



The Assistant Pastor

March, 1929

The Devil vs. Man

The story is soon told. The scene was the garden of Eden. The conflict was short. Man, the noblest, the sublimest, the most perfect, the very King of all created things, for he was like God himself, was through deception and lies enticed to wilful surrender.

Then followed the tears, the pain, the griefs, the groans, the hell of slavery under a brutal, murderous task-master that every Christian knows sadly well, and that, to the damned, shall have no end.

Man vs. the Devil

To tell about the conflict is to tell the story of Lent. The Devil was furious in his rage. He knew that if his head was not to be crushed, he must win a decisive victory. To gain his end he stooped to the meanest strategy if it promised advantage. He bribed kings and influential men, yes, the very courts and tribunals. His lines thus strengthened by a mighty host of traitors, victory seemed within easy reach. The mad mob did, indeed, mock and jeer at the suffering, bleeding, dying enemy. But by an invincible power, the apparently vanquished rallied again and the serpent's head was crushed!

You hesitate; you question. "Did man gain the victory over the Devil?" No, not by the might of his own power. "When no eye its pity gave us, when there was no arm to save us." One, born of a woman, stepped forth from our impotent ranks and single-handed disarmed the enemy and put all traitors, who did not seek pardon, to everlasting shame. "Who is this valiant one? 'Tis Jesus Christ, the Son, the Lord of Hosts, 'tis He who won the victory."

Go now, during Lent, and see Him in Gethsemane, see Him before the frenzied mob, the bribed court, the spineless judge, hear the mocking and jeering, see Him raised on the accursed tree, behold Him rigid in death, laid away in the grave; and, by the grace of God, realize that this was the price of your victory.

THE ASSISTANT PASTOR

Published by the pastor of the Jerico and Saude Lutheran churches affiliated with the Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

H. M. TJERNAGEL, Pastor

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CHURCH SERVICES

Jerico—First and third Sundays, 10:45 a. m.; Saturday school every Saturday, 10 a. m.; confirmation class, 2 p. m., Fridays.

Saude—Second and fourth Sundays, 10:45 a. m.; Saturday school, 2 p. m.; confirmation class, 9:30 a. m., Fridays.

Fifth Sundays by special announcement.

FEBRUARY CHURCH ATTENDANCE

First Sunday, 70; second Sunday, 28; third Sunday, 76; fourth Sunday, 52.

Omission in Saude treasurer's report: Mrs. Offerdal \$15.00 to current expenses.

Baptism Jerico church: Luella Marie, born January 9th, baptized February 17th. Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Knutson. Sponsors: Mr. and Mrs. Alfred A. Knutson, Alfred Robinson, Selma Robinson.

Besides the main message that my assistant brings you this month—see first page—and which I hope will bring blessing to many souls, he will also bring another which may not be kindly received. I beg of you to listen patiently and attentively endeavoring, before you pass judgment, on what he has to say, to rid yourself of all prejudices established merely by long usage.

The Saude congregation dates from the year 1856. In those days many walked over the prairie patches and through the thickets and timber to the little log church, while others came in ox-drawn vehicles over trails that knew no compass.

In the year 1864 a fleet of prairie schooners that had fled from South Dakota before hostile Indians anchored on the banks of Crane Creek *far* to the west. Yes, six miles was *far* in those days.

The young pastor, Vilhelm Ulrik Koren who, in

his student days at the University of Christiania, was known as "løven"—the lion—and who now fed God's sheep and lambs at Saude, very soon found his way to the refugees on Crane Creek to offer them the cheer and guidance of the Word of God. They received it gladly and eventually a church was established among them.

By indomitable courage, willingness to work and God's blessing the settlements prospered and, through immigration from older settlements, especially in Wisconsin, and from Norway, they grew large. The stately horse had succeeded the lowly ox. Proud were our fathers as they pulled up to the church in the horse-drawn lumber wagon, mother and the children and father too, seated on boards laid across the wagon box. Often enough, however, the horses looked all but stately after having waded through three or four miles of mud with their proud master and his flock in tow.

On account of the roads and the pitch-like consistency of Iowa mud—and there was lots of it in Chickasaw and Howard counties—communications between the settlements as well as the churches was infrequent. There was not much pleasure on a trip through mud, the wheels of the lumber wagon solid disks, the horses at dead pull and moving at snails pace. Such a journey was not undertaken except by force of duty or sheer necessity. However, the road was not always soft, sometimes it was hard and rough as a stone quarry. Then again, snowdrifts impeded the way. In the summer time, when the horses worked to their very limit in the fields, was it fair to take them out on a Sunday for a longer drive to the neighboring settlement or church? Our fathers said: "No." Summer or winter, spring or fall it was, truly, *far* from Saude to Jerico and from Jerico to Saude.

Then came the light wagons, the buggies, the surreys, but the roads remained the same and the horses needed rest on Sunday as before and six miles was *far* still.

Next came that peculiar, large road bug that sometimes moved along the road and sometimes stood still. When it moved it made a triphammer noise and when it stood still it emitted ill smelling fumes and in either case put all horses into frenzied terror. To drive horses six miles on the road now was to gamble with life and limb.

The new road bug proved to be very prolific. Fortunately it could be domesticated and made tractable and useful to the average man. In other words, the automobile came to stay. But the roads showed little sign of change, and through long periods of the year, six miles was farther than ever before.

The next step in the changing conditions of our settlements brings us up to our own, the present, day. The auto that was a buggy with a little motor aboard that went pop-pop-pop—sometimes, and that was built more for comfort under it than in it, has given place to the beautiful, swift, noiseless vehicles that we drive today and which are so splendidly adapted to the conveyance of old and halt and feeble as well as the young, the sound and the strong. And it is not only the expert mechanic that can coax them to move but they go as smoothly and willingly to the bidding of women and children. The old mud roads on the main routes of travel that were churned and rechurned by horses hoofs and wagon wheels and that sometimes, in self defence, hardened over night so that neither man nor beast dared tread on them, are now safely concealed and made harmless by a heavy covering of gravel

or concrete. Now a monster passes back and forth over our winter roads and either ruthlessly shoves the snowdrift into the ditch or blows it back to where it came from.

It is *not* far now from Saude to Jerico nor from Jerico to Saude. What formerly was a hard trip of upwards of 120 minutes is now, during the greater part of the year, a pleasant spin of 10 to 15 minutes.

Things have changed, indeed; it seems that nothing is as it used to be. Yes, one thing is as it was fifty years ago: members of the Jerico congregation at services in the Saude church are about as scarce as hens teeth, and members of the Saude congregation at services in the Jerico church are almost as common as peaches on a crab-apple tree.

Now, dear friends, having arrived at our subject in this round-about way, let us drop all levity and talk about it seriously, for it is a serious matter. The situation among us is this: the Word of God is preached by the pastor that you all acknowledge as yours every Sunday in a church, ordinarily, within easy reach, and you choose to go to hear him only every other Sunday. You will give as your reason for this that "we have services only every other Sunday in *our* church." Will that, however, justify you before God in not attending services, divine worship, every Sunday when conditions are as they are now and here among us and not as they were ten and more years ago? The third commandment enjoins upon us "not to despise preaching and His Word, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it." The Psalmist says: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." In the epistle to the Hebrews we find this admonition: "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."

Do you not feel a decided disharmony between these passages and the habit practiced among us, namely to attend services *only* in that particular congregation where one holds membership and habitually refrain from worshipping in a sister congregation, easily accessible, on Sundays when one's own church is not open for public worship?

I have, perhaps, made a mistake in not speaking earnestly regarding this matter before. But I thought there might be some subtle, hidden reason for such practice, and I deemed it the course of wisdom to try to diagnose the case before attempting a cure.

My conclusion now after five years of observation is that it is due merely to force of habit. Stern conditions dictated in this matter in the early days of the settlements and of the life of the churches. A habit then acquired still persists.

I cannot be persuaded to believe or to say that the reason lies in wilfull neglect of God's Word and public worship. Neither can I believe that the members of one church are not welcome in the pews of the other. Nor can I find it to be the pastor's fault. My twenty-seven years experience before audiences warrants me in saying that the audiences in both churches are attentive and interested. I rarely, if ever, experience a restless audience in either church that seems to wish it was time to quit. If the minister is worth hearing when he preaches in Saude why is he not worth hearing when preaching in Jerico? If it is worth while hearing him in one church why not in the other? Does it make such a whale of a difference which pulpit he preaches from?

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Some may possibly think that the sermon preached in one church on a given Sunday will likely be preached in the other on the following Sunday and this discourages them from going to the neighboring church so as not to embarrass the pastor. It is true that when services are held in both churches on the same day, as Easter and Pentecost, or on consecutive days, as first and second Christmas day, practically the same sermon is delivered in both churches, but very rarely otherwise. If it became common that the Sunday audience was composed of members from both congregations, it would never happen.

What would be the advantages if the habit now prevailing was broken? The first and most important one is that more would hear the Word of God every Sunday. To realize that this would be a distinct advantage, note carefully and well that the salvation of the soul is by God linked up with the hearing of His Word. "Faith cometh by *hearing*." "Blessed are they that *hear* the Word of God and keep it." "My mother and my brethren are these which *hear* the Word of God and do it." "He that *heareth* my Word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

Here we might close for surely this one advantage should be enough to cause every one to break the old habit. However, another can be named. Parking space at a premium! A crowded church at every service! The congregational singing a mighty outburst of prayer and praise! What a thrill and encouragement to the individual worshipper and what a strong urge upon the minister to prayerfully do his very best that he may serve the golden fruit of Christ's love on platters of silver.

And finally, a third advantage. It would, for the present, remove the language question. As you know, our present arrangement gives each congregation one Norwegian and one English service a month. Not all are pleased with this. The very best that could possibly be done for those who wish more Norwegian would be to give all the services in that language. Likewise, the very best that could possibly be done for those who wish more English would be to give all the services in that language. But, in fairness to both parties, we cannot exclude either one of the languages. However, if those who cannot understand English would go to the Norwegian services *in both churches* and those who cannot understand Norwegian would go to the English services *in both churches, all of them* would get as much service as if ALL the services of the church, in which they hold membership, was conducted in the language of their choice.

"Well — but — we don't know the people over there as well." Please, I beg, don't mention anything so trivial and unworthy of consideration in the face of the great advantages to be gained, but come, one and all, let us break asunder the bands of an old habit that robs us of blessings and encouragement in our church work. God speed the day!

The Finance Committee of the Synod reports that a total of \$18,520.00 will be required to meet all of Synod's current expenses — this includes Missions, Lærerløn and Synodekassen, etc. — for the fiscal year 1928-29. This means an average donation of \$3.50 per confirmed member of Synod. "Is that sum impossible, brother? Is it too much?" asks the Finance Committee. We trust the 274 confirmed Jerico members and the 158 confirmed Saude members will unanimously answer: "No."

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