

The Assistant Pastor

December, 1942

Good Will Toward Men!

May the birth of the Christ-child which restores peace between God and men, and declares God's good will toward sinners, fill your hearts with the triumphant joy of adoring worshippers at Bethlehem's eternal shrine.



Resolutions for 1943

"I Will Serve the Lord

- I "By being a more regular attendant at Divine worship,
- II "By being a more regular attendant at Communion services,
- III "By being a more regular attendant at the business meetings of my congregation,
- IV "By praying more frequently, and by conducting regular home devotions,
- V "By being a better example to my children,
- VI "By being more concerned about the spiritual welfare of others, and
- VII "By supporting the work of my church in accordance with my abilities, and in proportion to my income."

I

Every time your pastor steps into the pulpit he is filled with a very deep sense of humility. He knows that in the pews before him are a group of people who have come a distance from their homes to worship their Lord, and to hear the message that he is to deliver. He wonders, "do I have a message that will help and edify my hearers?" But despite his own shortcomings he knows that he does have a message worth listening to, because he is merely an instrument, bringing God's message of grace and salvation.

Often he prepares sermons with certain persons in mind, preparing a message that might help them in their trouble, or strengthen them in their weakness. But alas, so often he finds that just those who might have needed that particular sermon are not there. And how often he would like to prepare a sermon on the subject of church attendance, but he knows that those who need that message will not be there to hear it.

Just for that reason he is grateful to the congregation for financing the publication of the Assistant Pastor, for in its pages he can reach those whom he does not reach through his sermons.

And so, for the moment, I should like to speak to you, dear friend, who may not be a regular attendant at the services in your church. I would not appeal to your sense of duty, as though you are failing an obligation, but rather invite you to come to every service because of the blessings that you personally will receive from your attendance.

At every service you have the privilege of worshipping your God and Savior. The act of worship is one that is reserved for God alone. You do not worship any earthly thing, neither is any person on earth great enough to deserve the worship of his fellows. Only God is worthy of worship. And that because He is the creator of all things, because He loved you enough to sacrifice His only Son that your soul might live to all eternity. Now you, sinner that you are, are permitted to gather with other sinners and praise and worship Him who has loved you so greatly. If you are fully aware of His love for you, you will be compelled by your love for Him to take your place at worship.

There is no hour during the entire week that is more important to you than your Sunday hour of worship. It is the most profitable hour that you can spend regardless of your occupation, because that hour is an important part of your preparation for the life that is to come. And the life that is to come will last for an eternity. Your life span in this world is nothing, compared with that eternity. Your future will be sealed at the moment of your death. If you die in faith you will live forever. If you are not prepared for death when its fateful moment comes, you will suffer for eternity the punishment that Christ's death averted for all those who die in faith. A doctor spends about eighteen years preparing for a life-work that he may engage in for fifty years. How sad that so many of us should neglect that Sunday hour of worship that is so important a part of our preparation for the eternity that is to come.

You may think, because of the careless habits you have gotten into, that you cannot possibly come to every service. If you think that, just remember that there are a great many people who are as busy as you are, and who accomplish as much during their week as you do. I can name several such persons in these congregations who have not missed half a dozen services in the two and a half years of my pastorate here.

When there are 80 persons present at a regular service at Saude we think the attendance has been very good. But if 80 persons were present 135 persons were absent. Likewise at Jerico an attendance of 150 at a regular service is considered very good. But when 150 persons are present, 250 persons are absent.

One could fill several issues of this parish paper with good reasons for regular church attendance. At this time I merely wish to stress this one point, that your church attendance is an important part of your preparation for eternity, and that your hour of worship outshines in importance any other single hour of the entire week. You are making a bad mistake if you think that you haven't time to go to church on this Sunday or that. The truth is that you can't afford to miss a service. Your soul is too valuable to risk for the sake of the things you think you need to do during that hour on Sunday. No one that I know of is deliberately starving his body with insufficient food, but I know a great many who are starving their souls by neglecting the use of God's healing and nourishing Word.

II

There is no thinking person among us that is not aware of our personal sins and weaknesses, and also of our shortcomings in our congregational life. Yet there is a remedy for all those weaknesses and shortcomings which we have used very sparingly. Jesus has promised the benefit of strengthened faith to those who receive His Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Is there a relation between our sins and faults, and the strengthened faith given by Communion? Can we improve our lives and increase our good works by strengthening our faiths? Abraham is a notable example of piety and Godliness; he is characterized as a man who was righteous in the sight of God. The Scriptures leave no doubt whatsoever of the fact that Abraham's righteousness and his worshipful

attitude toward God was a result of his faith. Without his faith his works would have been dust and ashes in God's sight.

In like manner our faults will decrease as our faith increases. Given a firm faith there will be no lack of good works in us. Have no doubt that frequent participation in the benefits of the Lords Table will strengthen our faiths. That is God's own promise. And the weaker we are, the more often we need to commune.

III

We have written recently concerning the importance of your being present at the business meetings of your congregation, but we mention it again to impress it on your minds. We hope you will take this matter to heart, and resolve to do what is your plain duty toward the congregation in which you hold membership. Your church needs more than your financial support, it needs your judgment, counsel, and vote when it transacts its business affairs.

IV

Those of you who have not been having regular family devotions will be helped, I am sure, by the very straightforward and simple article on that subject which was reprinted in the last Assistant Pastor. Doubtless, as that article implied, the principle obstacle to your beginning such devotions, is your embarrassment in starting. But do as is suggested, just start. The embarrassment will soon be gone, and you will soon be enjoying your Bible reading.

Prayers will be a part of those devotions. But we should not neglect our personal and private prayers. You have heard the comparison that gives prayer the same relation to your spiritual life, as breathing has to your physical life. No one can live without breathing, nor can one be spiritually alive without praying. We ought to pray because we need the things that prayer asks for. We ought to pray because God has commanded us to do so. We ought to pray because God has promised to hear and answer our prayers. Those are the three reasons for prayer that we usually stress in instructing children. We know and believe those things, and yet we do not pray as we should. In some insidious manner the thought gets into our minds that the things that are to happen will happen, and there is not much use to pray. But that thought is far from the truth. It does make a difference whether we pray or not. Hannah prayed, and God gave her the son Samuel, the prophet. Zacharias and Elizabeth prayed, and God gave them a son in their old age. David prayed, and God forgave him the sin of Adultery and Murder. Peter prayed, and Jesus forgave his denial. Prayer is effective. Your life can be, and will be, shaped and influenced by the prayers you offer. Have no doubt of it.

V

One of your pastor's great pleasures is the time he spends with the confirmation class. But it is a pleasure very much mixed with sadness that comes from his knowledge that many of the things that he teaches the children will be nullified by the example the children are given by their parents at home. The pastor speaks of the evil of profanity,

as forbidden in the second commandment, but knows the instruction will be nearly cancelled by the fact that profanity is heard by some children in their homes. He teaches the scriptural commands concerning worship, and exhorts the children to be regular in their worship, but knows that they will not heed that instruction, because their parents do not. The pastor warns, under the sixth commandment, of the sin and danger of unchastity. But he knows that his instruction, in so many cases, will be nullified by that deadly combination, strong drink and the dance hall, to which the children soon gain access, their parents blindly consenting. The pastor tries to teach the confirmants to be truthful and honest, but knows that some parents teach their children the very opposite. He has heard a good mother tell her child to "Go to the door and tell the agent that is rapping that mother is not at home," and he has heard similar instruction in dishonesty given children by the parents.

Your children are bright, alert, and intelligent. What a fine group of young people they could become if you gave them the example that they deserve. Many of you are, and the results are something to give us all pride and pleasure.

VI

Christ, our Savior, has commissioned us all as missionaries. But here too, a sense of awkwardness, and embarrassment keeps us from helping our erring and unchurched neighbors as we might. In my first year in the ministry I found it most difficult to speak to the sick about their souls' welfare as I should. A certain awkwardness kept me from saying the things I should. But that soon disappeared, and it has come to be a real pleasure to me now to speak to the sick. In the same way, once you break the ice, and really go and speak to your neighbor when you can help him, you will find that Christian service a great pleasure too. Perhaps your neighbor is not going to church. A friendly invitation may help him to overcome his carelessness. Perhaps he is suffering under the curse of addiction to strong drink. A kind word might help him. It is sure you will do him no good by standing at the bar with him and offering him another drink. There are so many ways in which you can help your fellow sinner. Don't forget that your neighbor is just that, a fellow sinner. And do not take it for granted that you cannot help him. God has assured us that His word will never be taught or spoken in vain. It will always do some good. His word always bears fruit.

VII

We are inclined to think that the only way we have of supporting our church is through our contributions. But the essays at the Circuit Meeting held at Saude this year brought out very effectively the fact that there are many other ways in which we can serve our church. The fact was mentioned, for example, that it makes a very great difference to a congregation how well the janitor work is done. A clean church is far more inviting, than an ill-kept church. A church that is cold on winter days is a serious deterrent to worship. Likewise the faithful performance of the organist's duties plays a large part in the welfare of a con-

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Church Directory

N. S. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE CONGREGATION

Trustees: Carl Miller, John Natvig, Martin Borlaug.
Treasurer: Milton Boleng.
Secretary: Fred Steensland.
Cemetery Committee: Oscar Natvig, Henry Borlaug, N. S. Tjernagel.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Carlyle Natvig, president; Mrs. Nels Ellingson, Secretary; Mrs. Martin Borlaug, Treasurer.

JERICO CONGREGATION

Trustees: J. N. Anderson, Tom Roberson, C. O. Vigdal.
Secretary: Alfred N. Anderson.
Treasurer: Jeff A. Knutson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Gilman Robinson, president; Mrs. Alvin Johnson, secretary; Mrs. Andrew J. Johnson, treasurer.
Cemetery Committee: Mrs. Carl A. Knutson, Mrs. M. A. Robinson, Mrs. C. O. Vigdal.

gregation. And there are many other things that need doing. The ladies do much by way of keeping our church property in order. The church yards must be kept neat. There are useful tasks that the young people do. All those things are important, and they make all the difference between a dead and a flourishing congregation. It is true that the pastor is a cog in the machinery of a well organized congregation, but he really is a small cog. The congregation is made up of its people, and its well-being is determined by the willingness of its people to serve their church.

Though your contribution is only a part of the service you render your church, it is an important part. The Old Testament based the contribution of the Israelites on a percentage of their income. While the New Testament does not prescribe what percentage of your income you should give your church, we are surely on solid ground when we urge you now to contribute on the same basis. Therefore we urge you to decide what percentage of your income you wish to give toward your support of the church, and then try faithfully to carry out your own decision.

ANDREW LARSON

Obituary

Andrew Larson was born in Chickasaw County, Iowa, on August 10, 1876. He was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith. At the age of seventeen years he left home and worked as a farm hand for one year. He then left for Cresco, and worked for fourteen years for a firm known as Coward and Swenson, serving as foreman the last few years. From there he went to Rochester, Minn., where he served as chauffer to Dr. Plummer of the Mayo Clinic, for twenty-two years. Upon retiring from active service he went to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he remained until this Fall, when his health began to fail and he returned home. On Saturday, December 5, he became seriously ill of a heart ailment, and was taken to the Cresco Hospital on the following day. He passed

away peacefully on Wednesday, December 9, at 2:30 P. M. He is preceded in death by his parents, two sisters, and six brothers. He is survived by one sister and three brothers. Internment was at Saude Lutheran Cemetery, on December 12, 1942. Services were conducted by N. S. Tjernagel who spoke on the words of Lam. 3, 22. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

DECEMBER 2, 1942

The above date will be remembered as the wedding anniversary of Godfrey Natvig and Theodora Knutson. The marriage took place at the parsonage. The groom was attended by Odell Natvig, and the bride by Oriette Knutson. After the ceremony there was a reception at the party room of the Maindiner Cafe in New Hampton.

DECEMBER 14, 1942

The above date will be remembered as the date on which the Midwest had its first test blackout. It will also be remembered as the date on which the members of the Saude and Jerico congregations gave their pastor a surprise-party on the occasion of his —th birthday. They came with a beautiful dinner, and stayed to present him with a gift of \$49.00. All remained quietly seated during the twenty minute blackout period, listening to the instructions for future blackouts given on the radio. When lights were turned on again the pastor spoke briefly in appreciation of the honor accorded him, and of the fine gift that was presented to him. He expressed his gratitude for the fine spirit of friendliness and cooperation shown him by the members of his congregations.

CHRISTMAS, 1942

The Christmas program of the joint Saturday Schools will be given in the Jerico Church at 8 P. M. December 23. The Christmas services will be as follows: Jerico, 10:30 A. M. December 25; Saude, 11:00 A. M. December 26; and New Hampton, Sunday December 27, at 11:00 A. M.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

New Year's Day services will be held at Saude at 11:00 A. M. and at Jerico at 8:00 P. M.

We hope no one will let anything but the direst necessity keep him from attending these holiday services.

