

The Assistant Pastor

March, 1930

Lent

Is there no longer a Devil? Is there no Hell anymore? Is it now a deserted place going to wrack and ruin, a haunted house, a dread place only to the credulous? Is the Devil merely a bogeyman? Is Hell only a bugaboo, an imaginary terror used by some to threaten children and the ignorant into obedience?

Go into many Churches and you will learn that the Biblical Hell and Devil are dead issues, dead as Cotton Mather's witchcraft. In others it is considered rude and shocking to speak the words from the pulpit. Still others timidly skirt the truth by using softer and less jarring words. Look about you and see how men, happy-go-lucky and unafraid, wade into the everglades — the swamps of sin — as though every alligator and venomous reptile were long since dead.

It behooves us to be on guard, dear friends; the Devil is trying to annihilate himself in our consciousness, he wants to get himself out of our minds.

"Well," say you, "if he does, good riddance; he has gained nothing and I have lost nothing."

You are very much mistaken, he does not exert himself for nothing. He has gained you for himself and Hell and you have lost Jesus and Heaven. Without believing in a personal Devil you will never believe in a personal Savior. You cannot deny or be ignorant of the Devil and yet believe in a Savior from the Devil. Without knowing Hell as the place of eternal torment for impenitent sinners you will never know Heaven as the place of eternal blessedness for penitent sinners.

Drop the words Hell, Devil, Damnation from your vocabulary (your list of words), and Lent, Gethsemane, Crown of Thorns, Cross, Grave, Resurrection will soon go in the discard with them.

But though the awful terms must be used and the terrible realities which they express must be acknowledged by all who use and believe the Word of God, they hold no horrors for those who sincerely and scripturally celebrate the season of Lent, that is, those who, led by the Holy Spirit by means of God's Word, follow Jesus the Redeemer in faith from Gethsemane to Golgatha and the empty grave.

The Assistant Pastor

Published and edited 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

SAUDE

Trustees: Iver Ellingson, H. Larson, O. N. Anderson.
Treasurer: A. G. Vaala.
Secretary: John Natvig.
Ladies' Aid: Miss Lena Landsverk, president; Mrs. T. Swennumson, secretary; Mrs. D. O. Natvig, treasurer.
Cemetery Committee: Alf Vaala, H. O. Natvig, John Borlaug, Anna Vaala, Lena Landsverk.

JERICO

Trustees: Alvie O. Knutson, O. Firkenstad, Fred Amman.
Treasurer: J. A. Robinson.
Secretary: J. A. Knutson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. L. A. Robinson, president; Mrs. M. Dahlen, secretary; Mrs. S. O. Johnson, treasurer.

Standing Services

JERICO

First Sunday, Norwegian, 10:45 a. m.
Third Sunday, English, 10:45 a. m.
Saturday School every Saturday, 9:30 a. m.
Confirmation class, 2 p. m. Fridays.

SAUDE

Second Sunday, Norwegian, 10:45 a. m.
Fourth Sunday, English, 10:45 a. m.
Saturday School, 2 p. m.
Confirmation class, 9:30 a. m. Fridays.
Fifth Sunday by special announcement.

Three times during the seven years of our pastorate here serious automobile accidents have threatened to instantly snuff out the lives of members of our congregations, but each time the good Lord has seen fit to avert sudden death.

The last instance was only a few days ago when John Natvig, driving alone from Lawler, went into the ditch and was pinned under his overturned Ford. The machine was resting heavily on the head of the unconscious victim of the accident when a stranger very soon "happened by," as we say, who released the body from the weight of the car and telephoned for a doctor.

The Lawler doctor was on the scene promptly and took the injured one to the New Hampton hospital where he regained consciousness in seven hours and in a few days was removed to his home where, to the joy of us all, he is recovering rapidly.

Friends, let us not forget to thank God for sending that stranger to remove the weight that was pressing the life out of our brother, and let us accept the accident as a gracious warning to us all.

As a warning to drive carefully? Yes, that too, but not especially that. The accidents here referred to have not happened to shiftless drivers. We certainly owe it to ourselves and those dependent on us to observe all reasonable care when at the steering wheel, but in spite of care accidents will occur now as they always have. My ancestors were sailors and many of them found a watery grave. Yours sought sustenance, perhaps, in the mountain valleys of Norway and some of them were no doubt buried by snow or earth slides. And so it goes. Accidents have always happened and will continue at all times, in all places and under all conditions. If we expect to eliminate accidents we are doomed to disappointment.

The warning our Heavenly Father would have us take from every accident that comes to our notice, whether it occurs within our immediate circles or farther away, is to be prepared always and at any place to meet death. We may pray God to spare us from sudden death, and He will do so if He in His infinite wisdom sees fit, but no one has the right to take for granted that he will be thus spared.

Therefore, walk carefully, watch your step that it does not lead you into sin. Cling close to Jesus your Shepherd and Savior and then come and go fearlessly and confidently wherever your calling leads knowing that your Shepherd can guide you safely through the valley of the shadow of death on a moment's notice as well as a week's notice.

He that tries to walk uprightly, as before God, and endeavors sincerely to glorify God and be a light to his fellowmen according to the rule of the Word of God, in word, deed, and actions, is disliked by the world. He is called a bigot, is pronounced intolerant, narrowminded and is very often stamped a hypocrite.

No, this is not based on observation and experience primarily but on something much more reliable and unchangeable. In Proverbs 29, 27 it is written: "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." All are wicked who are not made good by the putting on of the righteousness of Jesus through a living faith.

The forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, was beheaded because he walked uprightly and as a torch of truth to his surroundings. If he had been more diplomatic and wise (?) he would have managed to let sins in certain quarters go unnoticed and thus have avoided the burning hatred of the powerful Herodias and his head would have remained intact on his shoulders. But John would rather be a headless saint than a live sinner by omission.

And St. Paul? "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned." Why? Because he earnestly sought to be upright in the way and fearlessly contended for the very same faith that still, by the grace of God, is ours today.

Be reminded also of the Prophets, of Stephen, and a long list of martyrs, of the mother and her seven sons, of John Huss and many more who were upright in the way and as a recompense received hate and persecution from their surroundings and finally the executioners ax or death at the stake.

And finally, remember above all others Jesus of Nazareth in whom there was no guilt nor guile, whose compassion and love included and was extended to all; who not only made earnest effort but did walk uprightly. Not one tactless word did He speak, not one unkind or selfish thought did He entertain, nor did one impure desire dwell in His heart. His every act was born of love and every deed was pure and untarnished by sin.

How did He fare? The story of Lent is the answer. The powers of wickedness breathed relentless hatred. Through lying they tried to prove him an abomination to God and country. Note their scorn and mockery of the Holy One; see the cruel crown of thorns pressed upon His head. Their hatred knew no abatement even when they had nailed Him to the accursed tree, they continued to mock Him and rail at Him. Why? Because He loved them and spared nothing to secure for them blessings and joy eternal.

We who love Him who thus loved us first and, as His children through faith, try to follow in His steps, can we expect the world to receive us with praises and appreciation? "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." It was so yesterday, is so today, and will be so tomorrow and as long as good and evil are opposites.

When good and evil cease to be considered opposites, when they are not in enmity definitely pitted against each other but by compromise are brought into the same camp, then wickedness can well afford to cease its hatred and persecution for its enemy will then wilt and wither away and cease to be.

Such a condition prevails to an alarming degree today. The world and the Church have compromised. The Church, the theatre, the dance hall, and the lodge walk along arm in arm in peace and mutual friendship. The so-called Christian can not understand this talk of bearing the Cross of Christ nor of the enmity of the world, and many an avowed unbeliever resents being charged with hatred of the Church and Christians. "Why," he says, "many of my best friends are Christians, we go to dances together, we belong to the same lodge, and everything."

The friendship of the world, popularity in the world can be gained by Christians only through compromise which means exactly the same as bidding Jesus good-bye.

With Lent comes also an invitation to you to again take part in a Synod wide Lenten dime collection for our Home Mission Treasury.

The work of our Home Mission is to extend the borders of our Synod, to enter new fields and build congregations. It is to do for others what the old Norwegian Synod and Rev. V. Koren did for these communities (many, many years ago). The Home Mission is the spiritual Red Cross of our Synod. Wherever spiritual want is discovered it brings the bread of life as far as men and means will permit.

It is the definite principle of Synod and its Board of Missions not to seek growth and expansion by tearing down what others have built. Our mission workers do not try to draw members from other missions or congregations. There are stray sheep enough to gather to tax all our strength without expending energy in trying to steal from other folds.

When I here speak of new fields and congregations, growth and expansion of our Synod as the object of our Home Mission work, that is true only in a certain sense. The actual object is to add living stones upon the foundation Jesus Christ, to further the growth and expansion of the invisible Church of God. But we can not see and judge the invisible, we can only judge by the visible. We try to do our work so that the outward visible growth is as nearly as possible a true indicator of the actual, the invisible growth, and, therefore, we can and do speak as above.

Granting that our growth is a reasonably true indicator of our Synod's contribution towards the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth it must also be granted that God has acknowledged and greatly blessed our work.

That the work has been carried on now for more than ten years without a deficit in the treasury, is very gratifying and encouraging. This is a record that is, perhaps, not equalled in any other Lutheran Church body.

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Hopes that also this fiscal year may close without a deficit rests on the Lenten dime collection. Cards for same are enclosed with this issue of your parish paper. We hope that all will do their best to return them well filled on Maundy Thursday or on Good Friday.

We realize perfectly well that dimes do not grow on bushes and that they are more scarce than usual also in the milk bucket and the egg case, but yet we believe that the willing heart can find a way to slip one now and then into the coin card so that it will be full before Easter.

It is a common and, perhaps, justified complaint in many quarters that so much contributed money is lost on the way as overhead expense. I can assure all that the overhead expense of our Home Mission treasury is, in round numbers, almost nothing and of the other treasuries of our Synod very little if any more.

Do not neglect to interest the children in this collection, not only for the sake of increasing the total but for the sake of the children themselves. It is a valuable part of every child's bringing up to learn to give. It is so natural to grow up greedy and selfish and willing to part with anything only when something is immediately received in return.

A child that has been led to give to some worthy cause instead of always buying candy bars for its own enjoyment, has been benefited. I would not advise that a parent places dimes in the coin holder for the children that are old enough to know somewhat the exchange value of money, for thereby the child is not learning to give. Rather arrange somehow so that the child has dimes that are its own and then try to influence its heart so that it prefers to give towards the things Jesus wants done rather than for buying toys and candy.

And now with a "God bless you" we send our silent solicitor out again this year with the sure hope that he will be kindly received.

Prof. T. E. Schmauk in his book on the Lutheran Confessions quotes Unionism as saying: "The bones are broken: it is too painful to set them: let us bind and mollify the skin that the world may behold that we are one." Then he goes on and says: "We say, The Christian Church is the one important organism in the world. Its bones are its principles, its doctrines, its truth. With the advent of the New Theology in American Christianity, the broken bones are numerous. They include . . ."—here he enumerates all of the principal Christian doctrines.

"With these broken principles, American Protestantism is a very weak man, as a Christian unity, and the device Alliance, Association, Federation is an elastic silk band, tied with a beautiful white ribbon, to hold the members in unity, 'that they may be one.'"

"To set the bones right, at any cost, to prevent false union, to break up every pseudo process, to keep up the pain until the original lines of juncture are recovered, to be satisfied with nothing temporary, is it not harshness and narrowmindedness on the part of the physician? But is he not right? Is he a 'mere bigot' because he refuses to postpone the pain of a proper operation, and will not sew up the skin neatly and say, 'Your bones are one.'"

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