



The Christian in Community: "The Woman You Gave Me"

It is fitting that we consider man's Fall in Genesis 3 as we enter the final weeks of Lent. Lent is a weeks-long battle against satanic forces, against temptation, against his attacks on faith and family, against the demonic uncleanness of sin and error and every evil. The beginning of Satan's assault upon man is recorded in Genesis 3, where the devil tempted and deceived Eve, where Eve obeyed his voice and sinned, where Adam obeyed Eve's voice and likewise sinned, and where God addressed the devil with the promise that He would destroy all the devil's works: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The Scriptures teach that Adam's sin is imputed or credited to us, that we have inherited his sin, and that this inherited sin (Original Sin) is so deep in us that we are unable by nature to fear, love, or trust in God. But this sin also bears evil fruit in our lives in the many sins we commit in thought, word, and deed, including the sins against our neighbor. Because sin destroys our fellowship with God, it also destroys our fellowship with one another.

Sin destroys community. Consider Adam and Eve, the first marriage, the first human community. God had created them for this companionship and love. He joined them together in the perfect union of body and mind, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23). They lived in perfect harmony with each other, an undamaged fellowship in the God who created and united them in marriage. And then they sinned.

We often take note of the guilt, the shame, and the dread of God that Adam and Eve earned by their sin. It was horrible. These majestic, noble, beautiful, virtuous and holy creatures become guilt-ridden, shame-filled, cowering wretches because they sinned. They did not dare face their own Creator or stand in His presence.

But the examination and judgment of God in Genesis 3 also reveals how they devastated their own marriage by sinning. When God confronted the husband with his sin, the husband immediately blamed his wife: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." By blaming his wife, the husband not only tried to shift the guilt of his sin to her, but he thereby also shifted the punishment of his guilt upon her. "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). It was as if the husband had said to God: Take my wife instead of me; punish her; kill her; send her to hell.

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It was a cowardly, unloving, unmanly answer. It reveals the devastation that their beautiful marriage suffered. Sin damages marriage and all other communities. What would their marriage look like after all these evils? It takes little imagination to hear their arguments and recriminations against each other, see their anger and coldness toward each other, and feel the awful shattering of their once-perfect union.

Every marriage is a good marriage. Every family is a good family. Every faithful church is a good church. This is true because marriage and family and church are good gifts and creations of God. He does not make bad things. He even ordered our lives into our neighborhoods and civil communities. But sin has done great damage to me and to my brother and to my relationship with him.

In 1 John 3:8 the Holy Spirit instructs us, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." Our sins damage our communities of marriage, family, church, and neighborhood. These sins and this damage is the work of the devil. The Son of God came as the Seed of the woman Mary, so that by His righteous life and innocent death bearing our sin, He might destroy the devil and all his works and all his ways.

Jesus came to restore community to us sinners. He teaches repentance so that we may turn away from our sin and look to Him. He is the Anti-Adam, the manly and loving Husband who gave His innocent life instead of His Wife's guilty life. He atoned for our sin and forgives us. He authorizes and commands us to repent of our own sins and to forgive the sins of those who sin against us. He humbles our wounded pride, heals our broken hearts, and gives us new hearts to love one another in sincerity and truth. God grant such healing and restoration to all our God-given communities!

Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

1 Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Your holy wounds I find,
Ev'ry hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within
Tempt my treach'rous heart to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me from its first beginning.

2 Should some lust or sharp temptation
Fascinate my sinful mind,
Draw me to Your cross and passion,
And new courage I shall find.
Or should Satan press me hard,
Let me then be on my guard,
Saying, "Christ for me was wound-
ed,"
That the tempter flee confounded.

3 If the world my heart entices
With the broad and easy road,
With seductive, sinful vices,
Let me weigh the awful load
You were willing to endure.
Help me flee all thoughts impure

And to master each temptation,
Calm in prayer and meditation.

4 Ev'ry wound that pains or grieves me
By Your wounds, Lord, is made
whole;
When I'm faint, Your cross revives me,
Granting new life to my soul.
Yes, Your comfort renders sweet
Ev'ry bitter cup I meet;
For Your all-atoning passion
Has procured my soul's salvation.

5 O my God, my rock and tower,
Grant that in Your death I trust,
Knowing death has lost its power
Since You crushed it in the dust.
Savior, let Your agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die be my protection,
Light and life and resurrection.



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The list of names below are students who are currently enrolled in one of the Concordia's. It is our hope that you will pray for them during their time in school and consider supporting them financially, if you are able, to help lessen their debt when they enter into the work field. This list will be included only in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter editions of the roundup. If there is someone we have left out, please let Tiffany at the District office know. Her email is thoff@wylcms.org.

Andrew Hill (On Vicarage)
7932 Westwick Pl.
Fort Wayne, IN 46835
Vicarage Address: 1228 Broadway
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Peter Preus (Seminary Student)
315 Carroll Rd.
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Nathaniel & Hannah Mars (Pre-Seminary; Church Music)
46 Bradford St. Apt. #4
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The following name is not in our district, but has previous ties to our district:

Charles Nemec (Seminary Student)
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REFORMATION 500

The Lutheran Reformation took place in a time of great turmoil in culture and institutions, including the church. In that respect, it was much like our own time. How does the church conduct itself in times of change? How should pastors care for Christians when they are confronted with matters of conscience in doctrine, church practice, and morality? Luther's pastoral care for the church of his day is instructive for us.

Much of what Luther had addressed in the eight *Invocavit Sermons* (March 1522) he put into writing in *Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament* (AE 36.237–267), published in April 1522. He began by teaching that “the world hates us and persecutes us” because of the Gospel, the preaching of the cross of Christ. Satan also exercises his malice toward us. “If outwardly we are too strong for his stooges, the papists, he will rend and destroy us inwardly through ourselves. May God our Father prevent him from doing this. Amen. So henceforth we must have regard to ourselves rather than to our enemies from without” (237).

Luther teaches us here that the devil and the world attack Christians in one of two ways. Outwardly, they provoke chaos and war, impose political and social pressure, instigate legal persecution of pure doctrine, or assault with outright violence. Inwardly, they stir up sin and error among Christians, provoke impiety, deceive Christians into the tolerance of vice, turn hearts cold with lovelessness, and invite conflict in the church among hearts hardened against repentance and reconciliation. In either case, it is the evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh to destroy God's precious Christians.

The inward attacks are often the greatest danger to the church, as Luther observes. The restoration and maintenance of pure doctrine is always the first priority in the church's preaching and practice. But such faithfulness in doctrine must be accompanied by the exercise of love within the church, which often requires patience and forbearance while God's Word does its work in our minds and hearts.

Luther warns us that there is great danger for us here. The devil's hatred and raging against us Christians is no joke. “So we too must expect that some of our own will fall away when the conflict begins” (238). He prays, “May God preserve us from extended disputes” (239) because of the damage they do to the consciences and souls of the faithful.

In this treatise Luther specifically addresses the matter of receiving Holy Communion in both kinds—that the laity receive both the body and the blood of Jesus. This

is what Jesus instituted. It is the right practice. But because these Reformation Christians had not received the blood of Christ in Communion for many generations, it would take time to make the change. Their consciences were still bound up with the old practice.

Luther teaches some beautiful things as he addresses this challenge. The first thing is that we must preach, hear, and learn God's Word.

A Christian should know that there is nothing more holy on earth than God's Word, for even the sacrament itself is constituted and sanctified and consecrated through God's Word, and all of us have received our spiritual birth from that Word and were consecrated as Christians by it. (244)

He reminds his readers that while the Lord's Supper is holy and must be received accordingly, so is the Christian. The Christian has been made holy by the Word of God and the sacraments. And he is precious to God, the object of all God's love and care. Luther admonishes us,

A Christian is holy in body and soul, whether he be layman or priest, man or woman. If anybody denies that, he speaks blasphemy against holy baptism, the blood of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. A Christian is a rare and wonderful thing, and God is more concerned about him than about the sacrament. For the Christian was not made for the sacrament, but the sacrament was instituted for the Christian. (245)

Luther is concerned about how reformation in the church is done. He is seeking to protect the consciences of God's dear Christians. The Christian conscience works and is grounded upon God's Word alone. By the Word a person's conscience knows right and wrong, judges actions and teachings to be righteous or evil, and shows the person the right course of action. The conscience is bound up with the thoughts of the mind, the feelings and intentions of the heart, the impulses of the body, and the faith in one's soul. A pure and joyful conscience is the work of God. Christ atoned for our sins, shed His blood, and applied the benefits of His holy blood to our bodies and souls, hearts and minds, thus cleansing our consciences. He who repents of his sin and trusts this work of Christ has a free and peaceful conscience.

The opinions of man cannot help us here. Luther emphasizes the teaching of *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone!) in matters of the conscience. “We must rather disregard flesh and blood, and consider how we may base our consciences on the pure Word of God alone, so that when we die we can face the devil and stand fast” (247). And how do we obtain well-instructed consciences? “The Master does his teaching in the hearts of men—through the external word of his preachers, however. The preachers impress the Word upon the ears, but Christ impresses it in the heart” (248).

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Luther uses an image from Jesus' teaching in Matthew 9:17 concerning the change from the Old Testament to the New: "No one puts wine into old wineskins; else the wine bursts the skins, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed." Luther explains his use of this metaphor, "The wine is the teaching of the gospel and the old wineskins are these weak and antiquated consciences—which is why they cannot get along together" (250). As long as weak consciences are clinging to the old false practice (i.e. communion in only one kind), no changes should be made. New wine bursts old wineskins.

In other words, preach and teach God's Word on the matter until consciences are strong enough and well-informed enough to make the change in practice. New wine (right practice) for new wineskins (well-instructed consciences)! Note here how Luther provides for the unttaught parishioners in his care:

However, there are among the old vessels and wineskins many good hearted, simple, little [or dear] people, who would like to do what is right and proper if they knew what it was or could grasp it. For that reason we must proceed against the tyrants in this matter in such a way as not to upset and confuse the poor multitude of the rank and file. Faith is supposed to fight against the tyrants, hold fast to the gospel despite their ordinances, and throw such useless vessels on the junk heap. But love should receive and embrace these weak and simple consciences, and work to make new vessels out of them. (253)

And as we consider the needed reforms or corrections in the church of our day, Luther also reminds us that we should understand our own duty and office in life. We should not try to correct everything or interfere where we have no call. "It is not proper for every individual to begin or to do all things that are right; it is enough that each one do that right thing which is appropriate to himself and incumbent upon him" (250).

As he concludes the treatise with a list of recommendations, Luther's key points stand out: Preach so that consciences are free while you wait to make changes in the church's practice. Do not force changes, but let the Word of God change people's hearts.

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around April 20 (May 2022 issue).

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

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

For our active-duty chaplains, **Rev. Lynn Christensen** (Japan) and **Rev. Ryan Mills** (Colorado)

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

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

Trinity, Gillette (served by **Rev. John Christensen, emeritus, Thermopolis**) called **Rev. Timothy Fitzer**, and he has returned the call. The congregation met March 20 and called **Rev. Nathan Neugebauer** (Revillo and Milbank, South Dakota).

Trinity, Cheyenne (Rev. John Preus) called **Rev. Travis Berg** (St. Paul, Latimer, Iowa) as headmaster-pastor. He has accepted this call and will be installed on March 27 at 4:00 PM.

Rev. Dr. Ron Garwood is serving **Christ the King, Cody** as the congregations prepares to enter into the call process.

Rev. Gerald Heinecke (Prince of Peace, Buffalo) has received and accepted the call to **Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville** and **Zion Lutheran Church, Waldenburg, Arkansas**.

Rev. Noah Fremer (Bethel, Lander) has received and accepted the call to **Trinity Lutheran Church, Howard's Grove, Wisconsin**.

Rev. Rene Castillero (Immanuel, Sheridan) has returned the call to serve as Assistant Pastor/Headmaster at **Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Roswell, New Mexico**.

Rev. Scott Shields (retiring as navy chaplain) has accepted the call as assistant pastor to **Faith Lutheran Church, Juneau, Alaska**.



Upcoming Events

- ♦ May 9-11, 2022: **Pastors Spring Conference** at Uinta County Youth Camp in Fort Bridger.
- ♦ June 9-11, 2022: **Pastors' Wives Retreat** at the C'mon Inn in Casper. Katie Schuermann, author of the Anthem of Zion series books, will be speaking on The Joy of Being a Pastor's Wife. Please encourage your pastors wife to attend. More info will be provided after Easter.
- ♦ June 16-18, 2022: **Headwaters Family Retreat** at Uinta County Youth Camp in Fort Bridger.
- ♦ June 20-24, 2022: **Continuing Education for Pastors and their Families** at Fort Robinson in Crawford, NE. Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz will be giving the pastors an overview of not only Reinhold Pieper, but some of his predecessors, his contemporaries, how they preached, and why.
- ♦ July 8-10, 2022: **Fathers & Sons Retreat** at Fort Robinson in Crawford, NE. Rev. David Ramirez will be presenting on Jonathan, King Saul's eldest son, as an example of courage, loyalty, friendship, faithfulness, humility, love, duty, and honor.
- ♦ July 19-21, 2022: **Homeschool Conference** at Lion's Camp on Casper Mountain. Dr. Gabriel Haley from Concordia University in Seward, NE will be our guest speaker. The overall theme is educating our children with graduation and afterwards in mind so that regardless of the vocations they pursue, they will be well prepared for faithful living in the family, church, and world. Dr. Haley will consider questions of preparing students for college, vocational training, or immediate entry in the job market. More info will be provided after Easter.
- ♦ August 1-2, 2022: **Continuing Education Class** @ Grace English in Pine Bluffs, WY
- ♦ August 7-11, 2022: **Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp** at Fremont County Youth Camp in Lander, WY. Topics will include the call to forsake all and follow Jesus, the gift of fertility, judgment on the wicked and blessing with the cross on righteousness, and justification by faith alone.