

Easter 5 5/18/14
John 14:1-14 A

“I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.”

In February of 2008, Benjamin Lovell was more than a little surprised when he received his bank statement. That little piece of paper told him he had more money in the bank than he thought. \$5 million dollars more than he had thought. Sensing a mistake, he went to the bank with statement in hand, where he was informed that there was no mistake. He really did have \$5 million dollars in his account and the money was all his, to do with, as he wished.

So Mr. Lovell took the bank at its word. He withdrew some of the money and gave it away. He invested some of it. Altogether, Mr. Lovell went through about \$2 million dollars, which meant he still had \$3 million left. This is where you already know how the story ends. The bank realized they had made a mistake. They had confused two account holders of the same name and this Mr. Lovell did not have \$ 5 million dollars in his account. So, what did that bank do? Well, they didn't say, “All Benjamin Lovell's are the same. All money is the same.” No, the bank didn't say that at all. In fact, even though it was the bank's mistake, Mr. Lovell -- the poorer Mr. Lovell – was arrested and charged with grand theft larceny.

What does this have to do with Jesus' words in our Gospel reading? We live in a world which says that all religions are the same. We all worship the same god, we just call him – or her – by a different name. All religions are just different roads that lead to the same heaven. In our world today, this is the politically correct position to have when it comes to religion.

The amazing thing is ... people aren't so politically correct when it comes to other subjects. Nobody expected the rich Mr. Lovell to be open-minded about his \$5 million dollars the bank gave to the other Mr. Lovell.

If you are sick, does it matter what medicine your doctor gives you? After all, aren't all medicines the same?

Ladies, what if you saw your husband kissing another woman? If you asked him what he was doing and his answer was, "All wives are the same," would you buy it? Maybe it would be more correct to point out that he wouldn't be alive to answer.

Which leads us to our Gospel lesson this Sunday. If one Mr. Lovell is not the same as any Mr. Lovell, if all medicines are not the same, and all wives are not the same, why do so many people persist in holding to the dangerous idea that all religions are the same and they will all take you to the same place? It just isn't so. This is a lie of the devil, the father of all lies, and it leads to hell.

Don't take my word for it. Listen to the words of Jesus, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME."

Religions are different. Again, don't take my word for it. Look at what the religions themselves teach.

Islam doesn't have a Savior. Any number of times in the Koran, Mohammed asks for forgiveness. The best the prophet can do is produce a **five**-fold path which a person is supposed to follow if he is to have any shot at getting into heaven. And, of course, in Islam, since Allah is not bound by any rules and regulations, nobody is given an absolute, iron-clad guarantee that he's going to make it into paradise.

Ask the Buddhist if he has a Savior. If he is true to his faith, he will tell you that he has an **eight**-fold path which eventually, someday, in some way, is supposed to take him to a nirvanic enlightenment which is not much more than a great, non-material, painless nothingness. Because the Buddhist has no Savior, he's forced to work things out on his own.

Ask the Hindu if he will go to heaven when he dies. He is searching for Nirvana ... but without a Savior, he, too, must work things out for himself. Again and again, he must be born in this world; again and again, he must try to do better than he has in the past; again and again he is bound to fail until someday he hopes to get it right and be with Brahm, the all-pervading force of the universe. Will he accomplish it? He hopes, but he can do no more than hope and struggle and strive.

Standing alone and separate from all of the other religions of the

world is Christianity. It stands alone not because of the wisdom or the excellent lives lead by its membership. It stands alone because it follows God's perfect Son and humankind's only Savior. It stands alone because every other religion says we must work our way out of sin to do enough good so that we can make God happy with us. Only Christianity says that we are saved not by our own works, but through faith in Jesus Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We learn this from our *Small Catechism*. Question 186 reads: Why must we firmly hold to this teaching of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith? The answer: We must firmly hold to this teaching because **(A)** it is the most important doctrine of the Christian religion; and **(B)** it distinguishes the Christian religion from false religions, all of which teach salvation by works.

Do you understand what our Catechism is teaching us? God is displeased and will always be disappointed with our feeble attempts at good works. He is dissatisfied with us because He is perfect and we are not. We are sinners. We have, in our words, our thoughts, and our actions fallen far short of the standard He has set for us. We cannot be perfect, like God is perfect.

All of which leads us to conclude we are spiritually sunk. Sunk good and proper and eternally. We are sunk unless and until Someone helps us out. That Someone, My Dear Friends, is Jesus Christ. According to His Father's promise, Jesus entered this world to do that which we could not do. While every religion of the world says we must struggle and strive to reach up to God, God reached down to rescue us in His only-begotten Son. While every other religion says a person must endlessly study and seek to find a path which may lead to God, Jesus comes and announces He is that path which takes all who believe in Him to heaven. While every other religion of the world teaches that its followers must free themselves of their sin, Christianity proclaims that God's Son has taken our sins unto Himself... taken our sins and carried those sins to the cross. There, as He was unjustly crucified, God's innocent Son paid the payment price which would redeemed us. For us and for our salvation, Jesus offered up His life as the sacrifice which would remove our sins and the condemnation which they carried. Then, Jesus did one thing more -- He rose from the dead.

Think upon that for a moment. What other religion in the world can make the claim that its founder has defeated death so all who believe in

Him will rise to eternal life? None can. But, as the prophets predicted, as Jesus Himself promised, three days after His heart had been pierced by a Roman spear, Jesus rose from the grave. He showed Himself alive in the weeks which followed to put to rest any doubt that He was still dead, or His body had been stolen. The resurrection of the Redeemer is proof positive that He is Whom He claims to be: the only Way; the only Truth, the only Life. The resurrection of the Christ is God's guarantee that those who believe in Jesus as the as Savior will not perish but have everlasting life.

Today, the family of Concordia recognizes her 2014 high school graduates, which means I am supposed to have all kinds of wisdom for our graduates. Really, I don't. Just this: Remember your baptism, when God gave you all good gifts in Christ. Remember your confirmation vows, where you promised to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from Jesus Christ. Remember that because Jesus is not just another religious leader. He is the Savior of the world. He is the only path, the only way, to forgiveness and salvation, the only Way to heaven.

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Concordia Lutheran Church

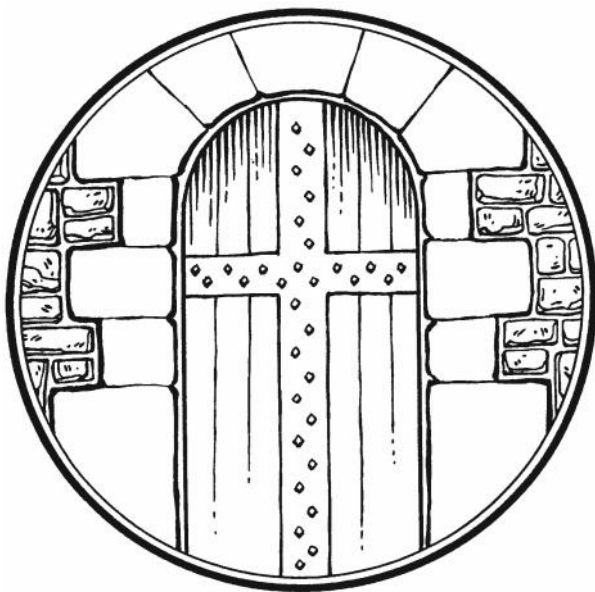
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

May 18, 2014



We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him.

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

Romans 6:9; John 14:23

DIVINE SERVICE Setting One

Hymn of Invocation # 465

Confession & Absolution p. 151

Introit

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
**you restored me to life from among those who go
down to the pit.**

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a
lifetime.

**Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with
the morning.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be
forever. Amen.**

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Kyrie p. 152

This is the Feast p. 155

Salutation & Collect p. 156

O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one
will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded
and desire what You promise, that among the many
changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true
joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and forever.

First Reading: Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60 (ESV)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man

standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Gradual

Christ has risen from the dead.

God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,

He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
he has put all things under his feet.

Epistle Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-10 (ESV)

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Holy Gospel: St. John 14:1-14 (ESV)

[Jesus says] "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Apostles' Creed

p. 159

Hymn of the Day

526

Sermon

The Way, The Truth, and The Life

Prayer of the Church

Offering

“What Shall I Render”	p. 159
Service of the Sacrament	p. 160
Distribution Hymns	# 644, 618, 660
“Thank the Lord”	p. 164
Post-Communion Collect	p. 166
Benediction	p. 166
Closing Hymn	# 722

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ’s Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination’s doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

In our thoughts and prayers,

† For favorable weather, that all agricultural endeavors may result in an abundant harvest.



Stewardship of Offerings and Attendance

Attendance: 171 Offerings: \$3,295.20

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” How often this thought is repeated in the Scriptures! Everything good we have is from God. He loves to give. He loves to bless. He loves to show us generosity time and again—and He desires that we grow into His image, and reflect His love.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Welcome to worship in this season of Easter as we gather to rejoice that Christ has overcome death and the grave and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15). Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon!



Potluck Recognition: Please join us this morning at 10:30 a.m. to honor our 2014 high school graduates, Katlyn Blaisdell, Kylie Scherer, & Leah Voigt.

Please join us for a baby shower honoring Gage Walter Mittelsteadt, the son of Evan Morast & Tiffany Mittelsteadt, this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Everyone is invited to attend and welcome Gage into the family of Concordia.



Everyone is invited to attend and welcome Gage into the family of Concordia.

Council Members, please remember our meeting Wednesday, May 21st, 7:00 p.m.

Vacation Bible School will be June 1-5. Registration sheets are on the table in the social hall.



Please put all completed sheets in Anne Rosenow's mailbox or give them to Pastor Heller. All children are invited to join us!

Parade Float: Several communities in our area, including Beulah, are celebrating their centennials this summer. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the social hall to see if there is interest in Concordia building a float for their centennial parades. For more information, please talk to Ray Sorge.



The May Human Care Project is collecting pasta for Women's Action & Resource Center. Please place your items in the shelf unit in the entry way. Thank you.



† This Week at Concordia †

- Sunday 8:30 am Divine Service
 9:30 am Bible Class
 10:30 am Potluck Brunch Recognition
 11:00 am *Worship @ Glen Ullin*
 2:00 pm Mittelsteadt Baby Shower
- Monday 7:00 pm Sarah Guild
- Tuesday 2:00 pm Bible Class
- Wednesday 7:00 pm Council Meeting
- Sunday 8:30 am Divine Service
 11:00 am *Worship @ Glen Ullin*

Church Office Hours

Monday - Friday 8:30 AM—12:30 PM

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*Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or
Communion attendance this morning.*