

WYOMING DISTRICT

ROUND-UP

Wyoming District—LCMS
2400 Hickory St.
Casper, WY 82604
(307) 265-9000

www.wylcms.org



FALL
2023

The Christian in Community: Through Adversity

There are many very earthy portions of Genesis that remind us that God deals not just with high and exalted things but also with the lowly and humble things in our daily lives. In Genesis we read not just the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his sons, but we learn the history of God's Church and of God's promise of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is a history of faith in the midst of domestic troubles, corruptors and despisers of God's Word, enemies of the Church, deceitful and greedy men. The Holy Spirit recorded these things for us so that we may learn from the faith and piety of our fathers in the faith, so that we may be warned against unbelief and impiety, and so that we may be comforted and strengthened in our own Christian walk.

Such is the case with our next section, Genesis 29-31. In these chapters we learn how God built up His church and provided for the coming of the promised Seed, Jesus. But God's gracious dealings were burdened with many evils and much lowliness. Jacob met Rachel, his beloved, and was betrothed to her—legally married. But his father-in-law Laban was a greedy and deceitful man. He made Jacob work seven years for his wife, and on the day they would complete their marriage he gave Rachel's sister Leah instead. Thus and otherwise unnatural and second marriage was forced upon Jacob, for he does not drive the unwanted sister away defiled and unmarriageable, but in mercy and pity he takes her also. But Jacob must now work another seven years for the unwanted wife. And even when the fourteen years were finally completed and Jacob reluctantly agreed to keep working for Laban (since God was blessing Laban for Jacob's sake), Laban greedily and unjustly changed Jacob's wages 10 times. Nevertheless God blessed Jacob with material wealth through this hard labor.

But know this: God will never leave you nor forsake you. He is working His own good and gracious purposes through your afflictions.

But Jacob's domestic troubles multiplied. Rachel was loved, Leah was unloved. Both women devoutly wanted children, wanted their husband's love and respect, wanted to be the mother of the promised Seed. God had mercy on unloved Leah by opening her womb and giving her sons. Rachel was envious, then angry, then downcast. In time, each wife sought and obtained children through their maidservants. God finally opened Rachel's womb and gave her a son, Joseph. Before the twenty years of Jacob's service to Laban were completed, God had given Jacob 11 sons and a daughter, together with many flocks and herds. God instructed Jacob to return to the land of the Promise, and Jacob fled from his heartless and miserly father-in-law with all that he had.

Yet in all this drama, God sustained His dear Church. Indeed, He expanded and strengthened it. Jacob came to Haran as one lonely, fugitive Christian. He returned with a large family and

servants, a congregation on the move. God sent His beloved Christians great adversity, anxieties, and temptations. He allowed greedy and deceitful Laban to torment and deprive Jacob and his wives. He permitted domestic turmoil to be inflicted on these pious saints. And through it all He accomplished His great purpose of building up a family and congregation of believers in Christ, through Whom the promised salvation of all the nations would be accomplished.

The Holy Spirit teaches us here to trust in God, to believe in the promise of forgiveness won by Christ in His death and resurrection. Jacob is our example, our pattern of faith in adversity. Through this Scripture the Spirit comforts and helps us in our own adversities and temptations. Our homes and marriages may suffer temptation affliction, and sorrow. Our congregations may be troubled by tight resources, dissention and fear, pastoral vacancy, lack of young children and families, and the like. You may be troubled with illness of body or mind or spirit. The assaults of the devil, the scorn of the world, and the burden of sin may seek to overwhelm the Christian, the household, the church. But know this: God will never leave you nor forsake you. He is working His own good and gracious purposes through your afflictions. He will sustain and build up His dear Church. He will deliver you.

Who trusts in God A strong abode In heav'n and earth possesses;
Who looks in love To Christ above, No fear that heart oppresses.
In You alone, Dear Lord, we own Sweet hope and consolation,
Our shield from foes, Our balm for woes,
Our great and sure salvation. (LSB 741.1)

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

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

For our active-duty chaplain, **Rev. Ryan Mills (Colorado)**.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

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

Our Savior's, Chadron (served by **Rev. James Rockhill, Bethlehem, Crawford and Redeemer, Harrison**) met August 15 and called **Rev. David Mommens** (St. Paul, Melrose, MN), who has returned the call. They met again September 26.

Rev. Kenneth Humphrey (Trinity, Morrill) has accepted the divine call to Christ and St. Paul's Lutheran Churches, Falls City, Nebraska. August 20 was his last Sunday. The congregation elected **Rev. Scott Firminhac (Our Savior's, Torrington)** to serve during the vacancy.

Rev. Mark Preus (St. Andrew's, Laramie) is taking a sabbatical from August to January. St. Andrew's is being served by **Rev. Mark Maas (King of Glory, Cheyenne)** during the sabbatical.

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) received and returned a divine call to Faith Lutheran Church, Shumway, IL.

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations after October 20.



REFORMATION 500

I learned early as a young pastor that while my congregation members might not remember my sermon for long after the service, they would inevitably remember which hymns I had picked. Lutherans love their hymns. It was a motivator for me to work harder at my preaching. But it was also a reminder that I should pick the hymns carefully, not just the favorite hymns, but more importantly the hymns that taught Christian faith and godliness most clearly. The members wouldn't wake up during the week humming my sermon, but if they had been singing a good Lutheran hymn, they might wake up humming or even singing that hymn and enjoy its great comfort and help throughout the week.

Martin Luther understood the power of combining Christian doctrine with holy and pleasing music. In mid-1523 he began calling upon his fellow pastors and theologians to write hymns, especially on the Psalms. The first Lutheran hymnal was published early in 1524, now called the *Achtliederbuch* because it contained eight hymns. One was by an unknown author. Three were by Paul Speratus, including his beloved "Salvation unto Us Has Come" (LSB 555). In 1523 Speratus had just been released from prison for his Lutheran doctrine and had come to Wittenberg, where he was helping Luther with the writing of hymns. Four hymns were by Luther: "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun" (see the July Roundup), "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" (LSB 556), "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" (LSB 607), and "O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold" (TLH 260).

"Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" was probably the second hymn Luther wrote. Like the first hymn he had written for the two young martyrs, this great hymn tells a personal story. With an exuberant and joyful melody it sings of the spiritual life and salvation of Luther and of every Christian. The first stanza paraphrases Psalm 98, calling on the Christian congregation to rejoice in the Gospel they are about to sing: "Proclaim the wonders God has done, How His right arm the vict'ry won, What price our ransom cost Him!"

Stanzas 2 and 3 confess our original sin and all its evil fruits. "Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay, Death brooded darkly o'er me. Sin was my torment night and day; In sin my mother bore me. But daily

deeper still I fell; My life became a living hell, so firmly sin possessed me." Nor could the sinner help himself. His works earned nothing from God. His powers of choice were turned against God: "Free will against God's judgment fought, Dead to all good remaining." The consequence: "My fears increased till sheer despair Left only death to by my share; the pangs of hell I suffered."

Then comes the Gospel. Stanza 4 teaches God's eternal election of the Christian according to "His mercies great" and through giving "His dearest treasure" for us. Stanza 5 expresses the eternal, gracious will and love of God for us and brings that will into our time, into His creation: "It's time to have compassion." Stanza 6 recites the Son's birth and His state of humiliation (Philippians 2:5-8): "His royal pow'r disguised He bore, A servant's form, like mine, He wore To lead the devil captive."

The final four stanzas are a summary of all Christ's word and work for us in the Gospel. In Stanza 7 Jesus tenderly calls us to Himself with promises (John 14:1-6): "Your ransom I Myself will be; For you I strive and wrestle. For I am yours, and you are Mine. And where I am you may remain; the foe shall not divide us." In Stanza 8, as though He were on His way to Golgotha, He comforts us with His substitutionary atonement for our sin, which we receive and make ours through faith (Romans 3:21-26; 4:24-45): "Though he will shed My precious blood, Me of My life bereaving, All this I suffer for your good; Be steadfast and believing. Life will from death the vict'ry win; My innocence shall bear your sin, And you are blest forever."

In Stanza 9 Jesus speaks of His resurrection and ascension and promises to send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15): "In trouble He will comfort you And teach you always to be true And into truth shall guide you." In Stanza 10 Jesus gives his final command to His dear Christians: "What I on earth have done and taught Guide all your life and teaching; So shall the kingdom's work be wrought And honored in your preaching." And He gives a final warning, "But watch lest foes with base alloy The heav'nly treasure should destroy; This final word I leave you."

Here we see that Luther's faith, his convictions, and his great joy are saturated with the teaching of Holy Scriptures. In the Law God reveals our condition and condemnation with terrifying force. In the Gospel He chooses and acts and speaks so lovingly and tenderly of Christ's death and resurrection and of the Spirit's abiding comfort and truth. But note that

Continued on page 5



The decommissioning of Wind River Lutheran Mission will take place on Tuesday, October 4th at 4:00 at Fort Washakie. All members of the Wyoming District—LCMS are invited to attend this event.

We rejoice in God for those on Wind River Reservation whom the Holy Spirit has called by the gospel, enlightened with His gifts of Word and Sacraments, sanctified and kept in the true faith. We give thanks for God's people with a heart for mission and the gifts and donations that made this work possible. We express deep gratitude to the Pastor-Missionaries and their families for their dedication and sacrifices to bring God's Word to the people of Wind River. In the last several years, tribal conditions have become unfavorable to Christianity, hindering our efforts to establish stable Christian communities. Covid restrictions further limited our out reach. Despite this, we hold onto hope and pray that God may open doors for future work among the tribal members. We urge those remaining to find solace in the ministries of Bethel Lutheran Church (Lander), Trinity Lutheran Church & School (Riverton), and Mount Calvary Lutheran Church (Dubois). Let us pray for God's blessings, that His Word may reach the hears of the Wind River Reservation community through our sister churches. May God lead us always as we remain steadfast in His service.



The 2023 District Homeschool Retreat was a wonderful success. Throughout the three days, we had 125 participants representing 25 different families from across the entire Wyoming District. The Lord God be praised for the godly devotion and faithfulness of his people.

The dates for next year's retreat are set: July 16-18, 2024. The location will be at the Lions Camp and possibly Camp Wyoba, located next to the Lions Camp. Using both facilities would provide more flexibility for lodging. Stay tuned for more details. If you are a part of the Homeschool group within the district and have any ideas for next year's retreat, concerns, and observations about the retreat this year or how the District can provide better assistance in your efforts to home school your children in a faithful and godly manner, or if you would like to be part of the homeschool group and would like more information, please reach out to Pastor Mars (kenmars1997@gmail.com). We look forward to seeing you in 2024!

Continued from page 3

Luther sees all this as the content and teaching of Psalm 98, Stanza 1. This is the New Song (Psalm 98:1): "Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things. His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

Just as this beautiful summary of the Gospel sprang out of Psalm 98, so other psalms provided Luther with the material for his other early hymns. He recognized that the Psalms are thoroughly Christian Scripture, Christian songs. The New Testament revelation of Christ, His Person, His work of salvation, His teaching and training in godliness, are all contained in the Psalms. The Psalms teach us to sing of Christ. Here we can understand Luther's other two early hymns. "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Tee" (LSB 607) translates Psalm 130 into the Christian life. Like the Psalm itself, the hymn is a prayer to God for mercy and compassion. The Christian confesses his sin in despair of his own works and situation in life. But the Christian's faith and hope are in God alone, who never forsakes us or fails to hear our cry. "Though great our sins, yet greater still Is God's abundant favor; His hand of mercy never will Abandon us, nor waver. Our shepherd good and true is He, Who will at last His Israel free From all their sin and sorrow." Here is revealed our dear Jesus, the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11). Luther's Psalm 130 hymn was commonly used for funerals, including the burials of Duke Fredrick the Wife (1525) and Luther himself (1546).

His fourth hymn, a paraphrase of Psalm 12, is an urgent cry to God to deliver His little, beleaguered congregation of Christians. This hymn, set to a powerful, minor melody, is hard for the church to appreciate when it no longer wants to think about the persecution of Christians and the devil's assault on pure doctrine. But it describes the church of our day as accurately as the church of Luther's day: "O Lord, look down from heav'n, behold And let Thy pity waken; How few are we within Thy fold, Thy saints be men forsaken! True faith seems quenched on ev'ry hand, Men suffer not Thy Word to stand; Dark times have us o'ertaken" (Stanza 1).

Psalm 12, and Luther's meditation based on it, force us to see and understand the hatred of God's Word seen inside and outside of the church: "With fraud which they themselves invent Thy truth they have confounded; Their hearts are not with one consent On Thy pure doctrine grounded. While they parade with outward show, They lead the people to and fro, In error's maze astounded" (Stanza 2).

These evils drive Christians to pray: "May God root out all heresy And of false teachers rid us Who

proudly say: 'Now, where is he That shall our speed forbid us? By right or might we shall prevail; What we determine cannot fail; We own no lord or master'" (Stanza 3). In answer to the Christian prayer and in wrath against the arrogance and unbelief of the false teachers, God answers: "Therefore saith God, 'I must arise, The poor My help are needing; To Me ascend My people's cries, And I have heard their pleading. For them My saving Word shall fight And fearlessly and sharply smite, The poor with might defending'" (Stanza 4). Note that within the written and spoken Word of God, and as the very content and power of God's Word, is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, who fights for us.

Then Luther, again paraphrasing Psalm 12, teaches us how God is at work in His Word through all our suffering and persecutions as Christians: "As silver tried by fire is pure From all adulteration, So through God's Word shall men endure Each trial and temptation. Its light beams brighter through the cross, And purified from human dross, It shines through every nation" (Stanza 5).

Luther then closes the hymn with a prayer for the Church, a prayer we must pray daily in our own evil times (Stanza 6): "Defend Thy truth O God, and stay This evil generation; And from the error of its way Keep Thine own congregations. The wicked everywhere abound And would They little flock confound; But Thou art our Salvation." Amen.



The 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was held from July 29 to August 3, 2023, at the Baird center in downtown Milwaukee. The Synod gathered under the convention theme, ‘We Preach Christ Crucified,’ based on 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. In a world of uncertainty, the church’s proclamation, mission, and identity remain the same. We preach Christ crucified.

A convention recap can be found here: <https://reporter.lcms.org/2023/we-preach-christ-crucified-2023-convention-wrap-up>. Thank you to those that attended convention. Your willingness to serve the church at large and represent the members of the Wyoming District is appreciated.



A Personal Note

I owe you all a word of thanks and an explanation for missing the August and September editions of the Roundup. Thank for your prayers for my father, Rev. Robert Hill, as God brought him near the gates of death and apparently wills to have him wait. He is very weak but holding his own and has even begun to regain a little strength. We await God’s good pleasure in peace, rejoicing that “God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

I was able to go to my father and mother for a week at the end of June and for two weeks at the end of August and early September, when the real crisis came. Even now, I am prepared to return and do the duty of a son in my parents’ time of need. It has been a profound privilege to serve my father in his weakness. My thanks to all those in the district who have waited patiently for my attention.

I attended my aunt’s funeral in Texas as I traveled to Dad (her brother) in August. Then, as we awaited my father’s anticipated death, I received word that my niece’s son Gabriel died at 20 weeks in the womb. Even as I write I also await the death of my cousin’s daughter, who will leave behind a deeply grieving husband and five little children. Death comes to us all. It is the wages of our sin. As my pastor reminded me on Sunday, we need to look death in the face. But no death can rob us of our life in Christ, our joy in His salvation, our sure and certain hope, or the peace that Christ alone gives us. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. Amen.

- Rev. John Hill