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Linda Mattson, Editor

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PO Box 220

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Phone/Fax: (503) 662-5909

E-mail: ChristianM@Apostolic-Lutheran.org

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*APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA website
address*

www.Apostolic-Lutheran.org

E-Mail Addresses:

Western_Mission@Apostolic-Lutheran.org

Eastern_Mission@Apostolic-Lutheran.org

Foreign_Mission@Apostolic-Lutheran.org

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Christian Monthly

January 2007

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We Have Been Taught Christ Jesus, Our Everlasting Truth

We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

II Thessalonians 2:13-15

Is the Faith of Our Fathers Living Still?

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:21-23)

Observe then, dear friend, the fatherly heart of God toward us in this, that through his Son, He gave us complete reconciliation and mercy if we, by faith, lay hold of it. So that living faith would come to us and remain in us, the Lord gave us his perfect Word and sacraments, by which the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to possess life. And the Word of the Gospel is the power from which faith is kindled; but we also need to know what the Gospel is.

The words *faith* and *gospel* are the most difficult of any to understand. Why? Is it because they are so confusing and deep for our minds? No, indeed; but because they are so entirely simple in the first place, the wise and prudent are offended by them.

See therefore, and try by the Scriptures, whether the Gospel of God is anything else but these words to the sinner: "Your sins are forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus." Here ends the Law and the prophets, and this alone is the correct and living Gospel of Christ that brings faith, life, and peace into the heart and soul of man. This, now, is the entire content and meaning of the doctrine of Christ, wherein, by grace, sins are forgiven the sinner who considers himself impossibly unworthy. Man's own merits are strictly left aside.

Therefore, only one thing is left for the message of the Gospel, and it is contained in these words: "Your sins are all forgiven for the sake of the merits of Jesus."

This beautiful Gospel Jesus now authorizes his disciples to dispense: *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.*

Thus, the authoritative license was proclaimed for the office of preaching, for you and for me, brother and sister. In doing this, Jesus breathed upon his disciples, for as the Father breathed the living Spirit into man when He created him, thus breathed the Son upon his disciples in ordaining them into the ministry.

So this is the precious Gospel of the remission of sins with which the whole world is offended and antagonized. For, against the will of the serpent, Jesus has saved countless souls from death, hell, and the

power of the Devil, and lifted them into the communion of saints and into Heaven.

Because we have fallen so deeply in the Fall caused by our first parents, still, if the voice of the Word were not audible to our ears, we would never be able to enter into living faith. By this means, the Holy Spirit kindles faith by hearing.

What wonderful grace this is, that man, in behalf of God, may remit sins by the power of Jesus' holy blood. To this end, we have now received power and permission by the words of Jesus.

Who then, are you, not to employ this gracious remission of sins in Jesus' blood among your brothers, when it is a God-given mercy? Has this love of Jesus, through the testimony of brothers and sisters, become scorned?

The Lord knew well our weakness, that the full Gospel would be necessary in audible words before we could come into faith. Here, now, the great mystery becomes solved: that salvation in Jesus is completely prepared if we only accept it by faith. For this reason, we also preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to all nations.

Therefore, may Jesus send many preachers of the Gospel of peace upon this earth, that sorrowing and burdened consciences may find rest to their souls.

Even though the unbelieving preachers may have such a short measure that they can only remit sins to the honest, we, however, must dispense the remission of sins to the fraudulent, knowing well that this Gospel influences true penitence. For Jesus spoke nothing of worthiness or unworthiness when He said, *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted.*

**"Whose soever sins ye remit,
they are remitted."**

No matter in what manner sermons are preached, should this voice be lacking, all grace then is lacking to the penitent, also, for these words of grace embody the entire Gospel.

*Aato Laitinen
Finland*

*Submitted by Ben Johnson
Translated by Helmar Peterson*

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

I John 5:8

Upon Them Hath the Light Shined

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

During the Christmas season, I was reminded of a simple service that was held once a year in an austere little church on the prairie near Frederick, South Dakota -- a church which the pioneers so lovingly built over 120 years ago.

As you approach it, all is dark except for two candles burning beside the front door. There are also candles in the windows. The wood fire glows through the grate in the stove, and there are lanterns and a kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling so that the Word may be read and spoken.

Although words are hard to read with the subdued lighting, voices are joyously raised in the singing of Christmas carols in the Finnish and English languages. This service, in all its simplicity, draws people from near and far, creating awe in the hearts of many. One elderly lady told me, "It's like making a journey to Bethlehem." It is very dark outside, with only the stars to light the sky as we gaze eastward. But no one is in a hurry to leave, for we have experienced the warmth of the Christ Child in our hearts.

What is it that really draws the hearts of God's children to worship Him? Is it not simply . . . love?

When my son was home at Thanksgiving, he commented that, if Christians perform their Christian duty, showing love to our neighbors or the "strangers" who visit our church, we wouldn't have to resort to modern practices to "draw" people.

Some years ago, my husband's uncle, Arne Nixon, shared some memories of Christianity as he remembered it when he was a child. I would like to share it with you because it instills a feeling of the love and reverence those people, who have gone on before, had for God's precious Word.

He said: "Today we gather in this old and beautiful house of God to commemorate days that are past. We meet here to invoke precious memories of the men and women who built this house. They were concerned with the many daily cares of living, and they carried heavy burdens. Newcomers and strangers in an alien place, lonely and alone, they struggled against a hard, unforgiving land which too often exacted a high and bitter price from those who had, at times, too little with which to pay.

"By the sweat of their brows, they earned their daily bread, which, too many times, was watered with their tears. Life offered them no guarantees, and they expected none. It offered them only hope, and that was enough for those good men and women whom we remember – those who left their homeland to establish new lives in this place. They came by faith, and it was by faith that they lived.

"We come to remember them with respect and love. They live now in the house of memories: in the hearts of their children, grandchildren, and their friends who still live. Today, after a century, we invoke the magic of memory, and we remember.

"We do not come here to honor those founders, for they need no honors that we can give. It would be presumptuous for us to even try. Their own lives and labors do them honor, and they are their own best testimonials of faith and achievement. Nor would they want us to honor them, even if we could, for they would insist that such honor belongs to God alone.

"Their steadfastness and courage glow across the years of that century like a bright beacon to us, who now travel that road that they built with such hard labor and devotion. They are dead to this world, and yet they reach out to us. Even in death they speak. Their wisdom teaches us; their example inspires us; their faith blesses us.

"As some of you have done, I have made many pilgrimages to their homeland in Finland. I have walked the very earth where they labored, and where they closed, for a final time, the doors of their humble houses, leaving homes and even families.

"Several years ago, I sat for hours in an old railroad station in a beautiful village from where my mother's family came. I watched the clock on the station wall, and listened to its ticking. It was the same clock, the station master told me, that had been there nearly eighty years before, when my own mother watched it when, as a young girl, alone, she waited for the train to carry her away.

"I have stood, too, for hours on the docks of that lovely seaport town of Hankoniemi on the Baltic Sea, from where thousands of people left the soil of their homeland, which became, at those moments, a homeland of the heart.

"I have talked for many hours with some of those few remaining old people in Finland who remember the bravery and courage of those who left, and of those who remained behind. I remember one old woman who still recalled her own mother embracing her strong, young son who was leaving. She said

goodbye, knowing that she would not see him again upon this earth. With tears streaming down her face, she said, 'I will see you again, Johannes, when we meet in Paradise.'

"They came to America with empty hands and full hearts. They came with hope and faith. They came to lend those strengths to the challenges of a new land, and they built, early on, this church as an expression of their faith. They came to help in the building of a new nation. Lacking language, lacking education, they found little easy work to do. They were required to perform the most difficult jobs, and work at the lowliest stations. But they worked gladly, and they taught their children to work, knowing that their lives would be brighter and better.

"They taught their children in this church, and outside of it, the best values of their old and beautiful culture: honesty, hard work, respect for age, helpfulness, charity for those in need, pride in their heritage, and love of country. When it became necessary, they offered their sons to defend their new homeland, and with sorrow and pride, they wept for those who did not return from war. Above all else, they taught their children a simple faith in the God of their fathers.

"It was altogether appropriate that one of their first acts was to build this church, and to dedicate its burying ground. So simply did they build it; as simple as was their faith in God. It was a house where they might come to hear and share the Word of God, where they might come to pray humbly to Him, where they might lift their voices in the beautiful old hymns of supplication, assurance, and exultation. There are those of us who remember well those hours of divine service held here in afternoon and evening hours. The men of God would come to preach. The old Book would come to life, and God would enter this house, and walk and talk with those who waited on Him.

"We can remember, too, the voices of those who were troubled in their relationships with their fellow men and their God. Here they would publicly acknowledge their own human weaknesses, and plead for human understanding and God's forgiveness.

"Yes, and we remember, too, many times when they would bring here one whose earthly journey had ended, for one final hour and act of committal to the God whom he had served. I can close my eyes even now and invoke in memory the beauty and the mystery and the sorrow of those hours: the people waiting, quietly and patiently. No sound broke the stillness. Then the mournfully beautiful music of Bach, 'Oh, Sacred Head, Now Wounded,' would

begin the service. It was music at its most beautiful, sung by human voices alone; the strong soaring voices of men, the clear lovely voices of women, and it was an experience so beautiful that even now I remember it with awe.

"Now those voices are still. The tongues are silent; the lips are mute. They speak no more in prayer of petition or praise. They can no longer fill this house with song. They sleep now, those founders, the sleep of eternity in the little field nearby, which is so quiet, waiting for the day of resurrection when their God shall call them, incorruptible, to inherit a new Heaven and a new earth.

"The old church stands as a witness to a passing of a century. It serves as a witness to its founders, and to their children, and to their children's children, and to other generations who yet wait to be born. It is fitting that it is here, and it is fitting, too, that we are here to remember. The church is a small piece of that proud Finnish heritage which they brought here from their beloved homeland. It is a place where the God of their fathers still lives.

"Long before the Finnish fathers came here, there was another band of immigrants who came to America's shores as pilgrims, to live and to worship God. I remember so well, in the little school close by, being required by a fine teacher to learn a poem about their pilgrim journey. I still remember that poem. Its final verse seems right at this hour and this time, at this celebration of memory:

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas? The spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine.
Ay! Call it holy ground –
The soil which once they trod.
They have left unstained what here they found –
Freedom to worship God.

"The church stands, and their memory endures.

"There was another teacher in that little school who had me learn a poem which speaks the final word concerning the prayers and purposes that have brought us here today:

I paused last night beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard his anvil ring a vesper chime.
Looking in, I saw upon the floor

Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
'How many anvils have you had,' I asked,
'To wear and batter all those hammers so?'
'Just one,' the blacksmith said, and smiled,
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'
And so, I thought, God's Word
For countless ages, cynics' blows have rained upon.
The Anvil is unchanged. The hammers all are gone.

"Yes, the builders are gone. They sleep peacefully and well in the Garden of Heaven. Their earthly voices are still, and they rest from their labors. But across the years of that century we hear them yet. They speak with an eloquent clarity in the beautiful words of that lovely tongue:

Kiitos olkoon Jumalalle,
Hyvä Paimen,
Joka on ohjanut meidän askeleet,
Joka on runsaasti siunaannut, ja siunaa,
meidän aikomukset ja elämän päivät.

Translation:

Thanks be to God,
The Good Shepherd,
Who has guided our footsteps,
Who has bountifully blessed, and
continues to bless, our intentions
and the days of our lives."

In the above remarks by Arne Nixon, we see that time so swiftly passes, and voices are stilled.

I encourage you elder preachers not to be still. And I encourage us younger ones to use, and heed, the gifts of these men of God.

*God's peace and blessings in the New Year,
Janet Maunu (with husband, Reino)
Watertown, South Dakota*

To Whom Much is Forgiven

One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (Luke 7:36-50)

This account is one of the most beautiful recorded in all the Scriptures, for it tells of God's truly amazing grace for the sinner. For brevity's sake, we will look at just two of the many marvelous things dealt with here.

First was the Pharisee's thought, *This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that*

toucheth him: for she is a sinner. The Pharisee believed that, by his knowledge, he could judge what was prophetic. This shows that his understanding was false.

Jesus did know what sort of a person was touching Him. The Pharisee judged her only from the outside, and saw her in her sin. He could not see her for what she really was in the eyes of God: a creature of God in need of his forgiveness. Jesus recognized her as such right away, and made it clear that her actions demonstrated a truly penitent heart. The Pharisee's actions demonstrated that, in spite of his outward religion, he was hard-hearted and smug in his religious understanding. This sinful woman, with the contrite heart, is truly the example of true faith, and not the hard-hearted Pharisee.

The second point is contained in this passage: *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

**“Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;
for she loved much.”**

Only the contrite sinner understands the true nature of love. The Pharisee has a great knowledge of Biblical things, but does not know the real power behind them; that is, the love of God brought to the world through his Son and conveyed by the Spirit. The Pharisee believes that, by his holy life, he impresses God and wins his salvation, while the woman throws herself upon God's mercy, and believes that, only through God's love and grace, has her salvation been won. This repentance is the sign of a living faith that God has kindled within her. The Pharisee believes that this woman is evil, and worthy of judgment, while it is actually he who places himself in jeopardy by being so judgmental.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

How kind God is, in that He has chosen to call sinners out of the depths of wickedness and into his glorious light through the blood of his Son. How, indeed, does his mercy endure forever!

May God grant all of us truly contrite hearts. May his love, conveyed in the beautiful words of the Gospel, touch each one of us.

Thanks to God for his amazing love and grace.

*God's peace,
Pastor Jay Weidner,
Painsdale, Michigan*

Pressing on Toward the Prize

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

A New Year is here. The past year is history. History is important, however, for it is a record of past events. Historians interpret causes of events and assess their importance. We hope that understanding the past will help build the future and help mankind to avoid some of the errors made before. Knowing history can also be a comfort to us in times of trial, for Solomon wrote that *there is no new thing under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1:9)*

How does it affect us as children of God? The Word of God is the oldest historical record of mankind. The Bible informs us of God, our Creator; his Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier. Through these three, we know God, his nature, and his work, including what He does in his people today.

Through many centuries, God has led his people through trying times as well as times of ease. We read about people of faith who gave up everything they had in this life to serve the Lord, even if it cost them their lives. They *obtained a good report through faith. (Hebrews 11:30)* Throughout history, the Church has flourished during the most terrible situations.

Many of us may feel troubled, and fearful of what lies ahead. We face many challenges and uncertainties. We face the ongoing wars between nations, where many are losing their lives and livelihood. We face the ongoing war of lives lost through abortion. We face the ongoing war against the use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco that damage and destroy the lives of young people as well as the not so young. We face the ongoing war of a new generation that rejects the values and faith of their parents and grandparents. Many people live in immorality. We have a generation that has been brought up with an entertainment mentality; that seeks for more thrills and things for themselves than serving the Lord and others.

Much concern and heartache fill the hearts of the believers over this conflict from the world, from within the churches, and from within our own hearts. What is our hope for the future? What will this New Year bring?

It often seems like Satan is victorious, but let us never forget that Jesus has overcome the world, death, and the Devil. We can take comfort from the words of Apostle Paul in our text, when he leaves the trials and problems behind, and presses onward for that high prize found in Christ Jesus.

Jesus comforted his disciples by saying, *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

Luther wrote, "Why should you fear? Do you not know that the prince of this world has been judged? He is no lord; no prince anymore. You have a different, stronger, Lord: Christ, who has overcome and bound him. Therefore, let the prince of this world look sour, bare his teeth, make a great noise, and threaten. He can do no more than a bad dog on a chain, which may bark, run here and there, and pull at the chain. But because it is fastened, and you avoid it, it cannot bite you. So the Devil acts toward every Christian. Therefore, everything depends on this, that we continue in the fear of God and in prayer. Then the chained dog cannot harm us." [*What Luther Says*]

As believers, our lives are reflected in this song:

I Look Not Back

I look not back; God knows the fruitless efforts,
The wasted hours, the sinning, the regrets.
I leave them all with Him, who blots the record,
And graciously forgives, and then forgets.

I look not forward; God sees all the future,
The road that, short or long, will lead me home,
And He will face with me its every trial,
And bear for me the burdens that may come.

I look not round me; then would fears assail me,
So wild the tumult of earth's restless seas.
So dark the world, so filled with woe and evil,
So vain the hope of comfort and of ease.

I look not inward; that would make me wretched;
For I have naught on which to stay my trust.
Nothing I see, save failures and shortcomings,

And weak endeavors, crumbling into dust.

But I look up, into the face of Jesus,
For there my heart can rest, my fears are stilled;
And there is joy, and love, and light for darkness,
And perfect peace, and every hope fulfilled.

Oskar Ahnfelt, 1813-1882

Jesus is our security, and Heaven is our home. When despair and sin weigh us down, we can hear the voice of Jesus say that He loves us, He died for us. He tells us to believe that all of our sins are forgiven in his name and blood, which He shed for us. He has been victorious over death. We are to be glad and rejoice.

May we, also, *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Have a blessed New Year.

*Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Frazee, Minnesota*

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-7

In One Accord

No more beautiful testimony can be given to a group of believers than that which Luke used to describe the disciples and the other friends of Jesus. Of them, he wrote: *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women (Acts 1:14) and they were all with one accord in one place. (Acts 2:1)*

Believers in every age have striven to achieve and preserve this unity. We, also, seek it for today. In his high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed *that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. (John 17:21)*

The oneness for which Jesus prayed was a oneness of spirit, and not an organizational unity. The key to this unity can be found in the words He spoke to his disciples: *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)*

There is no true accord outside of the Word of God. It, alone, is the *lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (II Peter 1:19)

This spiritual accord, for which we labor today, can be achieved in no other way than in the early Church. It requires submission to, and continuance in, the Word. Peter praised God for having *begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (I Peter 1:3)* He stated that the incorruptible seed of the Word of God effects this born-again experience, for the Word says, *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (I Peter 1:23, 25)*

Jesus explained that He was the door into the sheepfold, and that *he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (John 10:1)*

Jesus, who is the door, has given the keys of the kingdom (the sheepfold) to the Church, with the commission and authority expressed in Matthew 16:19: *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

In referring to this authority, Paul wrote that, as ambassadors for Christ, we have received the ministry and the word of reconciliation: *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (II*

Corinthians 5:18-19) He boldly identifies himself with this word of truth by saying, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. (Romans 1:16)*

**“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:
for it is the power of God unto salvation
to every one that believeth.”**

In his epistle, Jude wrote of our common salvation, and exhorted the believers to *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 1:3)* As we seek to abide in the doctrine of Christ, and to follow the counsel of Jude, we must not forget the importance of also abiding in the vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, and obtaining our life from Him.

We are told that, *leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection. (Hebrews 6:1)* In this, we are reminded that our life is in Christ, who has been made unto us, by God, *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (I Corinthians 1:30-31)*

If we base our salvation upon a knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, and not upon Christ himself, we are in danger of finding ourselves in the same condition as the angel of the church of Ephesus. Although the Lord knew his works to be good, and gave him approval as to his faithfulness in pursuing his calling, yet he told him, *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4)*

Although he had contended earnestly for the faith, had tried those who said they were apostles and were not, and found them liars, and had labored without fainting, yet the Lord told him, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Verse 5)*

Although we endeavor to uphold the doctrine of Christ, we must remember that our salvation does not lie in doctrine, but in Christ alone. In Christ, there is unity; in Christ there is accord.

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

II Thessalonians 2:16-17

Children's Page

Dear Children,

It seems that Christmas comes and goes quickly, but we can remember Jesus' birth, and keep Him close in our hearts and minds every day. There are many people who do not celebrate Christmas with Jesus as the reason, but all those who do believe in Him can share in that celebration all the time. As this New Year starts, let us remember to thank Him for all He did, and does, for us.

We will look at the account of Jesus' being presented in the temple, found in Luke 2:21-40.

Presentation in the Temple

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (Verse 21)

That area's custom was that the baby's name was not known to the public until he or she was eight days old, so Jesus' name was not revealed until then. On that day, Mary and Joseph went to the temple to present him to the Lord. This was a law of the Lord in the book of Moses. *Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. (Verse 23)*

In the Old Testament, there were many animal sacrifices made for many different reasons, and, at this presentation, there was to be a sacrifice made. Because Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, they were to bring two turtle doves or two pigeons. The Bible does not tell us which they brought.

There was an old man there named Simeon, who served God, and spent much of his time in the temple. He had been waiting for Jesus, the Messiah, for many years. The Holy Ghost had told him that he would not die until he saw the Messiah with his own eyes. The Spirit told him to go to the temple on this day, and he went. While he was there, Joseph and Mary came in with baby Jesus.

Mary gave him to Simeon. The Bible says, *Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. (Verses 28-33)*

Simeon blessed God for the perfect gift that he held in his arms, and also for God's allowing that day to come, just as it was told to him long before.

Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (Verses 34-35) This means that the people would see that Mary's own need for a Saviour did not allow her to get to Heaven without Him.

Also in the temple that day was an old woman named Anna, who did much praying and fasting to God night and day. *And she coming in that instant*

gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Verse 38)

After the presentation was over and all the prayers, thanksgivings, and sacrifices were offered, Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus returned to Galilee to their city of Nazareth. I'm certain Joseph and Mary had many thoughts about all that had taken place at the temple. They knew they had a very special child, who would grow up in their home. There was still a lot more that they would have to learn about Him as He grew.

The last verse of our chapter says just how special Jesus was, and would be. *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (Verse 40)*

In this New Year, let us all thank God for sending his Son. I pray that you children will always love and serve the Christ Child.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

Winter Services

The Mesa, Arizona Apostolic Lutheran congregation announces Winter Services February 21-25, 2007 to be held at their church, 13205 South Val Vista Drive in Gilbert, Arizona. The guest speaker will be Tom Lappi from the Portland, Oregon congregation.

The schedule of services and gatherings is as follows:

Wednesday, February 21	7:00 pm
Friday, February 23	7:00 pm
Saturday, February 24	5:00 pm
Sunday, February 25	10:45 am and 1:00 pm

Everyone is invited to attend. RV parking is available. For more information, please call Clark or Sue Somero at 480/926-2066 or email: sues16@yahoo.com.

To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever. (Psalm 30:12)

*Clark Somero
Dwight Karlsen*

The People of God

We come unto our fathers' God;
Their Rock is our salvation:
The eternal arms, their dear abode,
We make our habitation:
We bring thee, Lord, the praise they brought,
We seek thee as thy saints have sought
In every generation.

The fire divine, their steps that led,
Still goeth bright before us;
The heavenly shield, around them spread,
Is still high holden o'er us;
The grace those sinners that subdued,
The strength those weaklings that renewed,
Doth vanquish, doth restore us.

Their joy unto their Lord we bring;
Their song to us descendeth;
The Spirit who in them did sing
To us his music lendeth.
His song in them, in us, is one;
We raise it high, we send it on--
The song that never endeth!

Ye saints to come, take up the strain--
The same sweet theme endeavor!
Unbroken be the golden chain!
Keep on the song forever!
Safe in the same dear dwelling-place
Rich with the same eternal grace,
Bless the same boundless Giver!

*Thomas Hornblower Gill,
1819-1906*

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in
God my Saviour . . . For he that is mighty hath done to me great
things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation.*

Luke 1:46-47, 49-50