

September 2022

# Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



## Noteworthy

### Upcoming Events

LLC Bible Course  
A Man after Mine Own  
Heart—The Life of King David  
October 7–9, 2022  
Stony Lake Camp

LLC Ministers Webinar  
November 3, 2022  
@ 8:00 pm CDT

LLC New Ministers  
Workshop  
January 13–14, 2023  
LLC Office, Monticello

### Reminder

If you plan to attend the LLC Bible Course, remember to sign up soon.

## Fall Feast Days

During October and November of this year, the church calendar includes the following special feast days: Michaelmas, All Saints' Day, and Reformation Day. Michaelmas is sometimes described as Angel's and Children's Sunday and its theme is "Messengers of God." The texts for the day speak of angels and children. The theme for All Saints' Day is "The Communion of Saints." The texts direct the attention of the battling congregation here on earth to the triumphant congregation, the former saints, who have already attained their victory. Their example both teaches us and gives us hope. Reformation Day is observed on the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost. The theme for the day is "The foundation of faith." The Psalm text for the day is from Psalm 46. The text was the basis and inspiration for Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," which is often called the Battle Hymn of the Reformation. The Epistle text is Romans 1:16, 17 which is one of the key sources for the reformer's teaching on the doctrine of justification by faith. You can find more information about these holidays at the Minister Resource page (<https://www.lchurch.org/minister-resources>) in a series of articles on the Church year found in the Bible Reference Materials section. Look for the article entitled Fall Holidays.



The recording of John Stewart's presentation at the August Ministers Webinar on the Letter to the Hebrews is also available at the Minister Resource page under the tab "Minister Webinars."

Be sure to take note of the upcoming events in the Noteworthy Events section as well. Make sure to mark the next webinar—the Annual LLC Ministers Teleconference—on your calendar. We will send out a reminder, an agenda, and a link for the meeting several weeks prior to the meeting.

aMark 10:21, 22

## Shattering the Righteousness of the Law

Esa Tuomaala

“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:21, 22).

Many people had things to discuss with Jesus. The approaches were different. Many came with distress in their hearts. Many were curious. Many were bearing hatred. In this Bible text, the person in question came with humble politeness. He knelt before Jesus and from his knees he asked a big question, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus rejected part of the man’s question in an extraordinary fashion, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.” Why didn’t Jesus accept the man’s use of the words, “Good Master?” The explanation could be that Jesus knew what the attitude of His listener was. He had no idea of Jesus’ divinity. The way that he addressed Jesus did not show that he acknowledged this. Instead he apparently, making a judgement in the spirit of the Law, had come to the conclusion that some people, at least, were good. By his manner of speech he included Jesus in this group. Jesus forbade dividing people in this way. His unconditional understanding of all mankind was the same as the psalmist and Paul: “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10–12). Jesus’ discussion partner did not understand this truth.

Jesus, as He began to teach the individual who had come with the question about the great matter of receiving eternal life, first discussed God’s Law. Jesus surely did not do so that He would have wished to introduce the Law to him as a way to salvation. The reason was entirely something else.

As He often did, Jesus began from what he knew

## JESUS CONVERSES

The gospels present us with a rich picture of Jesus’ public ministry. There we find His works and miracles, teachings, parables, and also some of His conversations. Some of those conversations were with adversaries, some with the curious, and others with the downcast or seeking. Some of the conversations were with individuals and others were with groups.

In these conversations we can see how Jesus approached people and responded to their questions. His teaching, methods, and manner offer us valuable lessons. We can apply them in our own lives and in our work as servants of the Word. The articles in this series will examine some of the enlightening conversations that took place between the Son of God and His contemporaries.

was central in the questioner’s life and thoughts. Jesus’ phrase says much: “Thou knowest the commandments.” This was essential for His questioner this time. He did know the commandments. Observance and fulfillment are, nevertheless, different matters. Jesus recited about half of the Ten Commandments. Among other things, He did not mention the first and second commandments at all.

The young man firmly took hold of the guideline of the Law which Jesus threw to him. Obviously, the line the discussion took pleased him. After all, Jesus spoke to him about the most familiar matter. It was easy for him to answer to this. This was his answer: “Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” The young man was satisfied with himself, his life, and his endeavor. He considered his life to be intact. He did not seem to be very young, since he said that he had observed the Law from his youth. We could ask, why did he then come to Jesus with his question concerning eternal life, since he had succeeded so well in his own mind? Perhaps, all the same, in the depths of his conscience flickered uncertainty whether this was actually enough before the righteous God. According to the Evangelist Matthew, the man actually asked, “What lack I yet?” Thus something, despite all this, seemed to be

# Jesus Converses

missing, and that's what he sought for in himself and in his own righteousness.

Jesus' encouragement to go and sell everything and give to the poor has puzzled Bible readers from time to time. Why did Jesus bring up the question of property and the sharing of it with others first, even though, according to the understanding of many, it definitely did not belong to the ABC's of faith nor was it the first matter in Jesus' teaching? In seeking an answer to this question, we should state that Jesus treated those that came to Him as individuals and spoke with each person who came to talk with Him precisely so the person could be helped. Now the question was of a person who on one hand had boasted that he had kept God's commandments, and, on the other hand, a person who had many goods and possessions. The man had accumulated both spiritual and secular riches. When Jesus noticed that he knew what the letter of the Law says, He wished to show with one powerful example what keeping God's demanding and holy Law would have meant in the man's life. He owned a lot of things. The commandment to love one's neighbor in all its severity would have demanded he sacrifice all of his possessions to Israel's poor. His love of God and his neighbor was now placed under trial by fire. The Evangelist Matthew's words clarify the picture at this point as well: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast ..." (Matt. 19:21). The Law demands perfection. We encounter this perfection in giving up our own in Christ alone. In fulfilling the Law, Jesus gave His all, including His life and heart's blood, on behalf of us poor sinners. He was perfect in love for God and neighbor.

With Jesus' words the glory of God's Law opened to the man. In its light, his very wholesome appearing life and endeavor was ripped apart. The work evaporated in an instant. Sorrow filled the man's heart with the collapse of the structure of self-righteousness. The man's heart had not been primarily attached to God and his neighbor, but rather to his own property, goods and his adopted spiritual richness.

Worst of all was—not that he became sorrowful—but rather that he went away from the Most Merciful, who would have been ready to continue the discussion and instruct him on the way of life.

The discussion between Jesus and the rich man is

a warning sign for all times about the danger of self-righteousness. Self-acquired holiness, self-formed conviction of faith, the endeavor for purity occurring with one's own strength in the light of the Law will never be acceptable before God. One clothed in that garment is always left feeling cold and completely naked before the true glory of God's Law. God's peace is never attained on that road. Rather there is a battle about these issues between God's kingdom and the practitioners of self-righteousness in this world. The Christian soul also has this same battle. The enemy of souls not only leads astray through open or secret sins of the flesh, but he wishes to take people through self-righteousness and in that way dry up the life of faith. Sometimes he tells a believer that he has succeeded in his endeavor and suggests that he could be at least partly acceptable to God on this basis. Sometimes he shows a child of God his own weaknesses instead and proclaims that if he would be rid of these weaknesses, then he could freely believe. Both of these imply a lie. Our faith and all of our security are dependent on that which the Lord Jesus has done through His death and resurrection. We cannot either add anything or remove anything from the righteousness that He has gained. It is entirely a gift. It can only be owned through faith. The endeavor against sin and putting away sin proceeds from the owning of the righteousness of faith.

Even now, my friend reading this, remain believing your sins forgiven in Jesus' name and blood! Our freedom is in Christ's wounds!



Ephesians 5:15–20

## Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Erkki Savela

### AN ENDEAVOR ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

Ephesus was an important port city on the Mediterranean Sea coast. The city was well-known for sinful life and the worship of false gods. All the same, a Christian congregation had been established there already early on. God's grace taught the Christians to reject sin and to live righteously. It is related in Acts that the Christians believed and confessed their sins, rejoicing and thanking the Lord Jesus. God's Word increased and became stronger in their midst (Acts 19: 17–20).



## Thankfulness

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

This Sunday's theme is thankfulness. There are many reasons for thankfulness and gratitude. The opposite of gratitude is ingratitude. "Ingratitude is the world's reward" is an old saying.

God's Word, the Bible, and God's Spirit advise a bright attitude towards life, to see the reasons for thankfulness and gratitude around us. We humans often tend to look at the dark side of things, in which case the topics of thankfulness and being joyful take a back seat. Although we encounter many anxieties and even fears, even then the child of God has the living God as security. He gives a future and a hope.

This Sunday's epistle texts show us many reasons for thankfulness and what a thankful mind affects.

### WALK IN THE LIGHT

Paul's letter to the Ephesians teaches what Christian life and doctrine contain. In this Sunday's text, he instructs us to live circumspectly, to understand what the Lord's will is, and to thank God.

Paul instructs us to live wisely and not like fools. A wise life means traveling in a way acceptable to God in our faith and life. Jesus encouraged us to believe in the light, to walk in the light, so long as the light is with us (John 12:35, 36). God's Word and the Lord Jesus Christ is the light (John 8:12; 2 Pet. 1:19).

An enormous change had occurred in the lives of the Ephesian believers. According to Paul, they had previously "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). What was that walk like? Paul explained it clearly, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even

# Epistle Postil

as others” (Eph. 2:3). By this Paul meant living in sin as an unbeliever. Earlier in the text, he warned of such sins. In his opinion, it was a shame even to speak of those sins which happen in the darkness of sin (Eph. 5:12).

## WHAT IS GOD’S WILL?

The Ephesians who had repented had received great happiness. God had opened their understanding to see His will. God placed the hope of eternal life into their hearts (Eph. 1:17-18).



Paul brings up one serious form of sin, drunkenness. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” Living Christianity emphasizes unconditional sobriety. There are many reasons for abstaining from alcohol. A drunkard does not inherit God’s kingdom (1 Cor: 6:10). The use of alcohol brings much harm and sorrow to our surroundings. Alcohol causes a person to do things which he would not do if he were sober. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).



Paul teaches: “Be filled with the Spirit.” God’s Holy Spirit and grace teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly and righteously (Titus 2:11-12). Paul emphasizes the precious grace privilege of forgiveness and thanks God for it. God’s children even yet proclaim this message of the forgiveness of sins. An unbelieving person becomes a child of God when he believes the gospel. Then believing of grace and endeavoring as a child of light begins.

## THE MOUTH SPEAKS FROM THE FULLNESS OF THE HEART

A pardoned child of God thanks God for His goodness with his heart and mouth. He also thanks God on behalf of the Lord’s entire congregation.

Paul encourages us to thank God with psalms and spiritual songs and hymns. With their psalms of praise believers thank God for the help He gives them. Experiences are portrayed in the psalms which a person living in the fellowship of God can experience. Such are joy for the forgiveness of sins, thankfulness for the help God gives, happiness even in the face of outward difficulties as well as God’s peace. In the Psalms, as Luther expresses it, we can “see into the hearts of all the Saints.”

## Contact Information

Jon Bloomquist, Mission Director  
jbloomquist@llchurch.org  
218.255.0173

Adrian Pirness, Mission Director  
apirness@llchurch.org  
763.360.0820

Adeline Moll, Mission Dept. Asst.  
amoll@llchurch.org  
928.499.8079