in us all." Cling to this unity, dearly beloved, with minds unshaken, and in it "follow after" all "holiness."

In it carry out the Lord's commands, because "without faith it is impossible to please God," and without it nothing is holy, nothing pure, nothing alive, "for the just lives by faith," and he who by the devil's deception loses it is dead though living, because as righteousness is gained by faith, so, too, by a true faith is eternal life gained, as our Lord and Savior says.

And this is life eternal, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. May He make you to advance and persevere to the end, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

The LCMS News Desk Book of the Month

LCMS President Encourages Church Workers

In two new videos, Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison encourages church workers—ordained clergy in one and all other church workers in the other.

To view the 6-minute video encouraging clergy, visit lcms.org/video/forpastor. Visit lcms.org/video/forchurchworkers for the 7-minute video encouraging other workers, in which he also asks congregation members to encourage their workers.

Harrison addresses preaching in the video of encouragement for clergymen—quoting St. Paul in the Book of Timothy to “preach the Word.”

“That task is an extraordinarily difficult one,” Harrison acknowledges, pointing out the regular weekly and other opportunities when pastors preach, on top of other duties. “It’s not easy business being a preacher. But I want to encourage you. The Word of God is living and mighty and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing unto the marrow. And the Word of the Lord does not return void. So don’t lose heart, brothers. The Gospel does its business, even through you and through me.”

LCMS Disaster Response Update

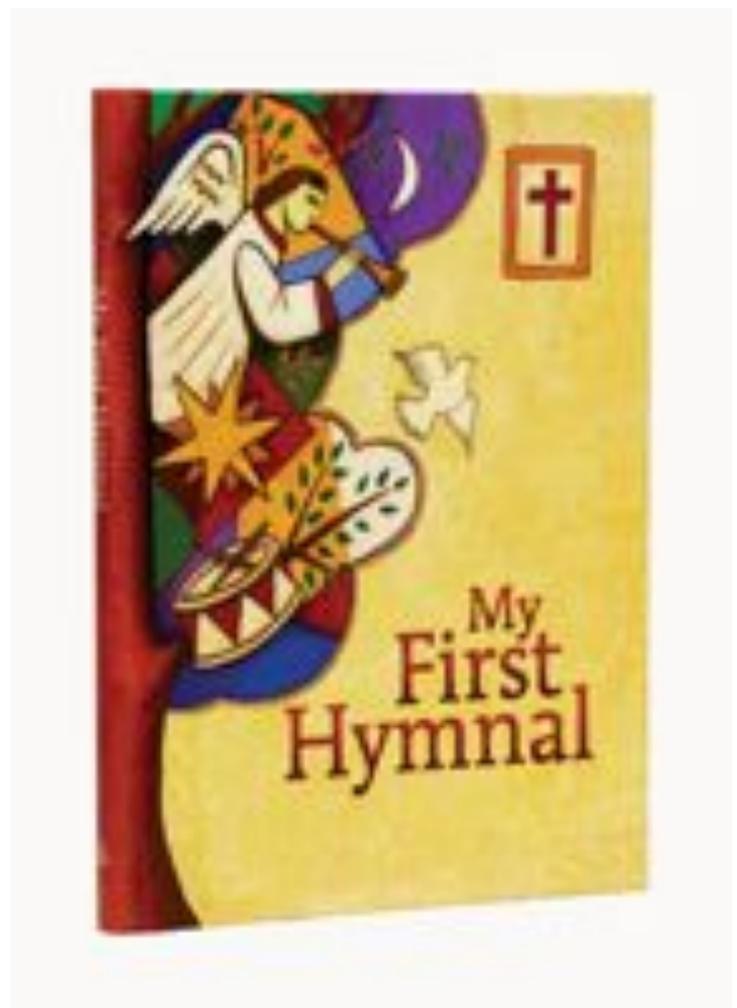
- *Superstorm Sandy*: the hurricane that led to the deaths of more than 280 people in seven countries in October 2012. In the months following the storm, the LCMS provided more than \$1.4 million in grants to help those with damages.
- *May 20, 2013, tornado in Moore, Okla.*: Within days of the storm, the Synod sent a \$100,000 emergency grant to the LCMS Oklahoma District to meet immediate needs of LCMS members and the community.
- *Nov. 8 typhoon in the Philippines*, which killed 6,000 people and left 4 million displaced. Disaster Response has provided \$528,400 for aid.

To give to LCMS Disaster Response or to learn more, go to www.lcms.org/disaster.

My First Hymnal

Now children have a hymnal all their own! With brilliant artwork and treasured music, it’s sure to be a keepsake for years to come. Teach young children God’s grace, mercy and promise of eternal life with the songs and prayers of the Church Year included in *My First Hymnal*.

Specially designed for children up to age ten, this heirloom quality hymnal contains lyric hymns favored by grandparents, godparents, and parents with beautifully conceived illustrations presenting the colors, seasons, and symbols of the Church Year and the life of Jesus. It’s ideal gift for birthdays, Christmas, baptism birthdays. Order at www.cph.org.



MAY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p> <p>8:30 AM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>10:30 AM Sunday School</p> <p>11:30 AM Catechism Class</p> <p>Catechism Recitation Day</p>	<p>5</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>7:30 PM Men's Club</p> <p>Tim & Tessa Pollock</p> <p>Virginia Handwerker</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>Oliver Joergens</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>Maylin Joergens</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Adam & Michelle Wilcox</p> <p>Mika & Cindy Dubois</p> <p>Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>10</p> <p>8:30 PM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>Janet Sumner</p>
<p>11</p> <p>8:30 AM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>10:30 AM Sunday School</p> <p>11:30 AM Catechism Class</p> <p>2:30 PM Nursing Home Service</p> <p>Tom Greig</p> <p>Bakker's Day</p> <p>Christy's Service Day</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>8:00 PM Board of Mission & Evangelism</p> <p>8:00 PM Board of Elders</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>8:00 AM Matins Group Meeting</p> <p>Lynette Smith</p> <p>Tim & Shanna Hord</p>	<p>14</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p>	<p>15</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>James Nunan</p> <p>Margaret Russ</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>17</p> <p>8:30 PM Divine Service (Communion)</p>
<p>18</p> <p>8:30 AM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>10:30 AM Sunday School</p> <p>11:30 AM Catechism Class</p> <p>Catechism Recitation Day</p>	<p>19</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>8:00 PM Board of Education</p> <p>Pastor & Lauren Elgerton</p>	<p>20</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>George Kuhn</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>Boyd Handerson</p> <p>Barb Liba</p>	<p>22</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>Joel Helgenhoff</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Miranda Comonika</p> <p>Ronald Urban</p> <p>Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>24</p> <p>8:30 PM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>Zachary Norman</p>
<p>25</p> <p>8:30 AM Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>10:30 AM Sunday School</p> <p>Pact Falls</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Colin & Ashley Lovoy</p> <p>Memorial Day</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:00 PM LWML</p> <p>Susan Frazier</p> <p>Pastor of Sossopinto Conference</p>	<p>28</p> <p>11:30 AM TAMM Meeting</p> <p>Landon Puchner</p>	<p>29</p> <p>7:30 AM Matins</p> <p>11:30 AM Ladies Aid Luncheon (Pastor's Candy Kitchen)</p> <p>8:00 PM Assesment Divine Service (Communion)</p> <p>First of the Assesment</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Pastor's Day Off</p>	<p>31</p> <p>8:30 PM Divine Service (Communion)</p>

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Immanuel's stained glass window in the Narthex.

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