**The Festival of Christmas Eve,**

24 December 2021.

 *Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ was Born to Give Men the Gift of the Gospel through which comes the Gift of Life Everlasting.”**

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS:

for he shall save his people from their sins.

**St. Matthew 1:21**.

**Introduction**.

 Christ was born to give men the Gift of the Gospel through which comes the Gift of life everlasting.

 All men are bereft of life everlasting because of the fall of Adam into sin. Christ gives to all men made mortal by sin immortality by first removing the cause of immortality, sin, by Atoning for the source of mortality, sin, on the Cross.

 Finally, Christ lived a holy and rich life for all men that He might bequeath it to them His Everlasting Wealth through His Passion.

 All these Blessings of Christ’s Passion become ours by the Bequest of Christ, which is the Gospel and faith.

 Christ was born on Christmas in order to give to men the Gift of Life Everlasting through Gift of the Gospel.

**I. Christ is Born to Give Life Everlasting.**

**A. Men are not created and born to die.**

The popular understanding of man is that he is born to die. What on earth would give the majority of people that irrational understanding of life? The world does. Men don’t rely on God’s Word but look at the world about them and conclude that the purpose of life is death because everyone dies. What an absurd conundrum! The purpose of life is the opposition to life, namely, death? Or as one popular drama claimed, death gives life its point. Really? This absurdity, however, is what man is reduced to if relies on reason unaided by the revelation of Holy Scripture.

 Man is not born to die but rather to live a blissful, rich, and glorious life with God his Creator forever -- not sorrow or death. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

God created man in His own, in the divine image, in order that one of His creatures 1) would know Him, live in conformity with His will, and in communion with Him enjoy bliss, an 2) would rule over the other creatures as His representative.[[1]](#footnote-1)1

 Knowing God, following God’s wise will, and bliss -- what has this to do with sorrow and death? Nothing. From where, then, did sorrow and death vis a vis God and life in general arise? It arose not from God but from man. Man rejected all good gifts and accepted instead the poison, sin, and death of the devil. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... .[[2]](#footnote-2)2

 Man was not created nor born to die. What folly would put that forth? Rather man was created and born to enjoy the rich life with God forever. Man, for reasons inexplicable, forfeited that for life with the devil and his false doctrine that simply embitters and impoverishes souls forever.

 **B. Christ is born to give men life everlasting.**

Christ, however, was not born to die nor was He born for Himself but rather He was born to Gift men fallen in sin and death with the Gift of life everlasting. Jesus says:

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

Giving life more abundantly Christ accomplished by saving men from their sins. The Evangelist St. Matthew writes:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.[[4]](#footnote-4)4

 Christ saved men from sin and death by giving of Himself. In the first place, Christ lived a perfectly holy life for all men so that all men would gain this holiness and with it the Gift of everlasting life. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adaption of sons.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

 Finally, Christ gave to men the Gift of life everlasting by shouldering the consequences of our breaking the law, of our sin. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I delivered unto you first all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ... .[[6]](#footnote-6)6

 Christ was born and given to men in order to give men fallen in sin the Gift of life everlasting. This Gift is the First and Greatest Gift of Christmas and teaches us of the great gifts to come forever. Luther writes:

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 [Christ] I perceive the greatness of the gift which God has yet to give.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

**II. Christ Gives Men the Gift of Life Everlasting through the Gift of the Gospel.**

**A. The Gospel Gives the Gift of the Saving Work of the Passion of Christ**.

 The Second Great Gift of Christmas is the Gospel. Many folks focus on Christ as the Great Gift of Christmas. Yet, how would we know of the Gift of Christ were He and His Work revealed to us in the Gospel? We wouldn’t. Hence, the Gospel is a Great Gift of the Christmas. The Apostle St. Paul writes of the Gospel revealing to us Christ’s Saving Work for us:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?[[8]](#footnote-8)8

The Lutheran Church confesses:

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

 **B. The Gospel gives the Gift of Life Everlasting.**

Through the Gift of the Gospel comes to men the Gift of Life Everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes of the Gift of the Gospel giving to men the Gift of Life Everlasting and the resurrection of the body on the Last Day:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection ... .1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

The Lutheran Church confesses that the Gift of the Gospel bestows upon men the Gift of Life Everlasting:

Therefore every Christian has enough in Baptism1[[11]](#footnote-11)1 to learn and to practise all his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Ghost with His gifts. In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature could realize it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich no one could find access! But here in Baptism there is brought free to every one’s door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys1[[12]](#footnote-12)2 death and preserves all men alive.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3

Luther describes the Gospel as the Genuine Fountain of Youth:

The second part, God’s Word beside and with the water, which is not something we have invented or dreamed up, but is rather the Word of Christ, who said, “Go into all the world and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Matt. 28:19]. When these words are added to the water, then it is no longer simple water like other water, but a holy, divine, blessed water. For where the Word of God, by which he created heaven and earth and all things, is present, there God himself is present with his power and might. ... Therefore it is such a potent fountain of youth that it causes a man to be born again, washes away an drowns every sin within him.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

**Conclusion**.

 While all too many folks don’t think of it, *the Great Gift of Christmas is the Gospel*. The Gospel is the Great Gift of Christmas because the Gift of the Gospel brings to us Christ and all the Blessings of His Passion.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

 Because the Gift of the Gospel brings to us Christ and all the Blessings of His Passion, the Gospel men the Gift of Life Everlasting.

 ***Amen.***

1. 1The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 523. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2**Romans 5:12**. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**St. John 10:10**. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4**St. Matthew 1:21**. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Galatians 4:4-7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**I Corinthians 15:3**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7*Luther's Works,* Vol. 28, p. 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8**Romans 10:13-14**. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9*The Large Catechism*, **Part Second, Of The Creed, Article III**.38-39, *Triglotta*, 689. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10**Romans 6:3-4**, **5**. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11Holy Baptism is the Gospel. “But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our hearts, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a Sacrament is a *visible* *word*, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article XIII (VII): Of the Number and Use of the Sacraments**.5, *Triglotta*, p. 309, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12Verschlingt, absorbet, devour, swallow. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13*The Large Catechism*, **Part Fourth, Of Baptism**.41-43, *Triglotta*, p. 743. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 52, pp. 320, 328, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15“[H]oly baptism was purchased for us through this same blood, which was shed for us and with which he paid for sin. This blood and its merit and power he put into baptism, in order that in baptism we might receive it. For whenever a person receives baptism in faith this is the same as if he were visibly washed and cleansed with the blood of Christ. For we do not attain the forgiveness of sins through our work, but rather through the death and the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. *But he takes this forgiveness of sin and tucks it into baptism*.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 51, p. 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)