**The Festival of Christmas,**

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*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Jesus is God Incarnate to save Men from their Sins.”**

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

**Isaiah 9:6.**

**Introduction**.

When man fell into the everlasting ruin of sin, *God Himself came to the rescue*. The Prophet Isaiah writes that it is the Mighty God Himself who pressed His Almighty Power into the Salvation of men. God pressed His Wonder as the Almighty Creator into the Service of men. God pressed His Counsel, i.e., the Wise Deliberation of the Holy Trinity, into the Service of men. God pressed His Almighty Power into the Service of fallen men. God pressed His Passion into the Service of fallen men when He died on the Cross in order to father men into life everlasting. God pressed His Almighty Power into bringing Peace from God to men in order to save them from their sins.

God continues to press His Almighty Power into the Service of men through the Gospel. Through the Gospel God forgives sin and saves, hence, it is the Power of God unto Salvation, ruling the world with Truth and Grace[[1]](#footnote-1)1.

God Himself came to the rescue of fallen men in the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth is God Almighty Incarnate in order to save men from their sins.

**I. Jesus of Nazareth is God Incarnate to Save Men from their Sins by the Cross.**

**A. Man incurs infinite and everlasting ruin by his sin.**

When man fell into sin, he incurred infinite and everlasting ruin. Man’s sin garnered an infinite and everlasting burden and debt because sin is an offense against an infinite and everlasting Person, namely, God. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Miserable man had angered the infinite God with his sin; therefore, he fell into an infinite evil. Such an infinite evil could be paid for and removed in no in no other way than with the infinite Good. Now then, apart from God nothing is infinitely good. That’s why God became man, so that man be enabled to pay on the strength of the infinite divinity, so that this divine payment avail for the benefit of man on account of the personal union, and so that divine righteousness adequately accomplish this. This is the wondrous accomplishment of divine righteousness and mercy.[[2]](#footnote-2)2

Man’s sin garnered for him everlasting and boundless ruin because sin is an offense against the Almighty God, who is boundless and goes on forever.

**B. God became man to Press His Divine Majesty and Power into the Salvation of men**.

*God Himself came to the rescue with the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem*. The prophet Isaiah writes of the Child born in Bethlehem:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

This Child is the Almighty God born to press His Majesty into the Service of fallen men to save them from sin. Isaiah writes:

... and his name shall be called: Wonderful ... .[[4]](#footnote-4)4

Wonderful is the Name of the Angel of the Lord Who is the Son of God[[5]](#footnote-5)5 and who liberated Israel from Egypt by His Mighty Power. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

... Isaiah calls this little Child which is born to us: **Wonderful**. This Name is taken from the book of Judges 13:18. There the angel of the Lord Himself appears to the wife of Manoah and announces to her the birth of Samson. This same angel was the Son of God, the Angel of the great counsel -- as the seventy translators [of the Septuagint] have in this case rendered this reference of Isaiah, where He Himself is called God. When Manoah asks for the name of this angel, he answers: **Why do you ask for my name, which, of course, is Wondrous?** [[6]](#footnote-6)6

The Son of God now uses His Almighty Power to deliver men from the infinite and everlasting consequences of their sin, the Same Almighty Power He used to deliver Israel from Egyptian tyranny.

This Child is called Counselor because He, in cooperation with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, took counsel to save man and re-create fallen man much as God the Holy Trinity took counsel in the beginning to create man in His Image[[7]](#footnote-7)7. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The reason why this Child, this Son, is also called **Counselor** is that He, in counsel with [the other Persons of] the Holy Trinity, helped reach the conclusion of how fallen mankind could be helped again. The unending righteousness of God was offended by the Fall of Adam. Now then, there was only an unending payment required, which neither angel nor man could provide. Therefore there was no counsel either in heaven or upon earth. Thus, the Son of God, the eternal Wisdom, came up with the counsel that He would volunteer Himself s Mediator and Redeemer, that He especially in the fullness of time wanted to take into Himself human nature and within it make payment of us men.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

This Child the prophet Isaiah calls “the Mighty God” because He is God Incarnate Almighty to bear the infinite and eternal burdens of men to save men from their sins. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Thirdly, Isaiah calls this little Child **Mighty**, or as it is written in the holy language [original Hebrew], **Strong God**. For He it is of whom it is written in Isa. 40:26: **His power and strong might is so great that it fails not in anything**. Psalm 147:5: **Our Lord is great and of great might**. That’s why St. Paul then calls Him divine **Might** and divine **Wisdom** in 1 Cor. 1:24, even as already here Isaiah calls this Child **Counselor** and **Mighty**.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

The prophet Isaiah calls Him “the Everlasting Father” not because of His Person, Jesus is God the Son, but rather because of His Work or Office to father men into life everlasting by His Passion. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Beyond that, He is called Father on account of the new birth, since we are born anew by the power of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 110:3 **Your children are born like the dew from the morning**. Gal. 6:15: **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor foreskin means anything, rather a new creation**. This is also a great comfort, that we know Christ is our eternal Father; that’s why we also become His children eternally through faith.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

The prophet calls Jesus “the Prince of Peace”, as He has been called from antiquity1[[11]](#footnote-11)1, because He brings peace with God through the forgiveness of sins won for us on the Cross. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Isaiah finally calls this Child **Peace Prince**, [a term] taken from Psalm 72:7: **At its proper time righteousness and great peace will blossom** etc. For we are once again reconciled wit God through this Child (2 Cor. 5:18). **For He is our peace** (Eph. 2:14).1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

Whereas God and the hosts of heaven were man’s enemies because of sin, God brings peace with God through the Cross of Christ and the angels, formerly man’s fierce enemies, sheath their celestial swords and become preachers of the Gospel at the order of their Commander1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 lying in the manger in Bethlehem.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4 The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

The prophet Isaiah teaches us that God used His Majesty, His Wondrous Person, His Counsel, and His Might, to bring Peace between God and men and, thereby, save men from sin and father men in life everlasting.

**II. Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate God, Rules the World with the Grace of the Gospel, the Power of God unto Salvation.**

**A. Jesus of Nazareth Rules the world Graciously through the Gospel.**

Jesus of Nazareth, God Incarnate, continues to work in behalf of men by ruling the world Graciously through the Gospel. The prophet Isaiah writes in today’s Old Testament reading:

Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

The prophet Isaiah writes of Christ’s Government being a Government of Peace, namely, the Peace of the Gospel. Zechariah writes of Jesus’ Gracious Reign over the nations:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He *is* just, and [being saved 1[[17]](#footnote-17)7]; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

This Peace Jesus speaks to the nations is the Absolution of all sins, i.e., the Gospel. The Apostle St. John writes:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

Luther writes of Christ’s Gracious Rule through the Peace of the Gospel -- hence, Christ is the Prince of Peace, as the Prophet Isaiah records:

*And he* [Jesus] *shall teach peace to the Gentiles*. It is for this reason that He will need neither chariot, nor horse, nor bow, nor battle. For He will be a “Prince of Peace,” as Is. 9:6 also says; and this peace is to be not only among the Jews, of whom only a few will accept it, but also among the Gentiles. *His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*. These words are taken from Ps. 72:8, so that one may see that the psalm is not to be understood as referring to Solomon, ... but to Christ Himself: “from one sea” -- that is, from the Dead Sea in Judea -- “to all other seas” round about; and “from the River” -- the Jordan -- “to the ends of the earth.” For His kingdom began in Judea, where the Dead Sea and the Jordan are, and from there spread about into all the world.2[[20]](#footnote-20)0

This Gracious Rule of Christ we sing about in the Christmas hymn *Joy to the World*:

He [Jesus] rules the world with truth and grace ... .2[[21]](#footnote-21)1

**B. Jesus’ Gracious Reign showers unending Gifts upon men, including the gift of life everlasting.**

Jesus’ Gracious Reign showers upon men the Gifts of the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, the resurrection of the body, and all the gifts found in the boundless treasures of heaven.The Apostle St. Paul writes of the Great Christmas Gift of the Gospel:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.2[[22]](#footnote-22)2

Luther writes of the Christmas Gift of the Gospel:

Rom. 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?” These words are beyond evaluation and incomprehensible. The Gift that has been given is very great, except that it is not yet revealed. Eternal life is not as great as Christ. From the very magnitude of the Gift I have received I perceive the greatness of the gift which God has yet to give.2[[23]](#footnote-23)3

**Conclusion**.

*God Himself came to sinful man’s rescue*. God Pressed His Wondrous Person, the Wise Counsel of the Holy Trinity, His Almighty Power, and His Passion to bring Peace to men with God and, thereby, father them into life everlasting.

Jesus continues to work in behalf of men through His Gracious Reign of the Nations through the Gospel. Through the Gospel Jesus showers upon men the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, the resurrection of the body, and the boundless gifts of heaven.

***Amen.***

1. 1“He rules the world with truth and grace ... .” Joy to the World, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, #87. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. David O. Berger, Decatur, IL: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, pp. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Isaiah 9:6.** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4**Isaiah 9:6**. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5“Jesus appears as God on the pages of the Old Testament. He reveals Himself under such titles as ‘the Angel of the Lord,’ ‘Jehovah,’ ‘Lord,’ etc. Whenever in the Old Testament the name ‘Lord’ occurs, it is pre-eminently not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God. Ex. 13:21 Moses writes of the Israelites in the wilderness: ‘And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.’ Who is this ‘Lord’? Ch. 14:19 He is called ‘the Angel of God,’ which is a well-known appellation of Jesus in the Old Testament. Here the Angel of God is directly termed ‘Lord.’ All doubt is removed by Paul (I Cor. 10:3-4): ‘Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; *and that Rock was Christ*.’ ... Which person of the Godhead summoned Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai and gave him the two tables of the Law? Again it was the Son of God. The evidence is presented in the Ascension Psalm 68; vv. 7-8, and 17-18. And all doubt is excluded by Heb. 12:18-26, especially v. 24. ... Luther writes: ‘The God who led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea; who went before them in a pillar of a cloud and of fire; who nourished them with bread from heaven and did all the miracles which Moses relates in his books; again, who brought them into the land of Canaan and gave them kings and the priesthood and everything, is this God and none other than Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s, the Virgin’s, Son, whom we Christians call our God and Lord ... . Again, He it is who on Mountain Sinai gives Moses the Ten Commandments ... Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross is the God who says in the First Commandment: “I, the Lord, am thy God.” ... .’ So then, the same God on Sinai and Calvary. What comfort for the believers! Now the flames of Sinai can no longer fill us with terror. Indeed, we daily transgress the holy Law of Sinai, but we break through its condemnation and flee to the Redeemer on Calvary, who Himself fulfilled the Law for us and paid its penalty.” The Rev. Louis E. Roehm, *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946, pp. 20, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, Decatur, IL: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, pp. 72, 73.

   “Thus we who believe the Word of God are the church. We have a most certain promise, into which we have been called and baptized, and by which we are nourished and sustained; we have the Sacrament of the Altar and the power of the Keys. But we are not Christians and have not been baptized in order that we may get possession of this land. Nor have we been baptized and born again into this life; we have been baptized and born again into eternal life. But what happens in regard to us too? Surely this, that when the church must be glorified and brought to those eternal joys which it awaits in the Word and in hope, then it is subjected to countless persecutions of tyrants and devils; it is harassed and torn by false brethren in many most pitiable ways. This is not what being led to eternal life means, is it? Indeed, it means being exposed to eternal misery. Yet hearts must be buoyed up and strengthened against this way of the cross. For we have the Word and the promise. Therefore the glory that has been promised is sure to follow. And meanwhile the church lives and is preserved by faith, which concludes firmly that GOD does not lie. And it learns this wonderful wisdom which is hidden from the flesh and reason, namely, that God is wonderful in His saints (Ps. 68:35) and that His counsels are wonderful. This is also why our Lord and Leader Jesus Christ has His name and is called WONDERFUL in Is. 9:6.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 185, 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7“**113. What was the image of God?** The image of God consisted in this – A. That man *knew God* and was *perfectly happy* in such knowledge. 263 [Ye] have put on the new man, which is renewed in *knowledge* after the *image of Him that created him*. *Col. 3:10*B. That man was *perfectly holy* and blessed. 264 Put on the new man, which *after God* is created in *righteousness and true holiness*. *Eph. 4:24****.*** ... **114. Does man still bear the image of God?** Man *lost* the image of God when he *fell into sin*. In *believers*, a *beginning* of its renewal is made. Only in *heaven*, however, will this image be *fully* restored. 265 [Adam] begat a son *in his own likeness*, after his image. *Gen. 5:3****.*** ... 266 I will *behold Thy face in righteousness*; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, *with Thy likeness*. Ps. 17:15.” *The Small Catechism*, pp. 96, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Decatur: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, pp. 75, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Decatur: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Decatur: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, p. 78, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.” **Genesis 49:10**. “Luther evidently derives *shiloh* from the root *shalah*, meaning to be secure and at ease or rest, which in turn is related to the Hebrew greeting *shalom*, which corresponds to the Latin greeting *salve*, both meaning your health, peace, welfare, and prosperity.” Walter I. Brand, editor, Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 45, p. 216, footnote 33.

    Even the liberal interpreters C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch concur with Luther based on Hebrew usage: “It only remains therefore to follow *Luther*, and trace [Shiloh] from [shalah], to be quiet, to enjoy rest, security.” *Commentary on the Old Testament, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Volume 1, The Pentateuch, Three Volumes in One, ... Genesis, Exodus 1-11*, tr. James Martin, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, First Printing, February 1989, p. 394.

    “Out of Judah should come the Ruler, the Bringer of Peace, Shiloh, unto Him should the gathering of the people be. Gen. 49, 10.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Decatur: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996,p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13“Here is reported of a wonderful appearance which Joshua experienced. By Jericho he saw a Man with a bared sword. He was Captain of the army of the Lord, which is the host of angels. This was the Angel of the Lord, who was of [one] essence with God, the faithful Angel of the covenant, the Son of God who led Israel all the way from Egypt and from Sinai. he will now with His heavenly host go before the army of Israel and help them in their victory over their enemies. This is a title that is becoming to Christ to this day, because He is the Captain of the army of the Lord. With his host of angels He camps about those that fear him, and fights for His Church against the world and evil.” *Wisdom for Today, Volume I, The Biblical History of the Old Testament*, tr. the Rev. Arthur E. Beck, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, p. 160, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14“Of course, there was a glorious peace between God and men in the beginning, between the angels and men, between men and all creatures. God spoke with man in friendship, the angels gladly associated with man, and all creatures were obedience to man; but [these conditions] didn’t last long. As the Devil toppled men into sin, God became his enemy, and contrarily man became God’s enemy; he fled from God and no longer regarded Him as Father. The angels also no longer wanted to be man’s friend. Instead, cherubim with a sharp sword were placed in front of the garden to scare off man (Gen. 3:24). Indeed, all creatures became man’s enemy because he was God’s enemy.” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Decatur: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**St. Luke 2:9-14**. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16**Isaiah 9:7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**Zechariah 9:9**, translation is mine. “[be saved] is the only correct translation and suits the context. ... literally, being saved, unfailingly delivered. So He is already presented in the word of prophecy. See Is. 53:8; Ps. 22, where He, forsaken of God, cries to God for deliverance (vv. 1, 2, 8, 11-21), confesses that from His mother’s womb He depended on God’s aid (v. 9 f.), and in answer to His prayer is delivered (vv. 21b-25). See also Matt. 26:38 ff.; Luke 12:50; 22:41 ff.; 23:46; John 11:41f.; 12:27 ff.; Heb. 5:7-9. Even though He was forsaken of God for a little while, He was delivered from the depths of hell, was crowned with honor and glory in answer to His prayer (Heb. 2:9 f).” The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 454.

    “The question arises: *In Zech. 9:9, why is the Messiah not called* [Savior] *in the active sense, but* ... *‘saved,’* *in the passive sense*? We respond: ... Christ is not only ‘Savior’ but is also Himself ‘saved.’ That is, because He wished to redeem us with His suffering and death, and descended into the depths of our wretchedness, therefore it was necessary that he be saved first, so that, having been saved, he might be able to save us too. ‘I looked around, but there was no helper; I was in anxiety, and there was no one to help’ (namely, among men). ‘My own arm’ (the power of My divinity) ‘has saved Me, and My anger’ (or zeal) ‘has helped Me’ (Isa. 63:5).” *Loci Theologici* ... *On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009 p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18**Zechariah 9:9-10**, translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**St. John 20:21-23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 288, 289, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 21*The Lutheran Hymnal*, #87, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 22**Titus 3:4-7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 23*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 28, p. 247, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)