



Scriptural Christmas Ornaments for US to Hang on to!

by Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

Magnum *mysterium* of incarnational theology! Baby Jesus as God in the straw lying in Bethlehem's wooden manger also destined to be suspended on a wooden cross! Magnanimous mystery indeed!

Central to the salvation of a hostile world already on that first Christmas, as promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures born in human flesh of a Virgin Mother in the ancestral home of Israel's King David, our Brother-Savior Jesus Christ forever remains this fallen world's desperately needed sinless God-Man or, as is also proper to say or believe, Man-God! (Deut, 18:15; Is. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2)

Based on countless passages pertaining to the mystery of the eternal Word of God assuming our human nature (John 1:14) and despite the absence of the word "Christmas" in our English Bibles, we have every reason to be thankful for the everlasting blessings of the absolute genius of God's incarnation.

Likely the earliest written New Testament reference to the Gospel message of Christmas are these words of our ascended Lord's apostle Paul to the churches of the Asia Minor province of Galatia:

In the fullness of calendar time, God sent His Son on a mission, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal. 4:4f.).

Because of His promised coming down to earth as the "singular seed of a woman," instead of condemning us sinners, God in Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:16).

Besides Matthew 1 and Luke 1 and 2 (think human history here) other passages well worth consulting include Is. 53; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:8ff., 4:15; 9:22b.; 10:5-10, 18; 1 Pet. 1:18f.; 2:21ff.; 1 John 4:2 and Rev. 21:3 ("God's wedding!"). With our sinless ascended Brother-Savior Jesus Christ as our Heavenly Bridegroom, not only are we God's adopted children but as baptized believing members of His bridal body, His Church, we are also securely "married" to Him who lived for us, died for us and rose again! Glad tidings, indeed to God for His inexpressible Gift, our ever-living and loving Lord Jesus! (2 Cor. 9:15; Heb. 13:8)

God's CHRISTmas Peace to all!

*Focus on Christ
this Season*



Sanctified Speech

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Stewards of Speech

Christian stewardship involves the management of all of life and life's resources to the glory of God. That includes managing speech in a God pleasing way. The tongue is a powerful human tool. It can do much good and create great chaos. "A gentle answer turns away wrath; a harsh word stirs up anger." (Prov. 15:11) St. James compares an unruly tongue to a spark that ignites a forest fire.

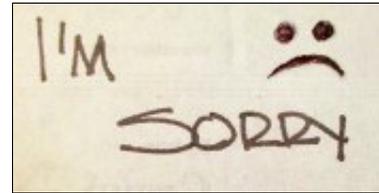
(James 3:5-6) Ill chosen words can quickly flare up tempers into a vicious conflagration of conflict. God pleasing communication can prevent or extinguish a raging fire of discord.

Avoid Profanity

The Federal Communications Committee prohibits obscenity, profanity and indecency from radio and television. Congress told it to do so. Collectively, people generally disdain the profane. General George Washington discouraged profanity among the military. An order at Valley Forge in August, 1776, includes the following: "The general is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing is growing into fashion. We can little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our army if we insult it by our impiety and folly." World War II General George Patton, known for prolific profanity, would have done well to heed those words. St. James admonishes Christians: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be." (James 3:9-10)

When Offended, Bite Your Tongue

Don't quickly dump on someone who has offended you unjustly. Don't verbally fly off the handle. Bite your tongue. Proverbs 10:19 states: "He who holds his tongue is wise." Proverbs 13:3 warns: "He who speaks rashly will come to ruin." When others angrily, falsely, maliciously wag their tongues against you, don't stoop to their level by responding with vitriolic verbiage. Cool it. Dissipate the emotional heat. Inwardly pray the words of Jesus when He was falsely maligned and crucified: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)



When You Offend. Sincerely Apologize

Who hasn't unjustly offended someone? And when you do so, a sincere apology is in order. Face up! Acknowledge your fault. Humbly say, "I'm sorry." Roy Lewicki of Ohio State University offers six key components for proper apologies in their order of importance:

- **Acknowledgment of Responsibility** - Say it's your fault. No excuses.
- **Offer of Repair** - Talk is cheap. Offer to fix the wrong. Take action to undo the damage.
- **Expression of Regret** - Say, "I'm sorry."
- **Explanation of What Went Wrong** - Point out your offending goof-up.
- **Declaration of Repentance** - Indicate your determination not to repeat the offense.
- **Request Forgiveness** - Do it humbly with eye contact and sincerity.

Criticize with Love

From time to time it is necessary to point out things to others. It could be something simple like pointing out a man's zipper down or a tear on a woman's dress. Then again, pointing out troubling issues can be more complex and difficult when a legitimate criticism is necessary. Deliver it with love, kindness and tenderness to show you care. Terry Pluto, a writer for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, offers the following tips on how to criticize:

- ▶ **Do it in private with a calm voice.**
- ▶ **Do it in love letting them know you care.**
- ▶ **Don't keep pounding the subject.**
- ▶ **Prevent it from becoming an argument.**
- ▶ **If there is a lash back, just drop the issue.**

The "Golden Rule" is a guiding light for proper criticism: "Do to others what you would have them do to you." (Matt. 7:12) Criticize the way you would like to be criticized.

RELATED RESOURCE

www.selc.lcms.org - Personal Stewardship
"Taming the Tongue"

What's Happening at the Haven!

by Diane Leining

We went to the birds recently – The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey that is! A group of residents strolled through some lovely flora and fauna to view several birds that this organization mends back to health. We saw beautiful owls, hawks and bald eagles...close enough to touch, but we didn't! Every year since 1948, the Haven has produced and distributed our own Christmas Seal. In the past few years we have used the artwork of a resident to grace our seals. They are sent out to churches all over and the donations go to our Benevolent Care Fund. The residents get together to fold the seals and insert them into envelopes for mailing. Another great fellowship event!

In October, we held our Fall Flea Market. Donations come from all over the Oviedo community come to our "Flea House" throughout the year and many of our residents sort through these items every week and box them up for our Flea Markets. All the profits from these sales go to purchase items needed for our skilled nursing home, assisted living and memory care facilities. We brought in approximately \$20,000 this fall. Good work!

We were very privileged to have entertainment from Walt Disney World come and play for our residents for free! The recording industry's Music Performance Trust Fund has pledged \$200,000 to present over 1,000 free, live and age-friendly musical performances for older adults. Long story short, Haven residents, Paul and Dorothy Wittenberg submitted the Haven as one of those places someone could perform. The very next day, I received a call from Bob Jackson, who performs at the Port Orleans Resort in Walt Disney World. YeeHaa Bob, as he is known, has a very unique, energetic style of piano playing and entertaining. We set a date and Bob came and performed one of his shows full of various types of familiar music that is much more than just toe tapping!! A great Sunday afternoon treat!

On Veteran's Day, we honored over 70 Haven residents and staff members, thanking them for their military service. VITAS' Chaplain Dan gave a stirring presentation for everyone to hear. This year the focus was on the Vietnam era. Each Veteran received a certificate of appreciation, as well as a flag ribbon. Some of our residents arrived at the event in full uniform, decorated shirts and caps. Patriotic songs and a beautiful cake made the afternoon one of pride and remembering.

Here at the Haven we are thankful for the freedoms we enjoy every day! God Bless America!



A Pastor-to-Pastor Letter from Michael W. Salemink

submitted by Ziggy Rein - reprinted with permission

Category: Bioethics, Sharing the Message of Lutherans For Life, Abortion and the Church, End of Life, Worldview and Culture, Christian Responsibility, Devotional

“Thank you for caring.” “Please keep speaking.” “God bless your ministry.”

I’m delivering these messages from Lutherans across the country. They asked me to share them with you. I was able to gather with thousands of Gospel-motivated voices this summer. We visited the LWML National Convention, the LCMS Synodical Convention, the NALC Convocation, and the LCMC Annual Gathering. We also had a presence at the LCMS National Youth Gathering (NYG), the Free Lutheran Youth Convention (FLY), and two of the Higher Things youth conferences. They engaged us by the dozens—youth, parents, congregational leaders, professional church workers, widows, and grandpas. They came from your churches and from your communities.

Students brought questions and held conversations. They talked about the life issues—the spiritual concerns, the matters of the heart—that their friends and peers are facing, like surprise pregnancy, abortion advocacy, sexuality, and suicide. They took the informational booklets and brochures that we set out. They attended our educational presentations in such droves that we had to add extra sessions—and we still didn’t have room to accommodate them all. Your students love to hear how God creates, redeems, and calls every human life as His own precious treasure.

Please keep speaking!

Parents shared their smiles and their tears. They told the stories of their preemies and their miscarriages. We looked at their pictures of foster sons, adopted daughters, and gestating grandkids. We witnessed them cradling our fetal models and placing them into the hands of their own little ones. We watched them linger fifteen minutes, lamenting the culture around them that uses death as a solution to suffering. Others spent half an hour rejoicing that no one’s age, appearance, or ability can impair the worth and purpose God gives our whole race. Your parishioners rejoice in the courage and compassion from God’s Word for our life-and-death circumstances.

Please keep speaking!

Many, many expressed their profound gratefulness. They beamed about how their pastors—that’s you!—speak the truth in love. They bragged that their ministers name abortion a sin and declare physician-assisted suicide evil. They boasted of you withholding nothing of God’s grace that works a better way through the greatest difficulties and afflictions. We learned that you give them a word from the Lord—a good Word—for situations when we can only see darkness, despair, and death. We heard that you explain our Almighty Maker values the lives of the least of these—the unborn ones, the elderly ones, individuals living with disability, or those in a Petri dish—just as much as the rest of us. They articulated exactly what you instructed, that the Heavenly Father’s forgiveness applies also to violence against life, that Christ’s compassion relieves from the grief of participating in it, and His sacrifice covers over the guilt of promoting it. Your members deeply appreciate your faithful servanthood.

[Salamink - continued on Page 5]

[Salemink - continued from Page 4]

Please keep speaking!

And some of them confessed regret. “I prayed for a sign. I needed God to make a statement. I wish my pastor would have said something.” Several recounted the child that they aborted. A number mourned the embryos that they abandoned to experimentation or disposal. Not a few repented the deaths of aging loved ones that they hastened in ignorance. They divulged the sorrow and remorse they’ve borne silently and secretly for decades. They wondered why they never got their pastor’s guidance. They disclosed their disappointment that their congregation never connected the truth and love of Jesus Christ to their life issues. They objected to categorizing these predicaments as too personal, too political, too controversial, too uncomfortable or offensive. They longed to have the Gospel proclaimed specifically to their hearts and explicitly to their hurts.

Please keep speaking!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

God of ALL comfort, for ANY affliction! Your ministry gives this consolation. Your sacred vocation changes hearts and saves lives. Our nationwide network has the delight of hearing about it every day. You don’t just have something to say; you have the best word and the last word! “[S]o shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). The Lord who called and ordained you in His Holy Spirit retains responsibility for the results of His message, whether reception or rejection.

Preach it gently, but relentlessly. Teach it patiently, but persistently.

We’ve prepared some resources to assist you. Check out our 2020 Life Sunday worship materials. They follow the theme of “Did God Really Say ... ?” from Genesis 3:1 and John 6:68, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal [LIFE]!” You will find bulletin inserts, Bible study and leader’s guide, order of service, children’s message, and model sermon manuscripts free of charge at www.lutheransforlife.org/store-life-sunday-2020 . And we place ourselves and our entire organization at your service for consultation, encouragement, and education—whenever, wherever, and however you need.

We cannot overstate our gratitude for your fellowship. The generous offerings of congregations like yours have helped us reach and touch over 200,000 people this year (our fortieth!). We eagerly look forward to future opportunities for communication and collaboration with you.

**Thank you for caring. Thank you especially for your Gospel-motivated voice For Life.
And God bless your ministry!**

The Lutheran Beacon

Send your articles and photos to: gailpete37@yahoo.com

Photos must be submitted as separate attachments [NOT as part of your article--JPEG format preferred.] You may send multiple photos in one email.

Gail Peterson, Ed.

**DEADLINE FOR JANUARY ISSUE
IS DECEMBER 12TH**

A very Blessed Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas to All!

BITS & PIECES

SELC Convention – Please mark your calendars for the 2021 SELC Convention. It will be held from April 15 – 18, 2021 in St. Louis. More details will be sent as they become available.

Congregational Treasurer’s Manual Revision – The Congregational Treasurer’s manual has been revised. The District Office has 5 paper copies that come with a CD. We also have the CD or a thumb drive available without the paper copy of the manual. Please email Patti Smith at pgsmith@ptd.net if you would like a paper version or the CD/thumb drive. The paper copies will be distributed in order that the requests are received.

David and the Psalms” - is the focus of Concordia Seminary’s Feb. 8 Winter Lay Bible Institute, led by Professor of Exegetical Theology and Dean of Ministerial Formation Dr. Timothy Saleska. Participants will reflect on the truths expressed in the Psalms – and will receive

concrete suggestions to help them in their devotional practice. “I’m often asked why I love the Psalms,” Saleska said. “As I listen to the beautiful language of the Psalms and contemplate the powerful images that they paint, they give me a deep insight into God’s grace as I have received it in my Savior, Jesus.”

Open to lay people, students, pastors and others interested in the proclamation of the Gospel, the one-day workshop will be held on February 8, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Sieck Hall 202 on campus, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105. The registration deadline is Jan. 24, 2020. Cost is \$20 per person.

The Lay Bible Institute, offered three times a year by Concordia Seminary faculty members, is an ongoing study of the Bible and how it relates to today’s life and events.

For more information or to register, visit www.csl.edu/lbi or contact Continuing Education at 314-505-7286 or ce@csl.edu.



LWML Applications for Mission Grants

submitted by Karen Ann Kowalczyk, Mission Grants Chairman

We are presently compiling a list of mission grants which will need to be sent to the SELC Board of Directors for approval. Requests for both mission and self-sustaining congregations should meet the following criteria.

1. Fit into plans and projections of the LCMS
2. Be “mission” in emphasis – extending the ministry of the Word
3. Be current and ready for implementation
4. Be well documented
5. Be designed to reach out to non-members (i.e. evangelism programs) or
6. Be related to public relations (i.e. sign, landscaping, etc.) or
7. Be for in-reach, equipping the people for mission (i.e. the elders course) or
8. Be something needed in the sanctuary for worship (i.e. paraments, hymnals)
9. Amount of request is not to exceed \$1,500

Please use the form on the next page to make your request. Include as much information as you believe the mission board and the LWML delegates will need. This information will be used to write a description of each grant to be sent to the delegates and officers prior to the convention to be held May 1 – May 3, 2020. **Any LWML member, society, zone, church or board of the SELC District may submit a grant request to the LWML. Your request should be mailed or emailed by Dec. 15, 2019.**

Lutheran Women's Missionary League – SELC District
2020 – 2022 Mission Grant Proposal

Please return completed application with necessary attachments no later than December 15, 2019 to:
Karen Ann Kowalczyk, 221 Wilson Dr., Hazleton, PA 18201 or email to karenankow@hotmail.com

Project Title: _____ Money requested: _____

Name and address of person or organization submitting the proposal:

Contact person's name: _____

Name of person or organization and address to whom the check should be issued:

Website Address: _____

Describe the purpose of the project:

State why funding is needed:

If partial funding is requested, please identify the total amount of money needed for the project and the source(s) of the remaining amount:
