

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## ***Topical Bulletin, November 2021***

As Lutheran Christians, we've recently celebrated Reformation Day on this past October 31<sup>st</sup>, while most other people celebrated Halloween – ironically meaning “holy evening” – on which nothing holy is actually recognized, while evil is in fact promoted by those folks who wear costumes of devils, witches, zombies and the like. Satan is surely pleased when Reformation Day and its principals are pushed aside while people celebrate evil. Make no mistake about it, there is nothing good or funny about witches and devils! “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” (Exodus 22:18 KJV) “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:31 KJV) “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12 KJV) “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44 KJV) “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26-27 KJV) The Holy Bible is clear: all evil is to be rejected, not embraced and certainly not celebrated and joked about!

*What are we to do as Christians? Holy Scripture supplies us the answer: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:11 KJV) “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18 KJV) “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9 KJV)*

Each year on October 31<sup>st</sup> it is important that we Christians remember and celebrate Reformation Day, for it was on October 31, 1517 that Martin Luther posted his 95 theses which led to the debate that sparked the Reformation in which the Gospel of Christ was once again prominently proclaimed and the Holy Bible was placed back into the hands of common folks who had been without God's pure Word for a very long time. Let us never take for granted the privilege we have in possessing the pure preserved Holy Word of God for us to read and study. Now that we've entered the month of November we look forward to celebrating the national Thanksgiving holiday here in the United States. We who have the Holy Bible and Luther's doctrine pure certainly owe God much thanks for all that He has done and still does for us. Therefore, it is appropriate that this month's prime topic for consideration is: **O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 107:1 KJV)**

*Comment: Note well to whom Holy Scripture commands us to render thanks: the LORD. Yes, the LORD – that’s “Jehovah” in the original Hebrew, meaning the existing one true God – is to be the one to whom we are to give thanks.*

We will further consider why the LORD is to be thanked by us.

**“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.”  
(Psalm 136:1-4 KJV)**

*Comment: The LORD is marvelously merciful! The LORD is God of gods and Lord of lords, for He alone is the one true God, the Triune God, “For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” (Psalm 96:5-6 KJV) The one true God is indeed the Triune God, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7 KJV) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-3, 14 KJV) “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:19 KJV) So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. [As correctly stated in the Athanasian Creed]*

*The one true God – the Triune God – indeed does great wonders for which we owe Him thanks! “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6 KJV) All creation is God’s wondrous work. “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.” (Psalm 36:6 KJV) Not only did the true God create all things, He also preserves all things. “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.” (Acts 17:24-29 KJV) Note well that the life we have, every breath we take, is a gracious gift of the merciful one true God who created us. Hence, it’s abundantly clear that we owe thanks to the one true God, the LORD of all, the Triune God and no other.*

We owe the LORD God thanks not only because of who He is but also because of what He has done, still does, and will yet do. We’ve already noted a few of the temporal gifts for which we owe God thanks since He is our Maker and Preserver. However, the LORD God provides us with both temporal gifts and

spiritual gifts.

**The LORD is He, “Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.” (Psalm 136:25 KJV)**

*Comment: Crops would not grow without the LORD God providing rain and sunlight at just the right times and in the exact necessary quantities, for, “He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.” (Psalm 104:10-15 KJV) Think about it: vegetables and meats for us to eat are available to us in markets because of the wonderful works of our merciful LORD.*

**“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17 KJV)**

*Comment: The above Bible verse is quite clear in showing us why we owe our heavenly Father thanks. Yes, it is NOT so-called “mother nature” which provides all that we need for this body and life; it is FATHER GOD who provides us with all that we need for this body and life. Oh, Father God not only provides us with temporal blessings but also provides us with very necessary spiritual blessings.*

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18 KJV)**

*Comment: We would all be lost and damned to hell if not for the LORD showing us immeasurable mercy, for God the Father sent His only begotten Son – Jesus Christ – to be our Savior. Jesus has kept God's Law perfectly for us and has paid for our lack of keeping God's Law. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” (Romans 3:19-27 KJV) “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23 KJV) Oh, the LORD is so very merciful!*

*Consider how it is that people come to have faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.*

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10 KJV)**

*Comment: The LORD God by His grace, mercy and power gifts folks with faith in Jesus Christ— the very faith which personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation which Jesus has earned for all people. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18 KJV) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17 KJV) “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17 KJV) “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Corinthians 12:3 KJV) “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13 KJV) *Realize that the beautiful and powerful Gospel of Christ is what God caused to shine brightly once again when He moved His servant Martin Luther to post 95 theses which sparked the Reformation and resulted in the Holy Scriptures being richly restored into the hands of common people.**

Martin Luther surely knew about the thanks we owe to the LORD God. Luther’s explanations of the three articles of the Apostle’s Creed beautifully illustrate the fact:

#### **THE FIRST ARTICLE CREATION**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

*What does this mean?* I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

#### **THE SECOND ARTICLE REDEMPTION**

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

*What does this mean?* I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with

gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

### **THE THIRD ARTICLE SANCTIFICATION**

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

*What does this mean?* I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

[The above three articles of the Apostle's Creed together with their explanations are as printed in Luther's Small Catechism, pgs. 9-11, Concordia Publishing House, 1943 edition]

We ALL have so very much to thank the LORD God for providing us with in both temporal things and spiritual things. Let us pray, praise and give thanks to the LORD God every day and not only on Thanksgiving Day. Let us strive to thank the LORD not only with our lips but with our manner of living by being positive witnesses for Christ, who commands His followers, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 KJV) Yes, **O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 107:1 KJV)**

m.e.l.