



DP Vantage Point

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

Tuesday, July 26, 2016

Dear Brothers in the Office of the Holy Ministry:

Several have asked for a copy of the homily which I wrote for the LCMS Convention service of the "Commemoration of the Faithful Departed". The assigned text is Isaiah 25:6-9. What follows is the text of that message...

The commemoration of the faithful departed is about remembering those faithful church workers who have died. Death gobbles up one person after the next. That's why we have these "commemorations" at every three years at Synod convention, at district conventions, also the first Sunday in November every year. Death is no respecter of persons. With the passing of time death devours children and parents, grand-parents, great grandparents, and their grandparents before them.

Death is no friend to the human race. The Prophet calls it "the veil that has spread over all the nations", "the reproach of his people." There is shame and disgrace in death. Death is the consequence of sin. You know the words which God speaks Adam and Eve, "Dust you are and to dust you will return." That curse comes because of sin. St. Paul says in Galatians 3: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Death. We have all seen it. We will experience it ourselves. Eyes glazed over with a distant, cold stare. The breath of life gone. Death is a scourge upon all humanity. A curse upon you and me. Those whom we remember have felt the sting of that curse. Each cemetery, every headstone, every buried coffin bearing silent witness to scourge of sin and curse of death. If you have ever stood at the coffin of a loved one, you have experienced the sting of death. If you have ever come nose to nose with your own mortality, you know how fearful the stench your own death is.

That's why the words which the Prophet Isaiah speaks are so powerful, comforting. They are amongst the sweetest in all of Holy Scripture. The Prophet Isaiah speaks to a people who have felt the sting of death in their lives. These are the survivors who witness the destruction and the death which the Babylonians bring upon the city of Jerusalem. Their friends, their neighbors, their family members die in the siege. Thousands die as the city falls into the hands of the Babylonians. Their dead bodies were everywhere. Rot and decay.

Yet, there is hope. There is a God in heaven. There is a Savior. There is life. Listen to the way that Isaiah describes it. "He [the Lord God] will swallow up on this mountain, the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken."

“The Lord has spoken.” Jesus spoke from the cross on Mount Calvary, “It is finished!” The Lord God spoke profoundly when the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb and it was empty. The angels’ message to the women at the tomb resounds from the highest throne in heaven throughout the generations, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but [He] has risen.”

And yet we are frightened of the grave. Why? Martin Luther has this to say: “Thus it is not the fault of dying and burying that you are frightened of them, but it is the fault of your flesh and blood, which cannot understand that its disease, death, and grave mean nothing else than that God is laying you gently like a child in a cradle or a bed, in which you will sleep sweetly until the Last Day.”

There is nothing to fear or dread. The words of the hymn ring true: “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Jesus says, “Whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” The Lord has spoken. “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Christ is risen. Life is His gift to us.

All that remains is the victory feast. We are blessed with a taste of that every time we receive our Lord’s Body and Blood in the Sacrament. It is the banquet of salvation. God himself has replaced the curse of sin with the blessing of forgiveness. God himself has destroyed the disgrace of death, and has given us life. Go to Revelation 22. The way to the Tree of Life is no longer patrolled by an angel with a flaming sword. John tells, “The angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.” Eat and live.

The Lord has spoken. Death has been swallowed up by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life! “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.” Of whom shall I be afraid? “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord”! Amen.

A Word from Luther:

8. Therefore, it is wrong and unfounded when some wiseacres now want to mediate and hit upon a compromise between us and our opponents in the papacy. They certainly want to have the Gospel preached, but at the same time they also want to retain the papal abuses. They say that for the sake of the weak we must not rebuke and suppress everything; for the sake of peace and unity we should somehow ease off and draw closer together, so that each party yields something to the other and has patience with each other; even though everything is not completely pure, yet we could help with our good explanation and understanding so that it would be tolerable. No, not that way! For here St. Paul does not want, and God forcibly forbids, mixing even a little yeast into the good dough, for it still eats its way through and corrupts everything. If in one point we mix the true, pure doctrine with human additions, then it is damaged so that in that way the truth is obscured and souls are led astray. Therefore, in Christianity it is not to be tolerated when someone wants to make such a mixture and patchwork in doctrine and, as Christ says, puts new cloth on an old garment [Matt. 9: 16]. 9. Similarly, also in life and works it is not to be tolerated if someone wanted to give his flesh free rein for its wantonness, and yet boasted about Christ and the Gospel, as did the Corinthians who caused quarrels and divisions among themselves, one of whom married his stepmother [1 Cor. 5: 1]. That also means,

as St. Paul says here, “a little yeast leavens and corrupts all the dough” [1 Cor. 5: 6], that is, the whole Christian life. Being a Christian and having faith cannot coexist with living according to the wantonness of the flesh in sins and vice against the conscience, as St. Paul elsewhere says, “Do not be deceived: a fornicator, an adulterer, etc., has no part in the kingdom of Christ” [1 Cor. 6: 9– 10]. Likewise: “The works of the flesh are evident, etc. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5 [: 19, 21]).

Luther, Martin (2014-11-11). Luther's Works, Vol 77: Church Postil III (Kindle Locations 729-731). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

SWD News and Tidbits:

1. **Prayers, please:** On the way back from a Canadian fishing trip this past week I stopped by Mayo Clinic for a couple of appointments, as a follow up to some testing. The “skinny” is that this Friday, July 29, I will undergo a bit of surgery at Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota. This is a follow up to the prostate surgery which I underwent two years ago plus. The goal of the surgery is to remove a lymph node that has been marked as positive for prostate cancer. I am told that my activity will be limited for only a couple of weeks.
 - a. You may have heard me give thanks for the skill and the diagnostics of Mayo Clinic. There are only four machines in the USA that are able to perform the test which marked this lymph node; and they are all within a hundred feet of each other at Mayo Clinic.
 - b. I give thanks to our gracious Lord who has blessed us with such wonderful technology and the physicians who are gifted to perform such an operation. Your prayers are appreciated and coveted.
 - c. Though I will be recovering at home, I will still be working...at least a bit. If you need assistance, please call Karen, my assistant. She always knows where to find me.

2. **2016 LCMS National Convention:** It was an amazing event! While some might not appreciate such conventions, they help to set the tone and the direction of our church for the next three years. From my perspective the delegates made very good decisions. Among the many decisions made, the delegates adopted a resolution which transitions us back into compliance with Augsburg XIV as licensed lay deacons will now be phased out. As you know if you were there, some didn't like FC #12's resolutions; but most all of them passed by at least 90%. Amazing! As a result of a question posed to the CCM, the Synod President now once again has the authority to be the ecclesiastical supervisor of the LCMS. Now it is up to the secretary of the Synod and the LCMS Board of Directors to adopt the appropriate bylaws in accord with that opinion. That opinion, 16-2791, is attached to this VP, and is well worth reading. It reinforces the fact that the LCMS is not confederation of independent districts; but that since districts are a creation of the Synod, districts are accountable to the Synod and its President. The full proceedings will undoubtedly be published sometime this fall.

3. **Thanks to all who helped with the LCMS Convention!** I am amazed at all the compliments that I received about our SWD volunteers. More than one commented, that this was the best group of volunteers they had ever worked with. A great witness to who we are as the people of God!! Thanks for your service!!

4. **The search for our next SWD mission executive:** Several have asked: When this search will begin? It will begin sometime the latter part of August as we pull together the search committee, the composition of which is defined in our Policy Manual. Next we will revisit the basic questions surrounding the position: Is it needed? Is the position description the best it can be? Who? When we get to the “Who?” we will ask for input from SWD congregations and pastors. After that there will be an interview process, and finally a divine call will be extended.

5. **We wish Peter Kelm God’s gracious blessings** as he transitions back into the parish. Peter was installed as an associate pastor of First Immanuel Cedarburg this past weekend. May our gracious Lord grant him good health and faithfulness!

6. **Calls and Vacancies:**

Pastor Calls & Vacancies:

- Beloit – Messiah
- Elm Grove – Elm Grove Lutheran (associate)
- Franklin – Risen Savior
- Mayville – St. John (senior)
- Milwaukee – Mt. Olive (evaluating)
- Milwaukee – St. Peter – Immanuel (evaluating)
- Sheboygan – St. Paul (associate)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)

Pastors Considering a call:

- Michael Larson - St. Paul, Wittenberg, WI to St. Peter-Immanuel, Milwaukee
- Brian Liermann - Chapel of the Cross, Racine to Faith, Marinette, Wisconsin

Pastors accepting a call:

- Luke Anderson - St. Matthew, Lees Summit, Missouri to St. Paul, Grafton
- Daniel Eddy – Christ, Scituate, Massachusetts to Messiah, Beloit (Installation 9/4/16)
- Allen Kramp – Faith, Flora, Illinois to St. John, Mayville (Installation 8/14/16)
- Andrew Steinke – Immanuel, Brookfield to Our Redeemer, Wauwatosa

Pastors Retired:

- Donald Weiss

7. **SWD Prayer List:**

- Peter Kelm as he continues cancer treatments
- President Wille as he recovers from surgery
- Our Military, Police, Firefighters/EMT's, and all those who serve our communities and country

May our Lord bless!!

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
President, South Wisconsin District-LCMS
Office: 414.464.8100
Mobile : 414.839.9162

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.*