



## DP Vantage Point

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*For Christ and for His world SWD magnifies partnerships,  
multiplies ministries, and maximizes resources.*

Monday, March 21, 2016  
Holy Week, 2016 and the Tomb

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Some short time back I began reading one of the newer Luther Volumes, Vol. 69 to be exact. I picked it up because it has a series of sermons which Dr. Luther wrote on our Lord's High Priestly Prayer in John 17. They are well worth the purchase price. What makes this volume even more precious lies in Luther's sermons that follow on our Lord's Passion. What I found extraordinarily beneficial this week were Luther's comments on our Lord's burial and His tomb.

Quite often we leave our Lord's lifeless body in the tomb at the end of our Good Friday worship and we don't return until Easter Sunday morning when the Resurrection leaves the tomb empty. It is easy to forget or overlook the tomb until we have to face it for ourselves. The grave. A casket. The vault. The headstone. The lifeless body. My body. Your body. The body of a loved one.

But as Luther reminds us there is a wealth of meaning in our Lord's tomb; words of pure Gospel that bring an enormous amount of comfort to us as sinners. What follows are excerpts of Luther's remarks about our Lord's tomb and the fact that He was there for us.

- To be sure, the history of how the Lord's burial took place can be learned quickly enough, so far as the words go. But the power and fruit of the history—how one should make use of Christ's death and burial through faith— that is not so quickly grasped. Now, the Lord Christ's death and tomb are comprehended in God's Word and made an article of faith. St. Paul says, "We were buried with Christ through Baptism into death" (Romans 6 [:4]; Colossians 2 [:12]). And again: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ |died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He was buried," etc. (1 Corinthians 15 [:3–4]). And the Christian Creed says: "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried."181 Therefore, you must learn this part— "Christ died and was buried"—in such a way that you believe Christ has thereby redeemed, freed, and preserved you from sin, death, and the devil.
- It is not enough only to know the history. One must also go further and possess the power and fruit of the history. That happens when Christ's tomb is regarded not merely with the outward eyes of the body but with the inward eyes of faith: namely, when we believe without any wavering that in Christ's tomb all our sins are covered up and buried. For just as He took all our sins with Him to the cross and bore them in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2 [:24]), so also He took all our sins with Him into the tomb; indeed, we are buried with Him through Baptism (Romans 6 [:4]; Colossians 2 [:12]). He took into the tomb with Him not only the cloths and linen shroud in which His body was wrapped but also the whole world's sin, damnation, misery, fear, affliction, and peril, and He covered and buried it all so that it might not harm those who believe in Him.

- Christ was buried for us, as the Children’s Creed teaches: “I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered, died, was buried,” etc. The words “our Lord” make everything that Christ did our own. Therefore, this is what [the Creed] means: Jesus Christ was conceived and born for us, suffered and was crucified for us, died and was buried for us.
- As for someone who immediately fears and doubts when in the slightest peril, how is it possible that such a man believes from the heart that Christ died and was buried for us? Whoever believes this from the heart speaks thus: “If Christ has died and been buried for me, then there is nothing lacking: all my sin, misery, and affliction are buried with Him. Therefore, my heart is confident and unafraid. Even if temptation and affliction shall come, my heart hopes without any hesitation in my Lord Jesus Christ, who has buried all my sin and affliction.”
- Accordingly, we should contemplate the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ not merely according to the outward facade or magnificent architecture, but according to faith, that we may say with true confidence of heart: “In this tomb lies all my sin and iniquity.” And that is the true prayer, the true kiss, and the highest honor that one can give to the tomb of Christ, when I say with a believing heart: “Thank you, dear tomb. Because my Lord Jesus Christ was buried in you, all my sin also lies buried in you. For Christ died and was buried for me so that that I should rely on His death and tomb.” Christ’s tomb is a testimony and proof that He truly died. Thus we should join His death together with His tomb, that it may become our treasury through which we are thoroughly sanctified from our sins and in which we possess everything, namely, redemption from sin, death, and every misfortune. For His death and burial took place for us so that through His death and tomb my sins and those of all who believe in Him might be put to death and buried. Therefore, we, too, should rely with all our hearts upon His suffering, death, and tomb, as the means through which all our sins have been blotted out and condemned. That is how one ought to preach about Christ’s tomb.
- Thus Christ’s tomb is also salvation and blessing, for it is attached to faith and is an article of faith on account of the Word in which it is comprehended. So if Christ’s tomb is regarded as an external thing, apart from the Word and faith, then it is evident that the tomb is a tomb, cloths are cloths, and ointment is ointment. But if Christ’s tomb is regarded in the Word with faith, then it is evident that the one who lies in the tomb is Christ, who through His death and tomb has overcome, slain, and buried all our sins. Therefore, Christ’s tomb should be regarded with the inward eyes of faith so that each one may say, “Christ’s tomb is for me; the cloths in which Christ was wrapped are for my benefit,” [Luther, Martin (2009-07-01). Luther's Works: Volume 69: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John (Luther's Works (Concordia)) (Kindle Locations 7192-7253). CPH.]
- THE holy evangelists carefully describe the burial and tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ and precisely indicate all the circumstances of time, people, place, and manner: when, by whom, where, and in what form and manner He is buried. In particular, they report concerning the tomb how the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees secured it as well as possible with guards until the third day, with the consent and help of the governor Pilate, and also closed the grave and sealed the stone. All this is so carefully described for our sakes, in order to make us sure and certain concerning the article of our faith in which we confess that Jesus Christ, God’s and Mary’s Son, our Lord, died and was buried. In the same way they also describe in careful detail His resurrection from the dead: how it was attested by various and numerous appearances and manifestations, likewise indicating person, time, and place—when, where, and to whom Christ showed Himself to be alive. And they do this, too, for our sakes, so that we

might be made altogether sure and certain of this article of our faith as well, in which we confess and say: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God and man, died for our sins and on the third day rose again from the dead. [Luther, Martin (2009-07-01). Luther's Works: Volume 69: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John (Luther's Works (Concordia)) (Kindle Locations 7812-7822). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

- It is indeed hard to believe that man, who perishes and dies in so many ways, shall live again; and that the parts of the human body, scattered so far from one another and having been turned into ashes and dust in fire, water, or earth, shall come together again; and that the human soul shall again dwell in the very same body where it had dwelt before; and that a human being shall have the very same eyes, ears, hands, and feet, except that the body with its members shall have a different substance. All this, I say, is indeed hard to believe. For if all this is reckoned according to reason, it seems as if this article concerning the resurrection of the dead were either nothing at all or altogether uncertain... Therefore, it is necessary for every Christian to keep before him the testimony of Holy Scripture concerning the resurrection of the dead, according to which the Lord Christ's resurrection is proven and attested through undoubted revelation as well, and to take a sure stand upon this, abandoning outward appearances and the experience of reason. And this is also the reason why St. John, like the other evangelists, so carefully described the history of the Lord's resurrection and left nothing out that might serve to confirm this article.  
[Luther, Martin (2009-07-01). Luther's Works: Volume 69: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John (Luther's Works (Concordia)) (Kindle Locations 7852-7871). ]

The truth of the matter is: Jesus Christ both died bodily and rose bodily. Mindful of the great sacrifice which our God made when His Innocent Son was sentenced to death for our sin, may our gracious Lord Jesus who so willingly paid our debt bless your preparations for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday! The suffering, the agony, the dying, and the rising of our Lord Jesus from the grave mean that forgiveness is sure and the bodily resurrection from the grave is a reality.

May those who gather for divine service where you serve be strengthened with the confidence that Christ was condemned for me, Christ is crucified for me, Christ dies for me, Christ was in the tomb for me, and Christ rose for me!

May our gracious Lord have mercy!  
Rev. Dr. John C. Wille  
President LCMS-SWD

#### **A Word from Walter's Law and Gospel:**

By the resurrection of Christ, God has declared that He is reconciled with all mankind and does not intend to bring punishment on anyone. He has had this fact proclaimed in all the world by His Gospel and, in addition, has commanded every pastor of the Gospel to forgive people their sins, promising that He will do in heaven what the pastor is doing on earth. A pastor should not first look up to heaven to determine what God is doing. Rather, he should merely carry out God's orders on earth and forgive people's sins, relying on God's promise that He has forgiven them. [Ferdinand, Carl; Wilhelm Walther (1905-07-02). Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible (Kindle Locations 13466-13470). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

## SWD News and Tidbits:

- 1) **Free to be Faithful:** Please join us in discussing Marriage, Life & Religious Liberty. Sunday, April 10, 2016 6-8:30 p.m. dinner and program (5p.m. “Meet the President” reception) at the Marriott Milwaukee West W231N1600 Corporate Ct. Waukesha, WI. (Junction of I-94 & County Road F). LCMS President Matthew Harrison will deliver a keynote address to discuss a Christian’s response to the increase of governmental intrusions in the areas of religious liberties, the Biblical definition of marriage and life from conception to death. RSVP by Friday, March 25 to Mr. Michael Butterfield LCMS Mission Advocate at 708-466-8391 or [Michael.butterfield@lcms.org](mailto:Michael.butterfield@lcms.org)
- 2) **Current SWD Financials:** Due to our impending audit SWD financials will not be released until after the audit is completed. So there are no financials attached to this report.
- 3) **2016 LCMS National Convention:** A couple of items by way of reminder.
  - a. By now everyone has received their convention assessment for this summer’s National LCMS Convention in Milwaukee. If your treasurer hasn’t already done so, please make sure that a check has been cut and sent to the SWD office. These monies help fund both the convention as well as the attendance of our delegates.
  - b. Voting for Synod President: In the near future both pastors and lay delegates who attended the 2015 SWD convention will receive information regarding how to record your vote for the election of our Synod President. Please urge your lay delegate to watch the mail for that information. Below is a quote from LCMS Convention News:
    - The three nominees for president, in the order of nominations received, are:
      - Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison**, the incumbent Synod president, with 755 nominations.
      - Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer**, president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 442 nominations.
      - Rev. Dr. David P.E. Maier**, president of the LCMS Michigan District, 358.The presidential election will take place electronically (via the Internet) over the period of **June 11-14. Those voting will be each LCMS congregation’s two voting delegates to its 2015 district convention.**
  - c. SWD Delegate Orientation is scheduled for Saturday, June 11 at the SWD office starting at 9am. Please alert your circuit lay delegate about that date.
  - d. Volunteers are still needed to help with Convention logistics. Information regarding that has been shared with all pastors and congregations. Please encourage people to help out!! Volunteers may sign up on the SWD website. <http://swd.lcms.org/volunteers-needed-for-lcms-national-convention/>
  - e. Some delegates have asked if they have to stay at the Convention hotel, the Hilton for us, if you live in the Milwaukee area. The answer is, ‘No, you don’t have to stay.’ That is up to you. We will discuss parking arrangements when we gather in June.

#### 4) Congregational Visitation:

- a. As you have heard in the recent past, part of my responsibilities as an ecclesiastical supervisor (DP) involve visitation of congregations. If you follow my calendar you know, that is well underway. This year I am prioritizing the congregations served by circuit visitors and SWD board members for visitation.
- b. However, if you would like to schedule such a visitation, give Karen a call. My calendar has some openings this summer. A normal visitation more often than not involves a conversation with the pastor(s), preaching, Bible Class, and always a visit with congregational leadership.

#### 5) Once again a word to the wise regarding Internal Reviews and/or External Audits:

An internal review or external audits are concepts that we are not taught at the seminary. But they are extremely important for the integrity of the finances for a congregation. I bring it up again because just last week a phone call came to my office regarding embezzlement. A trusted someone had a debit card, and...the rest is now unpleasant history.

Please, please make sure that your leadership has tight financial controls in place, and that only people who actually need a debit or credit card with the congregation's name on it have one.

Please it is about the integrity of the financial process and about protecting the reputation of all who handle funds. Please have your boards do an internal review or external audit. It is work; but it may just save you and your congregation a lot of tears and consternation. It is true that an external audit may have a cost, but how much is a good reputation worth? King Solomon comments: A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. [Proverbs 22:1]

#### 6) My calendar highlights for the next few weeks:

- Holy Week and Easter: Family, after that I will be humming Willie Nelson's song, "On the Road Again". It is a hectic schedule for April. But that comes with the territory of being a district president. Every DP is both an officer of the district in which they serve, *AND* an officer of Synod.
- April 5-7, Staff devotions
- April 7-8, Board Orientation at Concordia Seminary St. Louis
- April 10, Preach at the 25 anniversary of Good Shepherd Tomah, which I served for 16 years as the first pastor.
- April 10 (evening) Free to be Faithful event at Waukesha Marriott with President Harrison and 200 of our closest friends (at least for that evening).
- April 11-13, SWD Spring Pastors' Conference at Best Western Oshkosh.
- April 14-19, Dominican Republic FORO. This is our SWD partnership with the Office of International Missions.
- April 21-29, Council of Presidents' Placement Meeting first at St. Louis and then at Fort Wayne.

#### 7) Calls and Vacancies:

##### Pastor calls & vacancies

- Beloit – Messiah (evaluating)
- Cedarburg – First Immanuel (associate)
- Elm Grove – Elm Grove Lutheran (associate)
- Franklin – Risen Savior
- Grafton – St. Paul (associate)
- Mayville – St. John (senior)

- Milwaukee – Oklahoma Ave.
- Milwaukee – St. Peter - Immanuel
- Sheboygan – St. Paul (associate)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)
- Wauwatosa – Our Redeemer

**Pastors considering a call**

- **John Diener**, Michigan to St. John's Mayville, senior pastor

**Pastors accepting a call**

- Dennis Harmon – Emmaus, Milwaukee to Hope, Milwaukee
- Jonathan Rusnak – Shepherd of the Lake, Garrison, MN to Pilgrim, Wauwatosa
- Russell Kampfer – Our Redeemer, Eau Claire, WI to Bethlehem, Wales

**Pastors declining a call**

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**Pastors resigning from roster**

**Pastors called home to glory**

- Elmer Lisch – 2/11/16
- Russell Peterson – 3/2/16
- Dennis Schueler – 2/11/16

**8) SWD Prayer List:**

- Darrel Bergelin recovering after surgery
- Dale Blanchard recovering after surgery
- Chris & Julie Raffa at the birth of a baby girl

May our Lord bless!!

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***Confessing Christ for the Next Generation***

*It is time for us to be distinctly Lutheran, to plant new churches, to honor our vocation,  
 and to embrace our communities.*