

God who looks into the depths and helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken, and those who are nothing, there a hearty love for Him is born. The heart overflows with gladness and goes leaping and dancing for the great pleasure it has found in God" (300).

Luther ponders Mary's song and considers that God alone knows humility and teaches the heart to be humble. Such humility finds contentment in God alone, regardless of the riches or poverty of God's gifts. It all begins with God's regard, with His favor towards us in Jesus, Mary's Son. Mary has become the model of Christian piety, for although she is made the Mother of God, she attributes nothing to herself and everything to God's grace.

In his meditation on the works of God praised in the Magnificat, Luther especially gives instruction to young John Frederick about the office of ruler, about pride and persecution, and about the hiddenness of God's work in us and in the world. In the epilogue he concludes, "I beseech and exhort your Grace in all your life to fear nothing on earth, not even hell itself, so much as that which the Mother of God there calls "the imagination of their hearts" (Luke 1:51). That is the greatest, closest, mightiest, and most destructive foe of all mankind, and especially of rulers. Its name is reason, good sense, or opinion; and from it all counsels and all rule must be derived. Your grace will never be secure from it unless you continually keep it under suspicion and follow it only in the fear of God. I do not mean your Grace's counsels only, but those of all your counselors as well. None should be despised, none trusted" (357). And with that, he urges the young man to pray for God's help: "Let me not follow my own reason, but be Thou my reason" (358).

FUTURE DATES (see wylcms.org for information)

May 31-June 4: Pastors Continuing Education, Fort Robinson

June 10-12: Pastors Wives Retreat

June 17-19: Family Retreat, Uinta County

June 25-27: Fathers and Sons, Fort Robinson

July 20-22: Homeschool Conference, Casper Mountain (registration and information forthcoming)

August 8-12: Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp, Lander

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around June 20 (July 2021 issue).



Wyoming District Round-Up

June 2021

District Website: www.wylcms.org

"Here I Stand" on the Word in My Community

"...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS..." (Eph. 1:16)

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health

For **Rev. Michael and Jennifer Wittrock** (emeritus) with health needs.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

St. Paul's, Sidney is being served by **Rev. Allen Strawn (St. Paul's, Bridgeport)** during the vacancy.

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merri-man, NE** (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Here I Stand: God's Word in My Community

Compassion and care of the weak and suffering are a specifically Christian virtue and work. Mercy—love to the neighbor in need—is at the heart of the Christian faith. None of the false religions have a God who loved rebellious, wicked, weak, sick, and helpless man by becoming man, taking on Himself all these evils, and dying a shameful death as their remedy. "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases" (Matthew 8:17, Isaiah 53:4). "By His wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:5). Mercy is a Christian quality.

Heresies have arisen to pervert this truth. In the last century, the Social Gospel movement effectively replaced the Gospel of salvation through the atoning death and justifying resurrection of the God-Man Jesus. In its place, Social Gospel promoted a message of "mercy" that focused on saving society through social welfare programs, reordering justice to give preference to the poor, changing culture away from historic and Biblical norms of justice and truth, and the like. It imitated Christianity by promoting the wellbeing of neighbors in need. This heresy has given birth to or created room for specifically anti-Christian religious movements: Social Justice, Progressivism, Socialism, Communism or Marxism, Feminism, Secularism, and the like. "Mercy" has now become a powerful

tool for the acquisition and consolidation of power by governments and politicians.

Nevertheless, Christians must not abandon compassion and care for the weak and suffering. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But we face difficult obstacles. First, we ourselves often have hardened, selfish, and greedy hearts. Merciless hearts bear the fruit of merciless lives. God calls us to repent. Second, we often find ourselves thoroughly blinded by the Standard-Of-Living god, that idol that requires that we hold fast to our own stuff (and time, leisure, and health) with tight-fisted stinginess. Third, the government has made every effort to take over the duties of both household and church by assuming their specific duties and works of mercy. It’s hard to provide compassion and care to your neighbor when the government is already doing it for you. It’s even harder when the government sponsors obstacles to your mercy.

We noted last month that justice must be tempered with mercy. Yet now we must observe that mercy without justice destroys both justice and mercy. Mercy assumes justice. It is not an act of mercy to act unjustly or to aid injustice. Mercy does not abolish or set aside God’s just law. For example, it is not mercy to destroy God’s instrument of justice and mercy—government or head of household—in order to right a perceived wrong (4th Commandment). It is not mercy to help a desperate, pregnant woman to murder her unborn child (5th Commandment). It is not mercy to aid and abet homosexual perversions, gender confusion, or lust by affirming the LGBTQ agenda and lifestyle (6th Commandment). It is not mercy to take another man’s property unjustly to feed the hungry (7th Commandment). It is not mercy to use lies to lift up the oppressed (8th Commandment).

Jesus gives the command: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). “Blessed are the merciful” (Matthew 5:7). Mercy flows from Christ’s compassion for us. We are merciful because He was first merciful to us. Mercy moves us to forgive: “So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us” (SC 5th Petition). Mercy flows from pity for the helpless and hopeless. Mercy gives comfort to the sorrowing, encouragement to the discouraged and downhearted, real help to the hungry and the sick and the destitute. Mercy moves us to give correction to the erring, counsel to the foolish or lost, assistance to the weak. Mercy moves us to support our families, give generously to our churches and church schools, and volunteer to help our neighbors in every estate and walk of life.

We know that we cannot save the world. Jesus has already done that. Nor can we produce heaven on earth. Jesus chose not to do that. “You always have the poor with you” (Matthew 26:11). God puts need before us in order to exercise mercy. But God has taught us who to serve first, how to prioritize our lives of mercy. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). We must also provide for the members of our own household (1 Timothy 5:8). We should focus on the particular neighbor, household, and church God puts before us. And mercy means that we give from our own resources—our own time and money and labor—rather than trying to coerce others to do our mercy for us. God grant us merciful hearts that bear the fruit of love and service to our neighbors.

REFORMATION 500: At the Wartburg Castle

Martin Luther arrived at the Wartburg Castle during the night of May 4, 1521 and lived there until early March 1522. He was taken from the center of world events at the Diet of Worms and was led into complete isolation. The Wartburg had once been the court for Thuringian rulers, and the home of St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, but was now a lonely castle situated high on the edge of the Thuringian forest, not far from the town of Eisenach, where Luther had attended St. George’s Latin school from 1498 to 1501 (age 15–18). (Eisenach is also the birthplace of Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685).

Luther was very productive in his isolation. During his 10-month stay, he produced works on marriage and monastic vows, refuted papal defenders on the doctrine of justification, wrote commentaries on several psalms, addressed actions to reform the use of the Lord’s Supper, gave advice on growing controversy in Wittenberg, and most importantly, translated the New Testament from Greek into German.

One of his first acts was to complete a commentary on the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) for the 18-year-old John Frederick, nephew of Elector Frederick the Wise, Luther’s ruler and protector. John Frederick himself became the Elector after the death of his father John in 1532 and was a firm Lutheran confessor through papal opposition and war, including five years imprisonment and the loss of the Electorate.

“The Magnificat” (AE 21.297–358) is a simple but intense meditation on how God deals with man, how He loves the humble but rejects those who are proud in their hearts and high in their own eyes. “He is a