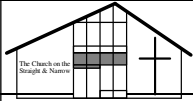


# The Straight & Narrow Way



A Newsletter for OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Eastertide 2007

## Comfort on the Journey

*Recently I have been renewing my acquaintance with the Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach. I had forgotten just how rich they are.*

*As beautiful as is the music, the words are even richer! Thus, even without the music and even without the poetry of the original German, you can still be profoundly affected simply by meditating on the words and letting the short, simple sentences soak deeply into your soul.*

*Below is the libretto for his Jubilate cantata (Easter 4).*

### Chorus

Weeping, lamentation,  
worry, despair,  
anguish and trouble  
are the bread of tears, of the  
Christian who bears  
the marks of Jesus.

### Alto Recitative (Arioso)

We must enter the Kingdom of  
God through much sorrow.

(Acts 14:22)

### Alto Aria

Cross and crown are bound  
together,  
struggle and reward are united.  
Christians have at all times  
their suffering and their enemy,  
yet their comforts are Christ's  
wounds.

### Bass Aria

I follow after Christ,  
I will not let go of Him  
in prosperity and hardship,  
in life and mortality.  
I kiss Christ's shame,  
I will embrace His cross.  
I follow after Christ,  
I will not let go of Him.

### Tenor Aria

Be faithful. All pain  
will yet be only a little thing.  
After the rain blessing blossoms.  
All storms pass away.  
Be faithful, be faithful!

### Instrumental Chorale

Jesus, priceless treasure,  
Fount of purest pleasure,  
Truest Friend to me!  
Ah, how long in anguish  
Shall my spirit languish,  
Yearning, Lord, for Thee?  
Thou art mine, O Lamb divine!  
I will suffer naught to hide Thee;  
Naught I ask beside Thee. (743.1)

### Chorale

What God ordains is always good:  
This truth remains unshaken.  
Though sorrow, need, or death  
be mine,  
I shall not be forsaken.  
I fear no harm, For with his arm  
He shall embrace and shield me;  
So to my God I yield me. (760.6)

*sdg*

*J. S. Bach, Kantor*



## Pastoral Pedagogy

### Reflections on the Resurrection

To bring life out of death for all who believe in Him, God sends His Son to conquer death. See the man Jesus, lying dead in His grave, but He is the Son of God and death cannot hold Him. Jesus rises to life, ascends to heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, rules all

things, prepares a place for us, and looks to the day when He will come again as judge of the living and the dead.

Jesus conquers death by raising Himself from death to life. The importance of Jesus' resurrection cannot be overestimated. The Christian faith stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus. Any faith without the resurrection of Jesus is nonsense. If the one who came to save us from death lies still and cold forever in a grave, Christianity is a sad joke. St. Paul says: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:17—19). Those who would deny the resurrection of Jesus and who would reduce Christianity to a set of moral principles have little to do with the apostle Paul, who declares: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Paul even said that if Jesus did not rise, he, Paul, was a false witness and a man without hope (1 Corinthians 15:14—15).

Either Jesus rose from the grave or He did not. If He did not, there is little in life that really matters. We can have no hope. We can have no lasting joy. We can have no solid foundation on which to base our faith and our lives. But if Jesus did rise, the future has hope, our lives have meaning, and His Word provides a strong foundation on which to build and by which to live. And Jesus did rise! St. Paul declares: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Again, in reference to Jesus' resurrection, Paul exclaims: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians

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# *Jesus' resurrection is a victory for us.*

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15:57). And Jesus' resurrection is a victory for us.

Frequently, it is difficult to believe that our lives contain anything victorious. It is difficult to believe that evil does not triumph over good. It is difficult to believe that Jesus really accomplished anything for us when we see how faithful Christians suffer and our faith seems at times to be futile. Then we look at the passion and death of Jesus. History has known many dark hours but none as black as those hours when the Son of God was on the cross. There the powers of evil converged on Jesus and released their full fury.

Who could have believed that any good could have come out of this? But God took this darkest moment and out of it He brought forgiveness, life, and everlasting glory. That is why our faith ultimately can conquer evil in this world—not because nothing will ever go wrong for us and we will never suffer, never sin, and never succumb to temptation, but because the Son of God took on Himself our human flesh and through His suffering, death, and resurrection robbed the devil and his evil forces of all hope for a final victory. In fact, Jesus' resurrection is the declaration that God already has defeated all evil through Christ, His Son. In the resurrection God has passed sentence on Satan and on all the evil that nailed Christ to the cross.

While in the Colorado Rockies, my wife and I were walking some distance behind an older man. Suddenly, we heard a commotion. We rushed to the man and found him beating a rattlesnake with a large stick. Then he sharpened another stick, which he drove through the snake's head. As we made our return trip along the trail about an hour later, we came on the body of that snake. It was still writhing. Satan is like that snake. His head was crushed at Calvary,

he has been defeated, and it is only a matter of time before his fight against God and His church comes to an end. The outcome of the struggle between God and Satan is not in doubt. Satan is still writhing, so to speak, but the decisive battle is over. The victory belongs to God and to His children. But many professing Christians seem to share the attitude the disciples had before they learned of Jesus' resurrection. His followers locked themselves in a room out of fear of those who had killed their leader. Their hopes were dashed, their plans destroyed. The disciples didn't know that any victory had been won, so they lived without hope. Then news came of the resurrection. Christ had been victorious, and they knew that His victory was also their victory.

Many people still live in that locked room, terrified and hopeless. They need to be told that because Christ is alive, a real victory belongs to them. Jesus says in the Book of Revelation: "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). Because Jesus lives, the final victory over sin, over death, and over hell belongs to every Christian. It is not a losing cause to be a Christian. Our Savior is mighty, and He is able to deliver us from sin and to give us a hope that cannot be destroyed, the hope of our personal victory over death. When believers in Christ approach death, the gates of death will not be able to turn them back. Believers do not go to death as slaves or as prisoners to a

dungeon. Rather, they go through death into the presence of their victorious Savior. This is not wishful thinking, the fantasy of miserable people who have created a hope for themselves so they don't have to despair. Our faith is grounded in the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection. Our faith is grounded in the promise of God, who gives victory and salvation to all who believe in Jesus.

Our perspective of something determines our attitude about it. For example, if you are hungry and an apple is in the middle of the table, you may be tempted to take a bite. But change your perspective by walking to the other side of the table, and you see a large rotten spot in the apple. Your mouth stops watering because you certainly are not going to take a bite out of that particular apple. Your attitude toward the apple depended on your perspective. Your perspective can be right, wrong, or incomplete. The reason many people fear death is that their perspective is wrong or incomplete. They operate with an unbeliever's view that death is the end, the snuffing out of human existence, the period that marks the conclusion of a human life after which there is nothing more.

When my oldest son was a young boy, I wanted to teach him not to run out into the street. One day, when no cars were coming, I took him out into the street and showed him a squirrel that had been hit by a car. We agreed that the squirrel was dead, that it would never run again, play again, climb a tree

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## *The Christian faith is grounded in the historical fact of Jesus resurrection.*

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again. My son asked why the squirrel was dead, so I explained that the squirrel had run into the street—right in the path of a car. Unfortunately, many people have drawn theological conclusions from similar experiences. They see animals and people die and they never see anyone or anything live again, so they conclude that when we die, we're done. We'll never run or play again.

But that's not the Christian view of death. We know that the moment Christians die, their souls go immediately to God in heaven. The Book of Ecclesiastes says: "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). St. Paul says: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Philippians 1:23). And the Book of Revelation says: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (Revelation 14:13). Jesus once told a parable about a rich man and Lazarus,

who was poor. Jesus said that when Lazarus died, the angels carried him to Abraham's side (Luke 16:22). And Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43) and to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Death is not the termination of human existence. Death is not the snuffing out of a human being. In fact, when a Christian dies, the angel of death passes over completely. Although we may place the body in the ground the soul of that person is in heaven, with Jesus and the angels and all the saints.

Thanks to Thee, O Christ victorious!  
 Thanks to Thee, O Lord of life!  
 Death hath now no power o'er us,  
 Thou hast conquered in the strife.



When Jesus said from the cross that "It is finished," those words meant that His victory had been completed. When He entered death, Jesus did not enter death in defeat. Instead, Jesus subdued and conquered death. His victory is evident when He dies. We're told in the Gospel of Matthew that when Jesus died, "the tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52-53). Look at the victory Jesus brings with His death. The Son of God dies and believers in Him rise because as Matthew tells us, when Jesus died, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to

bottom" (Matthew 27:51.). This curtain prevented the people from entering the Holy of Holies, which symbolized the presence of God. Now that the Lamb of God had been sacrificed, the curtain was torn from top to bottom because this Lamb had taken away the sins of the world. Now nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord—not even death.

Certainly death cannot separate from the Father the one who has conquered it, namely, Jesus Christ, His only Son. As a conqueror Jesus walks right through death into heaven, which is what we will do because we believe in Jesus. We are covered with the blood of the Passover Lamb. By the power of Jesus' death and resurrection, we will walk right through death into heaven. Finally, on the last day, when our Lord returns to judge the living and the dead, He will raise our bodies to life again. Then our souls and bodies will be reunited, and we will live forever in the kingdom Jesus has prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

Is heaven "the end," for Christians? We cannot use the word *end* to describe our future because there is no end. Our life with Christ and all the saints and angels is eternal. Jesus says: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). He also says: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father; who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27—29). John the Baptist says: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36).

Who can describe how good and kind our God is to His children? Paul reminds us that “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). The glory of what God has prepared for us in heaven is beyond description, but we know one thing. Although there is no “end” for Christians, there will be an end to all worries, temptations, and trials, to all crying and pain. Then

All trials shall be  
like a dream that is past;  
Forgotten all trouble and mourning.  
All questions and doubts  
have been answered at last,  
When rises the light of that morning.

The heavens shall ring  
with an anthem more grand  
Than ever on earth was recorded;  
The blest of the Lord  
shall receive at his hand  
The crown to the victors awarded.

Rev. Daniel Preus, *Why I Am a Lutheran*, pp. 156-163.



## Excursions in Faith

### ◆ Service Times Switch

Please remember that beginning Sunday, May 6, we will change service times for the summer. *Divine Service* will begin at 110am and Bible Study will follow at 12:15PM.

### ◆ The Complete Bach

As I mentioned in the opening article of this newsletter, I have been listening to alot of Bach. That is because I found a great deal on Amazon.com. “The Complete Bach” 155 audio CDs with all of his instrumental, choral and keyboard works, is only \$108 with free shipping!

### ◆ Youth Retreat

We have had a great response to the youth retreat being hosted by Higher Things. At least eight youth from our

dual parish will be going to Jackson on June 8-11 to study and play with other Lutheran youth from across the country.

### ◆ Congregational Work Day

On Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:00AM we will be doing spring cleaning and repair around the church. If you have any tasks that need attention, please indicate them on the back bulletin board. There you can also adopt a task or two as your own. At noon, we will have a pizza lunch during which we will discuss our annual planning calendar. All are invited to bring their ideas for congregational events.

### ◆ Synodical Nominations

The results are in from the synod-wide nominations process for the July convention. Dr. John C. Wohlrabe, Rev. Daniel Preus and Dr. Wallace Schultz join Gerry Kieschnick and William Diekelman on the presidential ballot. Let us pray God’s blessings upon the LCMS as the convention draws near.

### ◆ Baby Shower

On Sunday, May 6, at noon (immediately following the *Divine Service*) we will have a baby shower for Stacy Price. All are welcome to come and participate.



## Down the Path

*The Season of Easter is comprised of a week of weeks. Easter Sunday begins the first week of Easter and the Saturday before Pentecost closes out the seventh week. These forty-nine days of Easter are in perfect symmetry to the forty-nine days from Quinquagesima where we heard, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.”*

*On the fortieth day of this season—always a Thursday—we mark the day when Jesus ascended into heaven to complete His “going to the Father.” After that day, we have a “little lent” for 10 days between Jesus’ Ascension departure and His Pentecost return.*

*This day, the fiftieth day after Easter, begins the time of the Church. It is a time when we observe and rejoice in the risen Christ who continues His*

*saving work among His people to this very day.*

### ◆ Easter Sunday - April 8

Psalm: 118  
Old Testament: Job 19:23–27  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 5:6–8  
Gospel: St. Mark 16:1–8

### ◆ Quasimodo Geniti - April 15

Psalm: 81  
Old Testament: Ezekiel 37:1–14  
Epistle: 1 John 5:4–10  
Gospel: St. John 20:19–31

### ◆ Misericordias Domini - April 22

Psalm: 23  
Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11–16  
Epistle: 1 Peter 2:21–25  
Gospel: St. John 10:11–16

### ◆ Jubilate - April 29

Psalm: 146  
Old Testament: Isaiah 40:25–31  
Epistle: 1 Peter 2:11–20  
Gospel: St. John 16:16–22

### ◆ Cantate - May 6

Psalm: 66  
Old Testament: Isaiah 12:1–6  
Epistle: James 1:16–21  
Gospel: St. John 16:5–15

### ◆ Rogate - May 13

Psalm: 67  
Old Testament: Numbers 21:4–9  
Epistle: 1 Timothy 2:1–6  
Gospel: St. John 16:23–30 (31–33)

### ◆ Ascension - May 17

Psalm: 47  
Old Testament: 2 Kings 2:5–15  
Epistle: Acts 1:1–11  
Gospel: St. Mark 16:14–20

### ◆ Exaudi - May 20

Psalm: 27  
Old Testament: Ezekiel 36:22–28  
Epistle: 1 Peter 4:7–11(12–14)  
Gospel: St. John 15:26–16:4

### ◆ Pentecost - May 27

Psalm: 104  
Old Testament: Genesis 11:1–9  
Epistle: Acts 2:1–21  
Gospel: St. John 14:23–31

