



The Reporter

March 2015

The Reporter

Volume 13, Issue 03

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“The Power of the Cross”

by Pastor Proeber

There is a beautiful and fairly recent song written by the team of Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. It is called, “The Power of the Cross.” The song starts with a somewhat subdued mood taking us on Jesus’ journey to Calvary. Once he is at this place of sacrifice, we become witnesses of his torture, his humiliation, and finally his crucifixion. While it is not a pleasant sight, it is compelling. From the Gospels we know darkness covered the earth. There was a violent earthquake and many who died in the Lord came out of their graves. Finally, the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom. The Gospel record comes to a stunning, even shocking conclusion when Jesus bowed his head in death.

The conclusion of Jesus’ work is clear, and is presented with unmistakable words. “This is the power of the cross.” The message is intensified with the refrain, “Christ became sin for us, took blame and felt the wrath.”

The picture, like the music which accompanies it, is haunting. Just con-

sider what Jesus did. He took the blame which we should have received for our sin.

From the Scriptures we know Jesus came as the obedient Servant and faithful Substitute to secure our rescue. Jesus was obligated by his Father to take our blame upon himself, that is the blame which comes as a result of an endless cycle of sin in our life. Willingly Jesus accepted it and carried it to the cross.

By means of his obedience to his Father’s will, he literally became sin for us, and the resulting condemnation is clear, “the wages of sin is death.”

We need to be very clear on whom that sentence is pronounced. It is on people, sinners like you and me.

As our substitute, Jesus became sin for us. It permeated his person to such a degree that all God the Father could see was the sin defining, deforming and damning his Son. God’s justice was carried out on his Son because of what he had become—“he who knew no sin became sin for us.”

Before Jesus gave up

his life, he felt the full fury of God’s wrath. He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted by his Father because he took our sin upon himself. Just before he breathed his last breath, Jesus acknowledged his Father’s just judgment upon him the Lamb of sacrifice. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus endured the full weight of sin and full agony of God’s justice. Because Jesus was obedient, even to death on the cross, God acknowledged and accepted that obedience. He also established and proclaimed the power of the cross. At the cross the guiltless died for the guilty, the Light of the world brought light and life to those doomed to darkness, and the justice demanded was justice fulfilled.

As a result of Jesus’ obedient death, there is but one conclusion, “we stand forgiven at the cross.” This is what is foremost in the song, and what is foremost in our celebration of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

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For a moment, consider what the outcome would have been if Jesus did not do what his Father had prescribed? Imagine if there was no perfect obedience? No punishment by crucifixion? No innocent death? No resurrection? This is why the words of the song are so powerful. They tell us what Jesus did do. In addition they tell us what is ours because Jesus obediently went the way of the cross. The results of that sinless death and sacrifice is what comprises the second half of the song.

It is interesting to note there is a significant change which takes place in the song. The key changes, as does the tempo. Even more important, the words confidently convey the end result of Jesus' death of the cross. "Freedom is secured, death is crushed, life is mine to live." Once again, the refrain summarizes it so simply—"this is the power of the cross."

St. Paul writes of this power when he addresses the Christians at Rome. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The power of the Gospel is that Jesus was put to death on the cross and rose again on the third day. That power is life changing, and the song presents this truth without compromise. There is freedom from judgment. Instead of standing in fear of God, we stand in awe of God rejoicing because the verdict has been changed. This change took place because his Son, our Savior endured our just sentence. Along with the change of verdict we are released from the crushing burden of eternal death.

Many fear death because of its uncertainty. Many reject death because of its cruelty. But, death is vanquished because Jesus endured death for all and rose victorious from the grave. Through his resurrection and his descent into hell, death no longer holds any threat, fear, or uncertainty. Jesus proclaims the power of the cross—"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25).

The best gift is saved for the last. "Life is mine to live." Many are confused by what life is and what life should be. They long for what the world has to offer, but usually find short term pleasures which fade in time. Eventually, everything is lost is death. The life Jesus offers is so much more than that.

Our Savior does not promise a heaven on earth. Nor does he tell us we will be free from trials, tribulations and burdens. Every believer will experience these as long as they are earth-bound. What the Lord does offer is the only way to deal with them. Jesus offers us the invitation, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Our Savior never promises a life of ease, but he does give us a life of rest. As we endure life on this earth, we know we are never alone. We also know he is always in control.

This is living at its absolute best. We may not have everything the world offers, but we have the one thing it can not offer, and that remains the one thing which can never be taken away from us. It is this life offered by our Savior which transcends life on earth and culminates with life in heaven. Heaven is what is prepared for us, and what we can anticipate. There we will have the perfect existence which was originally ours at the creation of the world. When we reach our heavenly goal, we will be filled with wonder, love and praise, because "life is mine, indeed!"

This is the power of the cross, and it is what makes this time of year so precious. We can walk with Jesus to the cross, and follow him to victory. We can witness his entry into Jerusalem. We can watch the injustice of Caiaphas and Pilate. We can view the mocking and the beatings. We can ascend Calvary, and gaze upon our Savior as he gives up his life as a sacrifice for all. The journey comes to a conclusion at the empty tomb. It is there we see the power of the cross fully displayed. It is no longer a cross of shame, but

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glory. It is no longer a cross of death, but life. It is no longer a place of gloom, but joy. This is the glorious conclusion of the song. It is also our song of victory as we celebrate the death and resurrection of our Savior. As we prepare for our Holy Week remembrance, rely on these words to draw you closer to your Savior—the Author and Perfecter of your faith.

Exaltation Choir Visits

by Pastor Proeber

On Wednesday, March 4th, Our Redeemer had the privilege to host the Exaltation Choir from California Lutheran High School. While some wondered if we would be able to feed and house the students and accompanying adults, a group of people stepped forward to make the visit a success.

The choir sang several sets of music throughout the regular mid-week service. These were a mixture of new compositions and timeless classics. Each offered God's Word in a clear and unmistakable way. Certainly every one walked away with a favorite from the evening.

The visit started Wednesday late afternoon with a chili, cornbread, and salad dinner. Following the service cookies, brownies and ice cream—a big hit—were served. Nearly all of the 70 in attendance stayed and enjoyed the snacks and time for fellowship.

Around 9:00 pm, the host families took the young women to their homes for the rest of the evening. For the most part, everyone came back well rested. Well, at least as well rested as teenagers can look at 6:00 am in the morning.

The young men of the choir, along with their director and myself, stayed in the fellowship hall on mats and inflatable beds. It was kind of humorous watching the parade to and from the showers in the parsonage. We might have even witnessed a "minor miracle" in that the hot water never failed. The evening concluded a little after midnight with a movie and a few more snacks.

The choir reassembled for breakfast around 6:15 the next morning. There was a baked egg dish, two kinds of French toast casseroles, bagels, fruit, and juice. The choir also made their sandwiches for lunch later that day. By 7:30 they were on the road to their next destination.

I, for one, was impressed with the politeness and respect these young people showed. They were also very helpful and considerate in so many ways. I commend the faculty and staff of CLHS for the fine work they are doing communicating God's Word and training these young people in the way of the Lord. I also encourage all our members to remember CLHS in your prayers, and to support the High School in whatever way possible.

Last, but not least, we give thanks to the Lord for all those who made the choir's trip and stay possible, and so pleasant—those who provided bedding, food, financial support, and kitchen help; those who served as host families; and a special "thank you" goes to Sue for working with me to purchase, plan and prepare the meals, and for accommodating 13 choir members with showers, towels, and bedding.

“We can do all things through him who gives us strength!”

Lent: “God’s Love Breaks Through”

by Carl Schueler



God's
Love
Breaks
Through

The March 2015 WELS monthly magazine *Forward in Christ* compares the Lenten season to other Christian “celebrations.” Lent is not generally acknowledged in secular society. The Christmas season is, with \$2000 average per capita gift expenditures (\$600 billion was spent by US consumers last Christmas!). Lent is not marked by special sales campaigns or discounts on “Lenten” merchandise—if such exists. While Christmas cards fill mailboxes, nary a “Lenten card” is found during the Lenten season! Other than Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which marks the beginning of Lent (Fat Tuesday), I cannot think of any other secular acknowledgement of this special season.

Yet, Lent is important because it reminds the Christian of what was necessary for our salvation: Christ’s death on the cross! Therefore, each year at Our Redeemer, Pastor Proeber prepares and delivers a series of special sermons to help us with our Christian journey leading to heaven—without any merit of ours—because of Christ’s perfect life and suffering on the cross. This year, the theme is “God’s Love Breaks Through,” told via the following six sermons, Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm.

February 18—When Sinful Hearts are Broken

The first Lenten service introduced Isaiah’s prophecy of the Savior and Matthew’s account of Christ’s Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane just before he was betrayed by Judas and led to the cross. The sermon focused on how we each face the same enemies who Christ overcame by his perfect life and death on the cross, and how our Lord ransomed each of us through the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.

February 25—When Human Strength Fails

The second Lenten service reviewed Isaiah’s prophecy and Matthew’s account of Christ’s Passion. Then it extended our understanding of the eternal benefit to us of Christ’s ultimate victory. The sermon reminded us that although our enemies are strong and seek our defeat, our Savior is stronger and comes to our rescue.

March 4—When Shameful Pride is Shattered

During the third Lenten service we had the opportunity to have the California Lutheran High School Exaltation Choir. Together with the songs they sung, we heard how pride can often lead us away from the Lord, and into sin and great shame. David experienced the danger of shameful pride, as did Peter, but their hope—as well as ours—is found in the love of our God who is always near.

March 11—When Other Loves Disappoint

The fourth Lenten service reminded us that we are to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.” While the Lord deserves our love, we recognize other things often compete for this love. Judas allowed the love of money to rob him of his Lord’s love, and the forgiveness which comes from it. We need to understand the dangers we daily face, and look to God’s love to break through our misguided love.

If you missed the first midweek services, two more are scheduled on **Wednesday, March 18th and 25th. Both services are at 7:00 pm.**

Safe in the “Day of trouble”

by Carl Schueler

I lie
down
& sleep;
I wake again, because
the Lord
sustains
me.
Psalm 3:5



**“For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.”**

Psalm 27:5

This short verse is amazing! A comforting section of Scripture which announces eternal salvation by our Lord on a believer’s death. How do I know it refers to my death?

The verse references “the” day, not “a” day.

Except the day of my death, what other “day of trouble” could be “the” day? There have been numerous “days of trouble” in my life. The day my father died fifty years ago (for my Dad, it was “the” day of trouble, but for me it was “a” day of trouble), the day I was rejected from a college (and the next two rejections), the first time fired from a job (and second, third, fourth...), days I received job rejections, the day of my first car accident, the day our house burned down and we lost everything, the days of motorcycle accidents, the day my Mother died fifteen years ago, the day I learned I needed back surgery ten years ago, the day I was laid off for the first time (and the second). I could go on. But all those “days of trouble” went by and led to better days here on earth!

“The” day of trouble can only be the day after which there are no more days! “The” day when the “trouble” is death! The day the grim reaper appears with his scythe to put me at the “fork in the road” leading left or right: Hell or Heaven. **Trouble with a capital T!** Without Christ, it’s big trouble, because the only option is to the left to eternal fire and punishment in Hell. But, as this verse assures me, with Christ, I’ll be safely routed to the right to Heaven!

The introduction is “the day of trouble.” The next three lines provide the assurance of safety, and where! I’ll be “safe” in “his dwelling.” He will “hide” me in the “shelter” of his “sacred tent.” Way above trouble: “high” with a solid foundation “upon a rock.” Do you notice something interesting?

Count the number of words in quotation marks: “safe”, “dwelling,” “hide,” “shelter,” “tent,” “high,” and “rock.” Seven! The number of completeness! Assurance the Lord has done and will do “all” that is needed to ensure my eternal safety!

I need no confidence in me, my “good works” or even my “faith” for assurance on “the” day of trouble! All I need is to know Christ lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, and lives to bring me—bought with his blood in spite of my failures—“safe” to “his dwelling” to “hide me” in the “shelter” of his “sacred tent,” “high” “upon a rock.” Praise the Lord! Tell this to someone who worries about “the day of trouble.”

2015 Christian Leadership Conference

by Al Todd



In the January 2015 Newsletter, I presented some background information concerning the 2015 Christian Leadership Experience. This is the first of four additional articles on the sessions.

Leadership Qualities in Non-Profit Boards

The speaker was Arvid Schwartz. He is active in his local (Wisconsin) WELS church and is one of the original board members who helped found WELS Time Of Grace ministries. He has 45 years experience as a member of several non-profit boards and shared his insights into the qualities of an effective leader.

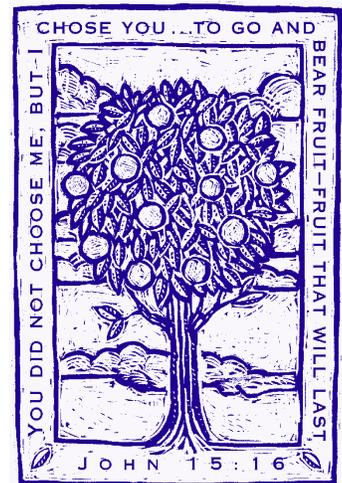
Not surprisingly, the number one quality is commitment to the mission and ministry. By commitment, Mr. Schwartz means a desire to move the organization to the next level to improve its effectiveness. Effective leaders do not just take a position because it is "my turn" or serve "when I have time" or are merely "interested." To be truly effective, they need to be committed! When recruiting prospective board members, key questions to ask are: 1) What can I tell you about the church?; 2) What do you already know about the church?; and 3) Are you committed?

If someone is willing to serve then he must know from current or outgoing board members what is expected, the qualities needed to be effective, and the level of commitment. Mr. Schwartz provided several examples from his personal experience of effective and ineffective board members to clarify the above points.

A key point was the requirement that everyone be "on board" with the mission and ministry. By that he meant that all members of the board need to fully understand and agree with the ministry's direction. If there is not full agreement, then discussions should be held to determine if the mission should be modified to make it more effective. Again, any mission modification must be ratified by every member of the board so that there is full agreement. This should result in all actions aligning with the mission.

One of the interesting anecdotes/best practices mentioned by Mr. Schwartz was how to choose board members (e.g. church council members) when there are several "vetted" candidates available. Instead of voting, one method is to simply put the names into a hat and draw them. That way, no qualified candidate is voted out or in (the classic "beauty" contest), but chosen by lot. I suppose this method is most workable in a fairly large church with many qualified candidates. When I asked Mr. Schwartz about this after the large session ended, he told me it could also work in smaller congregations such as his church which is "very small" (his description) with 300 members!

Next month's article will describe the session on "The Future of Christian Stewardship."





“**A** farmer
went
out to sow his seed.”

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee continues to sponsor events to provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We hope these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of Grace we proclaim. Please plan to participate, and to serve!

Holy Week Celebration

March 29th	Palm Sunday Worship at 9:30 am
April 2nd	Maundy Thursday Worship at 7:00 pm
April 3rd	Good Friday Worship at 7:00 pm
April 5th	Easter Festival Worship at 9:30 am with a brunch following the service for friends and members.

Future Activities

TBD	Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social
July 4th	Movie, Barbeque, Fireworks and Desserts
August 30th	Beach, Bike and Barbeque at Goleta Beach
September 20th	Festival of Friendship—Worship and barbeque

Sharing the Good News

Prior to our Easter worship service, we will put out door hangers and print personal invitations. Both will offer us the opportunity to share the good news of a crucified and Risen Savior with a friend or a neighbor. The door hangers will be ready around the 18th of the month (Wednesday). The personal invitations will be available on the 22nd of March (Sunday).

Just a note

This year we will have a free gift available to our visitors. We have copies of the DVD's "Come, Follow Me," and "The Way to Emmaus." Both are produced by our Synod's Commission on Evangelism, and offer a way for people to continue to learn more about what their Savior has done for them.



March Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

- 9th - Frank F.
- 12th - Zachary W.
- 16th - Kallie H.
- 28th - Chris M.

In April the Church Directory will be updated for 2015. When the information is placed outside, please make any needed corrections. *Thank You.*

Notes & News

Handbell Choir

Practices for the Spring—Holy Week, Easter, Trinity and Pentecost—will continue every Monday evening at 7:00 pm. We are thankful for those who generously give of their time and efforts to make practices and ring for our worship services.

There is also an invitation—if you are curious, or if you would like to try ringing—to speak with Debbie.

New ringers are always welcome, and can be worked into the future playing schedule.

Choir

The choir continues to practice for the upcoming festival portion of the church year. Some of the songs will be familiar, some will be new to our congregation. All will lead us to rejoice and sing praises to the Lord.

As practice continues into the spring, why not think about joining the choir. The practices are Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm for approximately an hour.

If you have any questions regarding the schedule, please speak with Pastor Proeber for more information.

Wednesday Evening Bible Class

Although the Wednesday evening class has been on hold through the six Wednesdays of Lent, it will restart April 8th at 7:00 pm.

The class will pick up where it last left off with the study of the “Seven Commandments Every Christian is to Break as Often as Possible.” There are 3 “commandments” remaining which will cover the themes —

“IfWeCanJust Churchology,” or the worship of spirituality;

“Freedom,” or you can find God in God’s absence;

“Counterfeit Christianity,” or you can find God in yourself.

What makes this study so interesting is that these topics are prevalent in many churches, and especially in “Christian” churches. We need to prepare ourselves so that we can remain standing on the “one foundation.” We also need to prepare ourselves so we can lovingly help others understand and avoid these half truths of the devil.

Sunday Morning Bible Class

As always there is a regularly scheduled class after the worship service. In the next two weeks we will conclude the study on “Hymns that Changed the World.”

It has been an insightful study of people’s lives and the gift of faith which sustained them in tragic circumstances.

The last two studies will be on the hymn, “Silent Night, Holy Night,” and a general overview of God’s goodness, mercy and power through the hymn, “Be Thou My Vision.”

After Easter a new study will begin.

Sunday School

We continue to offer Christian Education for young children. Sunday School is held on the first and third Sundays of the month, and during the worship service.

If you have any questions, regarding the program or possibly helping, please speak to John Favuzzi, or one of the teachers—Sonja Todd, Barbara Favuzzi, or Sue Proeber.

The goal of our Sunday School is to help parents train their children in the Way of the Lord.

Opportunities

We are always looking for new opportunities for service, outreach, study and encouragement. Please share your ideas with a Board member or with Pastor Proeber.



“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”

Romans 1:16,17

Serve the Lord with Gladness

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy to Carl Schueler, or email to Carl Schueler (cfs_home@hotmail.com)
or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thanks to Al Todd and Carl Schueler for their articles. There is a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will provide an article for 2015. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber or Carl Schueler for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for March

Church Council	March 3rd at 7:00 pm
Committees	March 3rd at 8:00 pm
Board of Elders	March 17th at 7:00 pm
Outreach Committee	March 24th at 7:00 pm
Property Work Day	March 28th at 9:00 am

The Spring Congregational Meeting will be April 11th following the worship service. Plan to be a part of our congregation's ministry, and support it with your presence and your prayers.



Confirmation & Reaffirmation

Last year Marrison Harrison became a Baptized member of Our Redeemer. Since that time, she and Joshua Schueler, parents of Jameson Schueler (baptized last year) completed a 26 week Adult instruction course with Pastor Proeber.

During the February

22nd service, Marrison was received as a Communicant member through her Confirmation. Joshua (confirmed 2002) reaffirmed his faith at the same service.

As part of the Rite of Confirmation, the members of the congregation expressed their verbal support to encourage

Marrison as a fellow member.

In about six weeks, Emmalee Schroeder will also complete her instruction and will be ready to be received into communicant membership at Our Redeemer. We want to keep all our new members in our prayers.

Devotional Corner

The Right Perspective

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 2:19-22

John enjoyed visiting the Museum of Modern Art. He appreciated the different styles and mediums with which the artists expressed their visions. On one trip a new sculpture had been added. As he studied the new piece, he contemplated what the artist had envisioned. While he admired the artist's talent, he couldn't quite understand his concept.

On a subsequent trip with his wife, the two of them slowly walked around the sculpture. After changing positions several times, they finally recognized what the artist was portraying. Both John and his wife agreed, it took the right perspective to see things clearly.

The disciples were also in need of the right perspective. Jesus boldly proclaimed, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Like the Jews who had heard his words, they were confused. How could he do something as incredible as this? It wasn't until Jesus was raised from the dead that they understood and believed. It took the right perspective.

Like the disciples I need to view Jesus and his ministry from the right perspective. Without the help of the error-free and inspired testimony of the Scriptures, I would find it hard to believe anything about Jesus.

With the right perspective, I come to know Jesus as the Son of God and the Son of Man who was perfectly qualified to be my Savior. I also know he was perfectly obedient in life and in death to secure my rescue from sin, death and the power of the devil. All of this becomes even more clear when I view it from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Because Jesus rose I know what God has declared is valid and certain. I can approach God the Father in boldness and confidence with my prayers. I can rejoice in his never-failing supply of forgiveness to release me from my sin. I can anticipate a joyful welcome into his eternal, heavenly kingdom.

Without Jesus' resurrection I would always be lost in doubt and confusion. Now, through Jesus' resurrection from the dead, I not only have the right perspective, I also know what Jesus did for me.

Prayer

O blessed Lord, I thank you for the precious gift of your holy Word. It is the truth from which I learn about my Savior. It also provides the perspective through which I see Jesus as that Savior.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."