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**Sunday 5 March 2023 to Sunday 12 March 2023**

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Sunday 5 March 2023

**Jesus – the door**

by Rev Antonio Reyes, President of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines

**I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9).**

Read John 10:1–9

A door is very important. It gives access to those coming and going out of a building. A door protects and keeps unwanted people and danger out of your home.

In John 10:9, Christ calls himself the door. What does this mean? This means that Christ Jesus alone provides access to eternal life. After the fall of man into sin, heaven’s door was closed to humanity. Only the door to damnation was open. In fact, ‘there seems to be a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death’ (Proverbs 14:12). In our hopeless condition, when heaven’s door was closed, God poured out his love for us. He sent his only Son, Jesus, to save us lost and condemned sinners.

Through Christ Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection, he defeated death, sin and Satan, who is the door to hell. Jesus’ resurrection on the third day opened the door to heaven for us – the entrance to the presence of God. Eternal life is ours right now through faith in Jesus, our only door to that life. Jesus is the only way … no-one can come to the Father except through him.

On Good Friday, when Jesus committed his Spirit into the hands of the Father, the curtain of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:45,46). The curtain was torn from top to bottom and not from bottom to top. Hence, it was God’s action that opened the door to heaven for us. So, any effort of humans to reach out to God by doing good works is futile and cannot gain entry through the only door to heaven. For it is only through faith in Jesus, who is the door, that we can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life and thus entry to heaven. Through faith in Jesus, our door, we now also have access to the Father as we call on him in prayer and as he answers us through his word.

The forty days of the Lenten season are a call to repentance and remembrance – remembrance of the love of God poured out for us through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross to pay for our sins. His resurrection, which brings eternal life to us, proved that his perfect sacrifice was accepted by the Father. This season also helps us remember to be repentant, reminding us of our sins, our mortality and appreciation for what Jesus, our door, has done and is still doing for us through the word and sacraments.

May God, the Holy Spirit, help us celebrate the Lenten season in a meaningful way. In Jesus’ name!

***Heavenly Father, we pray for the Lutheran Church in the Philippines as it commits to strengthening and equipping God’s people in the areas of witness, worship, fellowship, nurture and service. Amen.***

*The devotions from this week are taken from LCA International Mission’s* 40 Days – A Lenten Devotion and Prayer Guide. *They are written by a variety of people who are connected with LCA International Mission. Some are LCANZ members who support International Mission in different ways, and others are from partner churches throughout the region. You can download the full prayer guide from the International Mission website:* [*https://lcamission.org.au/join-gods-mission/pray/*](https://lcamission.org.au/join-gods-mission/pray/)

Monday 6 March 2023

**Jesus – freedom**

by Yin Dara, Treasurer, Lutheran Association of Cambodia

***Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).***

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1–17

Nowadays we are living in the world that is full of sin. As we are Christians, we live in the way that is led by the Holy Spirit, but every day we always do something – big or small – that is opposite to God’s will. But the question is, does God take the salvation away from us? Does God take the true love from us? The answer is no. In the book of John, we are told, ‘for God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him’ (John 3:16,17).

In the traditional faith of Cambodian people, we believe in souls. For example, we believe that the soul of our parent is still in the world – they stay around to help us and sometimes we pray for help from those souls. Another example is that if our siblings say some bad words to each other (quarrel with each other), something bad may appear in the family such as sickness or accident, something like that. (There are many other examples that are difficult to explain.) I observe so many non-Christians trying to do many things to protect themselves. So many people live in fear because they have a spirit of fear, they have no freedom.

But for us, as Christians, we are free. We are not afraid. I believe that the Holy Spirit leads me through his way. 'For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control' (2 Timothy 1:7). So, I encourage all of you. Our Lord of Lords, King of Kings – everything is from him, every moment is in his hands, and he knows our steps. Trust him, give your life, your soul to him, please let him lead. A father never gives a stone when his child asks for bread. If you do fear, pray to God; if you are unhappy, pray to God; if you feel alone, pray to God. He hears your voice, and he always helps. He is with us every moment, everywhere we go, Amen.

***Spirit of God, bless the Lutheran Church in Cambodia’s ministry through agricultural projects, as they build deeper relationships with people in the community and provide ways for financially supporting families. Amen.***

Tuesday 7 March 2023

**Jesus – mediator**

by Cathryn Zarnke, English lecturer, Martin Luther Seminary in Papua New Guinea

***For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).***

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–6

Paul wrote this instructional letter for Timothy to give to the church at Ephesus. He wanted to stress the great importance of pure doctrine in the faith and life of the church. He linked the truth of God’s word to salvation, emphasising that there is only one God and that, in him, they have their only mediator. This God is also the man Jesus Christ, the only man who is able to negotiate with God on their behalf so that they can be found justified. This was counter to some ideas circulating at the time.

Paul was keen to preserve the true proclamation of the church there in the face of pre-Gnosticism. This idea denied Christ as the sole mediator between God and humans. It proposed that through mystical searching, personal revelation of God could occur that added to, or opposed, the faithful teaching of the church. This sort of teaching was not only evident then, but is also popular today.

Have you ever believed that God spoke to you in a dream or that you know God through nature? This happens from time to time for some, and while we may feel close to God through these experiences, they must be tested with Scripture and be subservient to it. It is only through Christ in the objective word and sacrament ministry of the church that the Father has promised to reveal himself and his great love for us, not through mystical experiences. Timothy provides certainty for us, reminding us that there is only one mediator, one person, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who negotiates on our behalf.

We experience God through the Son, assurance of the forgiveness of sins through his perfect death, and salvation because of Christ’s advocacy. We are justified because it is Jesus Christ who speaks for us and died and rose again for us. Even though we have sinned against God by neglecting this word or believing ideas that deny its truths, we are forgiven because of what he has done for us.

***Jesus, our Mediator, we pray for Cathryn Zarnke, as she teaches English to the students at the Martin Luther Seminary so that they will be equipped for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.***

Wednesday 8 March 2023

**Jesus – sacrifice**

by Rt Rev Thomas Low, Bishop, Lutheran Church in Malaysia

***Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:1,2).***

Read Ephesians 5:1,2,6–14

Loving someone and giving of oneself to that someone is a mark of genuine love. We cannot claim to love someone and remain passive. That love is merely an idea or intention. It is conceived but not born. Unless love is birthed, it has no reality. At best, it is just a ‘feel-good’ experience within us.

To love someone necessitates giving part of ourselves to the beloved, otherwise our giving is just a set of actions, fulfilment of a duty, completion of an event.

As a parent, I can give time, effort and financial resources to my daughter without loving her. I wake up at 6am, get her ready for school, spend 20 minutes on the road, and drop her off. Then I fetch her home, feed her and put her to bed. I have fulfilled my duty as a parent and I can do so without ‘heart’. Yes, it involves sacrifice of time and resources but, without adding my ‘self’ to the task, it is not love, just duty. When I give of my ‘self’ to the task it becomes life-giving, life-changing and life-affirming.

I wake up at 6am and urgently get her up because I do not want her to be late and suffer the consequences. While she is still half-asleep brushing her teeth, I am rushing to get her breakfast ready because I do not want her to spend the morning in school feeling hungry. I get anxious when the traffic is slow to school. She gets out of the car and waves goodbye with a smile, assured that I will be there again when school is done. When I collect her from school she will talk non-stop about her day – about friends, teachers, what she has learnt, how she has been good or bad, followed by streams of questions. She will make fun of me, and I her. There will be laughter, shared joys and sometimes, tears and anger. I live a busy life with so many people and things requiring my attention but I can make sure that in those moments, however brief and routine, I can always give of my ‘self’ to her and she returns the same. Such sacrifices become life-giving, life-changing and life-affirming.

Our Lord Jesus’ love for us involves him giving himself totally to us, even to the point of death. His love is one of self-giving that begat in us a life of forgiveness, joy and hope. Let us be mindful of all our relationships that God has gifted us with. Life is precious and fragile. Handle with care. Let us love by giving of our ‘self’ just as Jesus did and just as Jesus did, make a difference in all our relationships.

***Loving Saviour, we pray for those serving the Lutheran Church in Malaysia, as they nurture, equip, care for and help their members grow spiritually and draw closer to God. Amen.***

Thursday 9 March 2023

**Jesus – the way, the truth, the life**

by Gillian Heintze, member, LCA International Mission committee

***Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6).***

Read John 14:1–7

Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room celebrating the Passover. He had washed their feet, an evening meal had been served, and the Lord’s Supper (as it is now known) celebrated. Then Jesus tells his disciples that he will be betrayed by one of them and that he is going to die. The disciples become distressed and, to comfort them, Jesus says these amazing words, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me’**.** Jesus’ words are striking and memorable. He doesn't say, ‘I am a way, and a truth, and a life’.

Very directly he says that he is ‘the one and only way’ to salvation; for all people to get to the Father. Jesus died on the cross at Calvary where his shed blood and selfless sacrifice broke the barrier between sinful us and the holy God.

Jesus Christ is ‘the truth’ who opens up our understanding of God and gives us knowledge of God – a truth that has parts that seem silly to our so-called ‘wisdom’. Jesus not only teaches the truth, but he is the truth, as he is both God and man when he took on human form more than 2000 years ago.

Jesus Christ is ‘the life’ who breathes his own resurrected life into our fallenness, through faith. Every person is born spiritually dead in trespasses and sin, incapable of saving themselves or of communicating with a holy God. But Christ is the source of all spiritual life and in him is eternal life for all who trust in him. As we are reborn in holy baptism and granted the gift of faith in him, we are made a new creation in Christ. It is by faith in him that the Spirit of God lives within us now and throughout eternity.

Jesus said ‘No-one comes to the Father except through me’. There is no other way to God; no other truth about God; and no other life apart from God, than that which is revealed in Jesus.

So, how can we know ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’?

1. Be in daily prayer with God.
2. Daily read his word and make it a part of our lives.
3. Seek out Christian fellowship.

The above is like taking medicine – do it daily and your spiritual life will be nourished.

***Lord of the Harvest, we pray for LCA International Mission committee, as they promote awareness of, interest in, and support for, the work of LCA International Mission. Amen.***

Friday 10 March 2023

**Jesus – Saviour**

by Pfarrer (Pastor) Hans-Georg Tannhäuser, Acting Director of Secretary Asia Pacific Desk, Evangelisch–Lutherisches Missionswerk Leipzig e. V. in Germany

**… the power of God … has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8b,10).**

Read 2 Timothy 1:3–10

A rescuer intervenes in a life-threatening situation. They have only one aim in mind: to preserve life. In doing so, the rescuer enters risky situations to help, often not thinking of themselves.

There are several occupations whose task it is to help and save people in need: paramedics, members of mountain rescue services, lifeguards, accident rescue services, sea rescue and so on.

There are many examples of rescuers, such as firefighters, who risk their own lives to save people from burning houses, often suffering serious injuries themselves. The images and reports from the World Trade Centre are still present – even after more than 20 years – of how New York firefighters saved people's lives. Without this effort, many more people would have perished. If sea rescuers had ignored or not heard SOS calls, many more people would have been casualties when ships sank. Again, rescuers did not hesitate to intervene.

The first Christians had a secret symbol by which they communicated with each other and encouraged one another during the time of persecution in the Roman Empire: the fish. The word for this fish in Greek is *Ichthys,* which means Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour. Paul also used this term in his letter to Timothy to describe the meaning of Jesus, as we read in 2 Timothy 1:10.

What is the term ‘Saviour’ all about? Jesus – the Saviour. So much resonates with this word that makes us grateful and happy.

The Son of God did not hesitate to put his own life on the line to enable us to live a full life, his own death taking away the power of death over us humans. Golgotha was the commitment of Jesus the Saviour. Easter morning showed the fruit of that commitment. It was worth it. Christ brought to light an incorruptible being. Christ's act of salvation was not in vain. In the end, death can no longer harm us. The first Christians knew this during their persecution and we must always be aware of this in the daily challenges of today's world, no matter on which continent we live. Amen.

***Saviour God, we pray for the Leipziger Missionswerk, as they manage the foreign partnerships of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony and the Evangelical Church in Central Germany with Tanzania, Tamil Nadu (India) and Papua New Guinea.***

Saturday 11 March 2023

**Jesus – resurrection**

by Rev Haraneath Singh, Pastor, Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Singapore

***Jesus said to her, ‘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 11:25,26a).***

Read John 11:17–27

Jesus’ resurrection is the most important event in human history! No other person in history has risen from the dead to live forever. Jesus’ resurrection is therefore proof that he is God Almighty. Jesus’ resurrection is also proof that God has accepted his sacrifice for our sins. In Lent we remember the love of God that is poured out through Jesus on the cross in his death and defeat of death, sin and Satan through his resurrection.

In today’s verse, Jesus is declaring to Martha, whose brother had died, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Martha believed that Jesus could have healed her brother who was sick, because she had seen and heard about Jesus healing others. Even though he loved Lazarus, Jesus purposely delayed going to Martha’s house after he heard Lazarus was sick. While Jesus was still travelling, Lazarus died. Martha and Mary must have been deeply disappointed. When he finally arrived, they said to him, ‘Lord, if you have been here Lazarus would not have died’.

God’s delays are not his denials. Jesus delayed his arrival at Martha and Mary’s house so that he could reveal himself further to them. He wanted to show them that he is not only the healer of all ills, but also the resurrection and the life. He is the only one who has and can conquer death.

Jesus proved that he is the resurrection and the life when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus had been dead for four days and had started to decompose, however, that was not an obstacle for our Lord Jesus. He commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Lazarus was brought to life and came out of the tomb. Martha and Mary saw the power of our Lord Jesus over death and were comforted to have their brother alive again.

We who believe in Jesus by his grace, also experience a spiritual resurrection. In our baptism we were buried with Christ into his death and were raised to new life in him, just as Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus is our resurrection and life too! And when our Lord Jesus Christ will come again at the last day, then we will experience a bodily resurrection, for he is the resurrection and the life.

Jesus as the resurrection is such a comfort for us because we all will experience death and have loved ones who pass away. Because Jesus is the resurrection, we are assured that we will live forever with God and one another in bliss and joy. What a blessing Jesus the resurrection gives us! Amen.

***Resurrected Jesus, we pray for the Lutheran Church in Singapore, as they continue to work as one body to promote the development of the church ministries and in so doing, attract the younger generation to revitalise the church.***

Sunday 12 March 2023

**Living water**

by Chelsea Pietsch

### *Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst (John 4:13,14a).*

Read John 4:5–42

It’s a scorcher today in Adelaide. I’m pouring drinks left, right and centre and thinking about Jesus in this passage asking the woman at the well for a drink.

The woman is surprised that Jesus is speaking to her, as she was a Samaritan. Yet Jesus is not concerned that her nationality differs from his. He’ll talk to anyone.

Perhaps Jesus is not thirsty after all; he seems more interested in making conversation with the woman. He wants to tell her about a source of water that never runs dry.

Naturally, the woman is interested. She’s also perplexed. Why is this man, who apparently has access to an eternal well, asking her for a drink in the first place?

Jesus, however, is not just talking about water as we know it – H2O – he is talking about living water; water that will quench the thirst of our souls.

We might have all that the world gives and yet still, we thirst. St Augustine once wrote that ‘Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God’. Don’t we know that to be true!

But what is this eternal or living water of which Christ speaks? What is this spring that will bubble up to eternal life?

Rev J Darsow, whom some of you may know as the author of the Australian Lutheran devotional ‘Strength for the Day’ once wrote:

‘The water of life is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This restores and satisfies the soul, and quenches its thirst. It is offered freely in the gospel of Christ, which tells of the streams of love that flow from the Father’s heart, and assures us that in Christ, who has reconciled us sinners to God, there is forgiveness, life, and peace.’

Are you thirsty? The Holy Spirit is calling you to come to Jesus. Repent of trying to quench your thirst with lifeless idols. Come, drink, and live!

**Oh Jesus, how I thirst! Lead me to your waters and give to me that which the world cannot give. Amen.**

*Chelsea Pietsch is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide. She is married with two children and a consultant to Lutherans for Life (*[*www.lutheransforlife.lca.org.au*](http://www.lutheransforlife.lca.org.au)*).*