

LIFE LINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Last month I wrote on the importance of presenting the Gospel to unbelievers in a way that makes them want to believe. If the person you are hoping to win over for Christ, is someone who is set against Christianity, then this initial Gospel presentation is essential. If they already have it in mind that Christianity and Christians are awful, then no matter what you say, no argument or evidence you present will ever be heard. Before you can explain why Christianity is true and begin to deal with the person's objections, you first have to get them open to the idea that if Christianity is true, it is beautiful. They have to look at the forgiveness, life, and salvation that is offered in Jesus and say, "This is what is missing in my life. That is what I have been longing for. This would be great, if it were true."

Once someone comes to the conclusion that life with Christ offers them something desirable; the work of evangelism often moves to the field of apologetics. Even though people may want to believe and may find the Gospel attractive, they may still find it unbelievable. In their minds there are too many reasons why it just doesn't make sense. At this point, to them it's just a good story, but one they cannot accept as true. Different people cite different reasons for their objections to Christ, but most of the objections people give come down to only a handful of things.

A popular article written 50 years ago titled, "What Non-Christians Ask," answered five common objections people raised against Christianity. The article was authored by evangelist Paul E. Little, who visited colleges and interacted with non-Christians constantly. He claimed that he could predict with 95 per cent accuracy the questions he would be asked by unbelievers. Modern apologists and evangelists (like Timothy Keller whom I mentioned last month,) have a few different issues they list today when they write on the same subject, but many are the exact same objections from 50 years ago. For this reason, it is important for Christians to have some idea how to answer these common objections to the faith so that we will always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us. (1st Peter 3:15) To that end, let me guide you through one of the most common objections raised by non-Christians. This one has to do with the question about all the other religions.

The objection centers on pluralism or inclusivism, which is the belief that every religion is equally valid. Or, to put it negatively: the belief that only one religion is true is exclusive and intolerant. Especially today, this might be the number one objection. Among Millennials and youth, nothing is more reprehensible than being labeled "intolerant" –and that is exactly what many of them suspect about Christianity.

This objection is commonly illustrated with the old tale of the Elephant and the blind men. This story has many versions, but its origin is the Indian subcontinent and it has influenced Eastern religious thought (Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) The story goes that different blind men touch an elephant to discover what an elephant is like. One feels the trunk and concludes "an elephant is like a snake." Another touches the leg and says, "An elephant is like a tree." A third touches the tusk and says, "An elephant

(Continued on the next page)

is like a spear.” Another the tail, “An elephant is like a rope.” And so, the story goes, religions all experience only a part of God and conclude different things about God based on their own experiences.

At first, the story seems to make a strong point about the diversity of religion. Each of us is limited in our understanding of God, and yet, somehow, all the pieces really do fit together. It is only our own blindness and limited experience that prevents us from seeing how it all works. But there are several problems with this story in using it to validate all religions.

The story gives the impression of humility: *each of us is only grasping at truth and we don't know the whole truth about God.* But the story is told from the point of view of someone who knows the whole truth. Who is this narrator who stands above all the blind men? What is his vantage point? Why is he so privileged above all others? Why can he see the truth, while all others are blind? Why is his truth, the only real truth? Or, as Timothy Keller puts it: “How could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you yourself have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality you just claimed that none of the religions have?” In the end, all the story does is conclude its presupposition, of pluralism. It supposes that only this conclusion is true while all the others are false; but that in itself is a dogmatic assertion.

Others have pointed out that the story fails because it assumes that each of the blind men is unwilling to investigate the claims of the other blind men. So, for example, if one of the blind men represents Christians while another represents Muslims, Hindus, Scientologist, etc. the story would have it as though none of the blind men ever looks into the claims of the others and evaluates them. Each one refuses to learn from the others. Christians, Jews, Muslims, (and any others with exclusive claims about God) are all wrong because they are ignorant. Each one stubbornly insists that his or her part is the only truth. But is this how it is? Are Christians wrong about Muhammad being a prophet who revealed divine truth because we haven't taken the time to listen to Muslim claims? Or, are we wrong about Jesus since Jews and Muslims strongly deny that He was the Son of God and the Messiah? Is our ignorance simply the result of our failure to listen to others? If we just tried harder to see other points of view, would we see that we are all partially right in the end? Or, have in fact, the blind men compared their notes and evaluated the other's religious truth claims and subsequently rejected them?

As hard as Inclusivism tries to be open-minded and affirming of everyone's views, in the end, it is just another form of asserting one point of view as the truth. Or as Keller explains: “Inclusivism is really covert exclusivism. It is common to hear people say: ‘No one should insist that their view of God is better than all the rest. Every religion is equally valid.’ But that can only be true if: First, there is no God at all, or second, God is an impersonal force that doesn't care what your doctrinal beliefs about him are. So as you speak you are assuming (by faith!) a very particular view of God and you are pushing it as better than the rest. That is at best inconsistent and at worst, hypocritical.”

Helping your non-Christian friends to see that their pluralism is just as “intolerant” as our Christian faith, can help to bring down one of the most common objections to Christianity and open the way to presenting the Gospel. If you can help them to see that on their own terms, every religion (including their own brand of pluralism) is “intolerant”, then you can get them to actually evaluate the religious claims instead of merely dismissing the claims of some as too narrow or exclusive. Then you can present to them the Christian message that God has indeed revealed Himself in His Son and come into His world to bring us peace and life.

More on this to come...

PrS

Sources:

“What Non-Christians Ask” by Paul E. Little

“Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs: Leading the Secular to Christ” and “The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism” by Timothy Keller

“Jesus: The Only Way” and “The Ambassador's Guide to Pluralism” by Gregory Koukl



John 15:5

June 24-26, 2016: LWML Texas District Convention in Lubbock - "I am the Vine, You are the Branches."

For more information and registration - www.lwmltxdist.org

**prepare for worship
in June**

5 June:

Texts: 1 Kings 17:17-24; Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

Hymn of the Day: "When in the Hour of Deepest Need," 615

12 June:

Texts: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-14; Galatians 2:15-21; 3:10-14; Luke 7:36-8:3

Hymn of the Day: "Today Your Mercy Calls Us," 915

19 June:

Texts: Isaiah 65:1-9; Galatians 3:23-4:7; Luke 8:26-39

Hymn of the Day: "Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling," 650

26 June:

Texts: 1 Kings 19:9b-21; Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62

Hymn of the Day: "Come, Follow Me," 688

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Fruit of the Spirit

Vacation Bible School



August 1-5, 2016
9:00 am - Noon

Register online at planolutheran.com/VBS

MISSIONARIES

MUSIC FROM
AROUND THE WORLD

Music Ministry Report, 2015-16

Although New Year's has always been the time that one looks forward and back, the end of the liturgical year has always seemed the opportune time to reflect on the past and evaluate the future. The festival part of the church year (that which corresponds to the life of Christ) is complete, and we enter the long period of Pentecost which will last until the first Sunday in Advent.

Lord of Life Music Ministries has had a busy year. The adult choir, consisting of about 27 singers this year, has worked every Wednesday night of the year (with the exception of a week's break after Christmas) to learn music that supports the Word of God as proclaimed in our services. The children's choir consists of about 12 kids who rehearse after late service, enjoying a time of fellowship and learning, while singing in church about once every six weeks. Under the direction of Susan Williams, the handbell ensemble consists of 5-8 ringers who have been rehearsing most Wednesday evenings. Youth choir ended the year with seven really great and committed singers—I was very proud of their progress from the beginning to the end of the year! Our vocal musicians are supported by a host of instrumentalists—we routinely hear trumpet, horn, saxophone, recorders, oboe, flute, piano, strings, and even an occasional harp. It is perhaps a bit trite and cliché to announce that our musical ensembles are always looking for new members, but it is indeed the case. We don't expect everyone to have great flawless sight-reading skills or a perfectly-trained voice; regular commitment to rehearsal is much more important than an innate musical ability. And, fortunately, commitment is a choice that one can make.

Our concert series season was short this year, but a newly-reconstituted concert committee is in the planning stages for next season. Always well-attended are the Festival of Lessons and Carols and the silent movie in

January. This February marked the second annual sacred music scholarship competition, and the first in which a violist was awarded the first prize. This competition, as well as all the events of the concert series, allow Lord of Life to welcome the community and hopefully to build relationships with people in the neighborhood. The Wednesday afternoon concerts continue about twenty times a year—although only about 15-25 people attend each concert, they are very faithful and enjoy the afternoon fellowship. You might have noticed "Music studio recital" in the calendar occasionally. Due to its perfect size for chamber music, ease of access, and quality piano, local music teachers are fond of using Lord of Life as a venue for their student's recitals. Although they are in no way evangelistic, they are evidence of the hospitality Lord of Life has for its community.

Our musicians always continue on duty until Holy Trinity Sunday, which can be as late as the middle of June. This year, with Easter arriving so early, they were done on 22 May and get to enjoy a longer holiday before the rehearsals and duties of a well-ordered church music program begin again in August.

Blessed Pentecostide,

Benjamin Kolodziej, CAGO, MSM, MTS
Organist and Director of Worship



"Spit in My Face"

May 10, 2016



For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-10

One of the great preachers of the 19th century was a Scottish Presbyterian minister by the name of Alexander Whyte.

Reverend Whyte was one of those wonderful people who had a living, loving relationship with his Savior. That, coupled with the fact that Rev. Whyte had done some serious soul searching, made him beloved by his congregation, which he served for almost 40 years. So great was their admiration that one day a member of his church came and gushed: "Dr. Whyte, I just love being in your presence. You are so saintly."

Pastor Whyte looked at the lady and said, "Madam, if you could look into my soul, what you would see would make you spit in my face."

By human standards, Alexander Whyte may have been a pretty good fellow.

But Alexander Whyte knew, in his final judgment before God, being a *pretty good* guy was not going to be enough to get him into heaven. Truly, by God's standards, none of us is good enough to get into heaven. The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes sadly says, "Surely, there is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Try as you might, you're not good enough to earn heaven.

Let me tell you what I mean by using a story. It begins with a man who died and found himself standing before the gates of paradise. St. Peter told him that he could come in if he accumulated 1,000 points.

"No problem," the man said to himself. He began, "I was an active Christian."

"A hundred points," said Peter.

"I sang in the choir."

"Twenty-five points."

"I was a substitute teacher once in Sunday school."

"Ten points."

With only 135 of the necessary 1,000 needed, the man became concerned. "I had a cousin who was a pastor and a great uncle who was a missionary."

"Five points each," came back St. Peter's reply.

"I went to a congregational voters' meeting."

Well, that counted for something: "A hundred points."

Unable to think of anything else, and with a grand total of 245 points to his credit, the man mumbled, "I'm not gonna make it. Nobody could. Only by the grace of God alone can I ever get into heaven."

Listening carefully to the man's mumbling, Peter replied, "That's 750 points! Come on in."

Now I don't want you to think you can even begin to get into heaven by your own power.

Scripture is clear: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). No, if we're going to get into heaven, it will only be because we have been given faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. If you have faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will get into heaven. No doubt, no question, no second-guessing, no balance scales.

With faith in Jesus Christ, you are going to heaven. That's because, in Jesus, the just Judge says, "All is done."

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, I give thanks that You have taken care of all I could never have done. Because of my Savior's sacrifice I have been granted life, forgiveness and salvation. In His Name I give thanks. Amen.



Teen Times

Another school year has come and gone. Everyone is looking forward to taking some time off to relax. You can spend it by the pool on a hot Texas summer day, or a trip to the beach during a family vacation. Maybe you just like to chill out with some friends while seeing all of the blockbuster movies that summer is known for. Weddings, family reunions, or birthday parties are other popular events taking place during the summer that bring people together. But summer doesn't mean you have to take a break from **everything!** We still need that spiritual food of Word and Sacrament on Sundays through worship and Bible study. Think about it; this also brings people together just like the family vacations and parties do.

One summer event that brings teenagers together are the trips that just about every church youth group takes. Some groups travel on mission trips to locations all across North America, while others will attend youth gatherings or retreats. This summer the Sr. High youth from Lord of Life will attend the Higher Things Youth Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Starting Friday, June 24, we will depart Plano to spend 3 days and 4 nights before the conference begins at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Nashville. There the group will participate in some service projects for the church on Saturday, June 25, attend worship services and Bible class on Sunday, June 26. We will spend Sunday afternoon at the Nashville Zoo, and be joined by the youth group from Immanuel Lutheran Church on Sunday evening. Monday, June 27 will include some historic sightseeing around Nashville and zip lining. The Higher Things conference begins Tuesday, June 28 on the campus of Vanderbilt University and concludes on Friday, July 1. The group will return on Saturday, July 2.

The group is doing several fun things during the first few days in Nashville, but the greatest part happens during Higher Things. This is the best way to describe a Higher Things Youth Conference: (this statement is quoted from the Higher Things website; higherthings.org)

Mission and Purpose

The mission of Higher Things® is to assist parents, congregations, and pastors in cultivating, encouraging and promoting a distinctively Lutheran identity among their youth and young adults.

To fulfill this mission, Higher Things:

- Catechizes youth through instruction in Christian doctrine and life;
- Involves youth in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people;
- Publishes periodicals, literature, curricula, and other resource materials using print media and the internet;

- Organizes conferences, retreats, and seminars to help youth become informed and active members of their congregations;
- Encourages youth to consider vocations of service in the church;
- Establishes networks for congregations to share resources for youth ministry;
- Connects high-school and college youth with faithful Lutheran campus ministries and assists congregations and campus ministries in their service to Lutheran college students.

Higher Things® is a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In addition to all of this, youth and adults are given the chance to meet new acquaintances from around the country and forge friendships that potentially last a lifetime; all with a distinctively Lutheran identity. The conference theme this year is “Bread of Life” based on John 6:35.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Together with nearly 1000 fellow Lutherans we will hear the Word, eat His body and drink His blood through Holy Communion, and we will never go hungry or thirsty again. Praise God!

Finally, this trip would not be possible without the generous prayerful and financial support from the members of Lord of Life. It is quite clear that you play a significant part in bringing these young people together to make lasting memories and nurturing their faith. For that, I praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Until next time, God bless.

Scott Peters



LOL CARE GROUPS

CAREERS IN CHRIST

† For info contact Heidi Pittson at (214) 315-0302 or Carrie Sanford (903) 388-3081

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS

† For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com

† Usually meet Sundays after the late service

EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

† For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or

itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net

† Usually meet on a Sat. at 6:30 PM

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

† For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974

† Usually meet the 2nd Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

MIXED BLESSINGS

† For info contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771

† Will meet on Sat., June 18 at 6:30 PM

MOMS' GROUP

† For info contact Kris Crabtree at (214) 705-0710 or crabtreefive@sbcglobal.net



James Hawkins 6-19-05



BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Kristi Gibson
- 1 Gary & Shannon Nuschler (42)
- 2 Ethan Pittson
- 5 Lance & Kris Crabtree (18)
- 6 Will Gibson
- 6 Vernon & Ardis Bang (62)
- 7 Karl & Debbie Keffer (47)
- 8 Scott & Jonelle Peters (25)
- 9 David & Jennifer Beaudreau (15)
- 10 Al Manning
- 11 Jim & Cathleen Ott (33)
- 13 Tony Hernandez
- 13 Joseph & Wendy Acker (24)
- 14 Cecilia Paradise
- 14 Linda McVicker
- 14 Jack & Nelda Schrank (58)
- 15 Kristen Klein
- 20 Kaitlyn Hacker
- 20 Jake Tyler
- 20 Mark & Carrie Ziegelbein (18)
- 21 Donna Brown
- 21 Athan Shaltanis
- 21 Tony Vess
- 21 Ben & Laura Lutek (30)
- 21 Karl & Debbie Olsen (41)
- 21 Pastor Joel & Phaedra Shaltanis (19)
- 23 John & Vicki Frinksco (32)
- 23 Tim Tischler
- 25 Ben Williams
- 25 Dave Wilde
- 26 Samson Carter
- 26 James & Lynette Westbrook (17)
- 28 Lisa Beckemeier
- 29 Chris Dorak
- 29 Melanie Scarth
- 29 Helen Wozniak
- 30 Greg Moudy

Serving in Worship in June

	June 5		June 12		June 19		June 26	
	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM
Elder	Lutek		Carper		Kunschke		Acker	
Common Cup	Womack	Acker			Peters	Hite		
Altar	Gail Senter and Nevelle Vess							
Alcolyte	Hawkins	W Gibson	Messinger	Ozlowski	Adcox	E Ziegelbein	E Hacker	M Shaltanis
Greeter	Vess	Manning	Schrank	Abbott/McVicker	Sparks	Dorak	Martin	McVicker
Sound	Botello	Pittson	Wolf	Hite	Wilkerson	Raj	Wolf	Selveraj
Usher	Scarth Parrent Martin	Kostrzewa Ziegelbein Loewecke	Frinsko Paradise Read	Dolginoff Cruz Moudy	Hawkins Cinquelpalmi	Berger McVicker Oltmann	Schrank Hacker Kun	Buckmeier Short Crabtree

FINANCIAL REPORT January- April, 2016

		ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE
RECEIPTS:	Regular Offerings	\$230,672	\$220,668	\$10,004
	Other	\$1,280	\$1,370	(\$90)
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$231,952	\$222,038	\$9,914
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$244,113	\$224,725	\$19,388
	RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES	(\$12,161)	(\$2,687)	(\$9,474)

OTHER INFORMATION

1. General Operating Fund Balance	\$69,528
2. Dedicated Funds Balance	\$221,964
3. Building Note Balance	\$654,228