

Misapplication Of Certain Critical Biblical Words Which Cause Confusion Among God's People.

In many respects this article has a great deal to do with the previous article, "The Office of the Ministry." In our Church communion, the L.C.M.S., many theologians and lay people are using Biblical words in ways the Bible never intended them to be used.

They are words such as evangelist and evangelism, witness, and witnessing, elder, steward and stewardship, ambassador and ambassador for Christ. The disregard of how these words are used by the Holy Spirit in Sacred Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions has at the very least caused a great deal of confusion within the Church and at most has placed many people unnecessarily under the Law and added a great deal of guilt to their lives. It is a guilt that they do not and should not be forced to carry.

I mentioned in a previous article that I also had fallen into the trap of applying these words and certain other ideas about the Church in ways never intended by the Holy Spirit. So let us start with the words Evangelist and Evangelism.

Evangelist and Evangelism

In most congregations today it is a given that the intended people who are supposed to be doing evangelism are the lay people. I want to immediately make two statements concerning this that may clear up some confusion right away. Now for fear that some might misunderstand my motivations, I am not saying that God's people should not or need not be able to speak of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World toward other people whom they might happen to meet in their daily lives. As the Holy Spirit gives us these opportunities it is our privilege to be able to speak of the things we know and have experienced through the working of the Holy Spirit. However secondly, in a more negative way lay people should not be coerced to feel guilty because some Synodical official invented a program in the congregation called the Board of Evangelism which strongly encourages or even mandates them to be an active part of such a board. A perfect example of this is seen in so many exit signs of congregational parking lots which say; "You are now entering the Mission field!" The implication of this sign is this; you get busy winning the world for Christianity!

Some of the very first evangelists of the New Testament were Angels. And why not? For the very word angel means messenger. One appeared to Mary, another to Joseph, and another to Zachariah. And finally over the night skies of Bethlehem the sky was filled with angels who proclaimed to the shepherds, "*For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.*" (Lk. 2:11) The word evangel literally means "good news." So it was good news which the angels proclaimed to Mary, Joseph, Zachariah and to those shepherds. A Savior had been born to them, who is Christ the Lord.

While it is true that after the shepherds had seen exactly what the angels told them they would see, according to scriptures, they in turn went and told all. *“When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.”* Notice they did not say, we saw Jesus and you need to accept Him as your personal Lord and Savior also. They made known the statement which the Angel had told them! And the result was, *“And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.”* (Lk.2:17-18 NASB) Now certainly they spoke, but not of what they had seen but of what they angels had told them. This is hardly a proof text for forming a board of Evangelism.

In the New Testament there are only three places where the actual word “Evangelist” is used. Conversely the word evangelism is never used! In every instance this word evangelist applies to those who have been called and ordained. In one instance the word is used to describe one of the gifts Jesus Christ has given to His Church.(See Number 3)

(1) In 1 Timothy 4:5, *But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an **evangelist**, fulfill your ministry.*

(2) Again in Acts 21:8 *“On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the **evangelist**, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him”.* Philip the evangelist was one of the seven who had been chosen earlier in the book of Acts to help in the distribution of food. So evidently somewhere along the line he had become an evangelist.

(3) And once more the word is used in Ephesians Chapter 4 which was dealt with in a previous article on the Office of the Ministry. *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as **evangelists**, and some as pastors and teachers,”* An evangelist, as the Bible uses this word is one who proclaims good news. He is literally one who preaches the objective message of Objective Justification – the death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all. Stop for a moment and consider the Small Catechism under the section of the Lord’s Supper. After asking the question, “What is the Sacrament of the Altar,” the next question asked is where is this written (in the Bible)? “The Holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul the apostle write thus:...

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also, He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

These men are considered the Evangelists, commissioned by God to proclaim the “Good News.”

In the early 1970’s, a Presbyterian Minister by the name of Dr. D. James Kennedy founded the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and Evangelism Explosion International.

This Evangelism program caught on in Christian circles like a forest fire. It was designed to help laypeople to be better equipped to evangelize to anyone with a heartbeat. Bible passages had to be memorized (which is really not a bad idea!) and the person who had been trained in this program learned two questions to ask people;

Are you sure that, if you should die today, that you will definitely go to heaven?

If you should die today and God should ask you for what reason you should be allowed into heaven, what would you answer Him?

On the surface these questions seem to be innocuous enough. But I must confess that I have become convinced that Evangelism Explosion and all of the subsequent evangelism programs are seriously flawed in a number of ways that perhaps are not so readily apparent.

Many years ago when I was a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Chesterton Indiana, I became involved in this evangelism training. I took every evangelism course the Synod offered and mastered them all. I would go out in the evenings to make “cold calls” at people’s homes trying to win them for Jesus. I would speak about Jesus at work. I would speak about Jesus with the waitress in a restaurant. I would speak about Jesus with anyone whether they wanted to speak with me or not. As I look back on these experiences I would have to say that I had to be the most obnoxious evangelist who ever lived!

It was not until years later that I realized many of the previously mentioned “flaws” of this type of evangelism. The first and perhaps the most obvious one has to do with making what were called “cold calls.” These types of calls were made by picking out a name in the phone book and just going out and trying to get in the door to speak to the person. I came to realize that somehow it was up to me to **manipulate** (emphasis mine) the conversation in such a way that the conversation eventually would come around to what I was there to speak about, Jesus Christ. Generally the conversations began with the usual topics of weather, who the people were, a little bit about myself and the congregation I was affiliated with and then, of course finally asking the two questions. The goal was of course to bring about a conversion to Christianity with the person whom we were speaking.

The largest flaw of this program has already been dealt with in the previous article concerning the Office of the Ministry. I was not an evangelist in the sense the Bible uses the word evangelist. As noted above, particularly in the book of Ephesians, an evangelist is one who is called and ordained and is a gift to the church given by Jesus Christ. I believe today we would call an evangelist a missionary. It could however be used to describe any ordained pastor who preaches repentance unto the forgiveness of sins.

But back then according to my vocation, what is called in the Small Catechism, my station in life, I was the Father of four rompin’ stompin’ boys and I should have been at home being what God intended me to be, a Godly Father and husband. I should have spent my time with them speaking to them of the tremendous truths of God as found in the

Catechism. That was my calling, my vocation. And it states in the Small Catechism; “as the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.” This is what God had called me to do.

I really am not sure where the contemporary idea of lay people going outside of their vocations to be evangelists originated. The bible knows of no such notion. However I have a strong suspicion that the idea came from a business model as does so much of what the church does these days. Going door to door trying to get people to commit to Jesus is suspiciously similar to going door to door trying getting people to purchase a vacuum cleaner. On a fundamental level it is a sales call and the goal is to close the deal! I have a deep abiding suspicion that this contemporary practice of door to door evangelism acquired its beginnings with the Fuller Brush Company and their salesmen.

Recall, if you will Article V. of the Augsburg Confession;

1 In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. 2 For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.

Notice if you will, that it does not say “in order to obtain this faith a Board of Evangelism must be implemented!” It is the Ministry of teaching the Gospel and ad**ministering** (emphasis mine) the Sacraments which brings about the faith which does now save. This is God’s plan and His purpose to bring people to Heaven. This is why God called His Church into existence. Consider this verse if you will in Ephesians Chapter 3 as Paul explains God’s desire as to the purpose of the Church in the World;

8 *“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,⁹ and to **bring to light what is the administration of the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 **so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church**”...* So God’s wisdom is to be made through the Church but what is this administration of the mystery which God brings to light? Well, more on this later. More on this verse later in the article.

Witness and Witnessing

Let us now turn to the next abused words in my list. They are the words, “Witness” and “Witnessing.” Jesus Christ spoke of this to His disciples in the book of Acts just prior to His Ascension. This is what He told them in Acts 1:8;

8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be **witnesses** unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Now remember that in a previous article it was explained how it is that we arrive at the correct interpretation of Bible Verses. There are several principles which come into play. In

the above quoted verse we could use three principles of interpretation. They are; (1) The Bible is a book which reveals God's plan of salvation for us. (2) Who is speaking? (3) Who is being spoken to?

Jesus is speaking to His disciples, His Apostles. He tells them that they are to be witnesses unto Him. So the message they are to speak will be about Jesus and how He brings salvation to men. Before continuing we must explore the use of this word witness as it is used elsewhere in the Scriptures.

In the first Chapter of the Book of Acts Peter speaks of finding a replacement Apostle for Judas;

*21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a **witness with us of His resurrection.**" 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 'And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.'*

Now notice that the man chosen, Matthias, had to have the qualification of being with the rest of the apostles from the time of John's baptism of Jesus until His Ascension. This had to take place so that Matthias could be chosen because he was a **witness** with the rest of the Apostles of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This word "witness," when it is used in the scriptures refers to what we would call today in a court of law an "eye witness." And this is exactly how the Scriptures use this word, an eye witness. Curiously the Greek word for witness is *martus* (*martus*). Oddly enough the English word *martyr* is derived from this word.

When we in the Church today speak of being a witness for Jesus or of going out and witnessing about Jesus we are using this word in a totally unbiblical way. We are not witnesses in the biblical sense because we were not there to see those events. Furthermore this use of the word witness in the Scriptures is not just limited to the New Testament. In the book of Deuteronomy Chapter 19:15 we find these words;

*15 "A single **witness** shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three **witnesses** a matter shall be confirmed."*

So it is that even in the Old Testament this word witness is used in such a way as to denote a judicial meaning, namely an eye witness. It was a regulation of civil law that any man accused of a crime could not be convicted on the testimony of just one witness. There had to be two or more witnesses necessary for a conviction or to establish the truth of any

matter. It is interesting to note this was the very question which was asked of Jesus in the Gospel of John by the Pharisees. Jesus quotes the above mentioned verse in Deuteronomy when the Pharisees accuse Jesus of giving false witness or testimony in John 8:13;
13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about yourself; your testimony is not true."

To which Jesus replies a few verses later in verses 17 & 18;

17 "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me."

Jesus claims the legitimacy of His Divine Office of Savior on the testimony (the witness) of Himself and that of His Father. In John's First Epistle, in the fifth chapter the testimony which is accepted by one who overcomes the world is the testimony or the bearing witness for us to the truth and is stated in this way;

*5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. **7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (emphasis mine)***

The three that testify or witness the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the World are nothing less than the "means of grace!" The Holy Spirit testifies through the Word which brings faith. The Waters of Holy Baptism which are connected to the Word and the Sacred Blood of the New Covenant or Testament which is also connected with the very word of Jesus on the night He was betrayed, this Jesus whom John refers to in his Gospel as the Word, the Creator of all things.

And finally the LCMS should take note of this important verse when it comes to the removal of a pastor from his office on the basis of someone (one person) who complains (gossips) about their pastor to a District President or Synodical Official. Much heartbreak has been done to Pastors and their families by ignoring this verse.

*19 Do not receive an accusation against **an elder** except on the basis of two or three witnesses.* (1 Timothy 5:19 NASB) As we shall see next the term elder being referred to is a Pastor.

Elder

This is the next word that has taken on unbiblical meanings and again leads to confusion in Christ's Church. Many years ago I myself was asked to be an elder in my home congregation. I accepted this position not knowing how it is that the Scriptures use this word. In our contemporary churches the qualifications of an elder are that they must be men. They must be spiritually minded, having a good grasp of the teachings of the Scriptures. They are normally to help the Pastor out by visiting members of the congregation, praying for the Pastor, and in most churches they are responsible to ensure

that the Pastor and his family (if any) are to be properly remunerated in terms of salary in order that the Pastor need not worry about his financial situation and can devote himself to his pastoral duties.

That the word “elder” is a biblical word is beyond dispute. However quoting Inigo Montoya in the movie *The Princess Bride* – **“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”** Indeed it does not. Quite simply stated the word elder in the Scriptures is a Pastor!

There are several words in the Greek language the Holy Spirit uses to designate Pastors. For our purposes here let us first turn to the term elder as it is used in the Book of Acts 14:23.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Notice in this verse that the Elders mentioned are ordained. Prior to the deaths of the Apostles these men (elders) were chosen to be the replacements of the Apostles to be the Pastors who would follow them in the work of the Ministry. Also note in Titus 1:5;
5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (K.J.V.)

The fact that these men are ordained indicates that this term elder is being used in the Scriptures in an entirely different way that our contemporary ways of utilizing the word elder in the modern congregation. The word in the Greek language is presbuteros (presbuteros). The English word presbytery is derived from this word and has a decidedly clerical meaning. These men were the 2nd and 3rd generation pastors of the infant New Testament Church. They were called into their office through the laying on of hands and praying over them. We still do this today in the church when we ordain a pastor into Christ’s office of Ministry.

There are other words in the Greek that are synonymous which are used in describing these called and ordained servants of the Word. In Acts 20:28 we find this word being used;

*28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (N.A.S.B.)*

The word used here is episkopos (episcopos). Our English word episcopal is a derivative of this word.

Another word for elder from the Greek is to be found in 1 Peter 5:1 and is very telling for our purposes as you will readily see;

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Again the word for elder here is presbuteros (presbuteros). However notice that Peter who is an Apostle includes himself as an elder. He is not only an elder but also a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

Also among those in the post Ascension Church who took active roles who held the Office of Apostle was St. Paul who also was an elder or Pastor in the Lord's Church. He is called also an evangelist and as he writes to the Corinthian Church he teaches and exhorts them about the proper administration and use of the Lord's Supper.

Curiously though Paul was not present on that night the Lord's Supper was instituted. We find this in the 1st book of Corinthians where Paul states that he received a special revelation from the Lord.

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 N.A.S.B.)

And finally the Apostle Peter describing the previous condition of the people to whom he was writing, people who had been scattered by persecutions, referring to them as those of the diaspora, or those who had been dispersed throughout the area, fleeing persecution, now speaks to them according to their Christianity says to them in 1 Peter 2:25;

*25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the **Shepherd** and **Bishop** of your souls.*

The reference to the one whom they have returned to is of course Jesus Christ. Notice though Peter uses two significant Words to describe Him. He calls Jesus poimen (poimen), a word meaning shepherd or pastor. He also refers to Him as Bishop, episkopos (episcopos).

In the above words used in Scripture to describe Jesus we see they are also the very same words used to describe elders. In the book of Hebrews Jesus is also called an Apostle because he is the One who is sent by the Father. That is what the word apostle means – one who is sent. In New Testament usage an elder is a Pastor, called and ordained to do the very same thing that Jesus told Peter to do three times. "Feed My sheep!" And in the Book of Romans Paul the Apostle (the sent one) has this to say about preachers:

*14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? (NASB) (The notion of being sent will be dealt with in an upcoming article concerning the **Divine Call Of A Pastor.**)*

In the Congregation in which I am Pastor, we have changed the word "elder," to the word Elector and thus we have a Board of Electors. They are chosen with care and serve for as long as they are able or desire. There are no term limits for the men of this board. These men are charged with the task of ensuring that the current Pastor(s) and the future Pastor(s) will preach the Gospel in truth and purity and that the Sacraments will be

administered according to the institution of Jesus Christ for the salvation of God's Chosen people. This historical term "Elector" comes to us from the Reformation times when some of the Electors provided safety for Martin Luther and his followers as they were under the sentence of death by the officials of the Church of Rome. In effect these men ensured that the gospel was preached and the Sacraments were administered. In this way they provided protection for the Lutheran Churches in Germany. So it is also in our Church here in Arvada Colorado. These men provide protection for the Gospel and Sacraments.

Steward and Stewardship

Now we come to the words steward and stewardship. Our Church Body currently teaches that the laity of the Church are stewards and they are responsible for the stewardship of the congregation. The word steward as it is used now in contemporary church usage has to do with the use of time, talents and money. Stewardship programs in the church focus on our use of these three things primarily to carry out the work of the church so that everyone (hopefully) has certain tasks to accomplish within the corporate body of the local congregation.

So they make use of their time to fill a position on a board. They use their talents (which they discovered from taking a "spiritual gift inventory") to see where they can plug in to various boards and committees and serve. Included, of course are their monies (offerings) so they can support the work of the local congregation and the various missionary endeavors of the Church in the World, to bring others to Christ. The underlying misuse of this word stewardship becomes law for everyone in the congregation. Statements such as "God will require an accounting of how one used time, talents, and money to further the kingdom" are often used to move and motivate people to get involved. So the congregations have events such as Stewardship Sunday where the members make their yearly pledges in order that a budget can be put together for the coming year. Boards of Stewardship are invented to put together programs to raise monies for the congregation and to assimilate new members so that they can be busy putting their time and talents to good use in areas of service within the congregation. Again this is a complete misuse of this Biblical Word.

This term steward has even crept into the vocabulary of the unbelieving world. Time and again we hear of how we should be good stewards of the natural resources of the world. We have to be aware of our carbon footprint to determine that we are not wasting these resources and that there will be enough for everybody to have their fair share. Certain segments of Christianity have even asked the question, "What would Jesus drive, eat or wear," so that we can emulate our Lord in being a "good steward and not be wasteful." In the New American Bible Standard Topical Index under the word "stewardship", we find this quote:

"Christian stewardship properly recognizes that all human abilities and possessions, including the earth and its contents, are on consignment to man from God"

The implication of this statement is that God gave us all these things and we must someday give to Him an account as to how well or poorly we have used these things.

Consider these verses from the book of Genesis and see if you can find any references to an accountability that will have to be given to God some day in the future.

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue** it; and **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 Then God said, "**Behold, I have given you** every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. (NASB)

I have taken the liberty of emphasizing certain words in these verses in order that I might show you what they are and what they mean in the Hebrew language. The First Word emphasized is **rule**. In Hebrew it looks and sounds like this -- רָדָה radah. It means, to have dominion, rule, dominate. So man is to rule, to have dominion over the creation. It has been given to him by God, not for God to see how man uses it, but as man's possession. The World and all that is in it is a gift from God to man so that man might receive, as it states in the Lord's Prayer, daily bread. Furthermore man is to be fruitful, multiply, have children and subdue the world. This word subdue in Hebrew looks and sounds like this; כָּבַשׁ kabash. It means, to subdue, bring into bondage. So man in his dominion over God's creation is to subdue the world, to make it work for him, if you will. And again the word rule is applied to man's status over every living thing which God had created. It sounds to me a lot like God has given as gifts to us for the purpose of enjoying, the entire world and everything in it as a gift of His mercy and love.

In Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism there is this explanation of the First Article of the apostles Creed:

"I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them. In addition, He has given me clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods. He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger and guards me and preserves me from all evil. He does all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this I ought to thank Him, praise Him, serve Him, and obey Him. This is most certainly true." (AMEN)

Notice that God gives, preserves, and provides all I need to support body and life and that He does this out of His goodness and mercy. The only duty mentioned is our duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.

Consider also the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer; "Give us this day our daily bread;" *God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked people; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.*

What is meant by daily bread?

Answer: Everything that belongs to the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Again we ask that God would lead us to realize the His goodness and receive all things with thanksgiving. This is how God works in all things. He gives freely out of His goodness, asking nothing of us in return. We give Him our thanks and praise out of faithful and grateful hearts. There is nothing more and nothing less expected or demanded of us. No accounting, no answering to Him for how we have used these gifts of His love. Indeed in every mention of the final judgment especially in Matthew 25 Jesus says not a word but only separates the sheep from the goats. This is judgment. Then He goes on to show the righteousness of His judgment by pointing out the good works that the sheep have done of which they are totally unaware of doing.

Our Lord tells many parables using the word steward. They are parables of the Kingdom of Heaven or sometimes referred to as the Kingdom of God. For many years I thought because the word heaven was used that Jesus was referring to heaven up there above. But He is not.

We are taught from the scriptures and the catechism that there are in fact three kingdoms in which our Lord rules. We mention them at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." Perhaps you can remember from catechism lessons these three kingdoms refer to the Kingdom of Grace, which is the Church, The kingdom of Power, which is the World, The Kingdom of Glory which is finally Heaven.

Let us consider one of these parables utilizing the context that Jesus came into this world to establish His Kingdom which is the Church! In Matthew 13, a chapter that is chocked full of parables Jesus tells of the Kingdom of Heaven which I think best explains the notion of Kingdom. Identifying all the characters in this parable, we find a man, his men, (later called slaves,) an enemy, and finally reapers.

24 Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.25 "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.26 "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.27 "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'28 "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you

want us, then, to go and gather them up?’²⁹ “But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.³⁰ ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ’(NASB)

In order to establish where this Kingdom exists ask yourself the question are there any tares up in heaven? Is there any sowing of seed going on up there? When is the harvest? I believe that you can very quickly rule out that this parable is about heaven somewhere up there. Rather it is about a Kingdom which is down here on Earth. This Kingdom is named the Kingdom of Grace. It is the Church where grace is proclaimed and distributed in Word and Sacrament. But it is a church which is called militant. There are tares among the wheat and the enemy works diligently in the church and he sows tares among the wheat.

This is one of the parables where Christ’s disciples ask for and receive an explanation as to what it means. So Jesus explains it to them. The one who sows good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the World. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one. The enemy is the Devil and the reapers are the angels. Interestingly the slaves are not mentioned. We can understand though that the slaves work for the Sower, who is identified as the Son of Man. So these slaves who want to get into the field and start ripping out the weeds in order to have a field of beautiful wheat are the Apostles. They are the usual bunch of pre-Pentecost, clueless but well intentioned followers of Jesus who haven’t quite figured out what is going on yet. But they will when the Holy Spirit shows up and leads them into all truth.

So Jesus tells many parables in which He employs the words “The Kingdom of Heaven” or the “Kingdom of God.” And in so many of these parables He uses the Word “steward” or as some translations put it, “manager.”

I contend that this word steward or manager is applicable to those whom God has placed in service to Him for others in God’s house, The Church! The reason I believe this is how the word, steward is used in the Bible. Let me give you some examples of this. By the way often the word slave is also used to describe a steward as we will see now in the Gospel of Luke chapter 12.

*35 “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. 36 “Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.³⁷ “Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them 38 “Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. 39 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.” 41 Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?”⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible (wise) **steward**, whom his master will put in charge of*

his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?43 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.44 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

In this discourse Jesus uses the word steward with the modifiers faithful and wise or sensible. In the Greek language the word steward is a combination of two words. The words are; οἶκος, (oikos), meaning house or dwelling and nemo, (nemo) meaning to manage. When they are placed together in the Scriptures the literal meaning is manager of a household. So a steward is someone who manages someone else’s house or affairs for the owner.

Notice also in the above parable the word slave seems to be used interchangeably with the word steward. Verse 42 uses the word steward and verse 43 refers to the same person, the one faithful and wise as a slave. In Greek the word used for slave is doulos, (doulos). In many of the Epistles the author will refer to himself as a slave of the Gospel or a slave of Jesus Christ. When one stops to consider the difference between a steward of a household or the slave of a master, the meaning in context does not really change. Slave or steward, both are still employed as the whim of the master and are to carry out the master’s commands.

Let us now consider from Matthew Chapter another parable of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a landowner who owns a Vineyard. From the King James Version in Matthew 20:1 we have this:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.”

However before we get too far into this parable allow me to point out some pretty remarkable facts. Again the Kingdom of Heaven is not referring to Heaven up there. Rather it is the Kingdom down here on Earth where there is work going on in the vineyard. Laborers are needed to work. So let us establish immediately that this Kingdom is once again the Kingdom of Grace – the Church where grace (forgiveness is freely given.)

So in this Kingdom there is a householder. Interestingly once again let us look at this word in Greek. We already said above that the word for house is the word, oikos. Remember when this word is connected to that other word, nemo we end up with the word steward or house manager, one who works for the house owner or house holder. The word for house holder is a word also consisting of two words; oikos and despotes. It is this second word that grabs attention, despotes. We would get the word in English despot! Of course this word has a very negative connotation to us. For a despot in today’s usage is an evil man, an evil dictator. However this word, used to describe God is also found in Peter’s 2nd epistle, the 1st verse:

*1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the **Lord** that bought*

them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (KJV)

The Word Lord, referring of course to the Lord Jesus Christ, is the translated word from the Greek word, despotes. It is translated with legitimacy as Master or Almighty. In this sense there is no negative connotation merely the acknowledgement that the Lord is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

So let us return to the parable in Matthew 20. There is a house holder and he has planted a vineyard. Now remembering that this is a parable about the kingdom of heaven, let us deal with a very real problem we might have with this section of the Scriptures.

Allow me to suggest that we in these early years of the 21st Century do not have the familiarity with the Scriptures that we should. I would go so far as to say that the intended audience of these parables knew more of the Scriptures than do we. This is evidenced by the fact that so many of the parables Jesus spoke were understood by the Pharisees as being addressed to them. They became furious with Jesus because they recognized that He was referring to them. Jesus tells a parable very similar to the one in Matthew 20 concerning the vineyard in Matthew 21 verse 33. It is a story of how the owner sent servants to collect the fruit at the time of harvest.

The workers in the vineyard slaughtered the servants and finally took the only Son of the owner, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Listen to the response of the Chief Priests and Pharisees:

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. (KJV)

So in Matthew 20 Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven comparing it to a vineyard. Allow me to suggest that most of the Jews who listened to Him speak knew their Bibles far better than we do. In Isaiah 5, hear these words of God;

*1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His **vineyard**. My well-beloved had a **vineyard** on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones. 3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My **vineyard**. 4 “What more was there to do for My **vineyard** that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? 5 “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My **vineyard**: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 6 “I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.” **7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant.** Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. (Emphasis Mine)*

This Vineyard of the Lord is found in many other places in the Old Testament. The Book of Psalms and the Book of Jeremiah are but a couple of these cross-references to the Vineyard of the Lord. The reference of the Vineyard is a reference to Christ's Church, whether found in the Old Testament or the New; His Chosen People if you will. Throughout the Gospels Jesus makes references to this Kingdom whether it is in parables, such as when He says "the Kingdom of Heaven is like..." or when he says elsewhere, the Kingdom of Heaven in in the midst of you."

So perhaps by now you might be beginning to realize that this Kingdom talk could be summed up properly by saying, where Jesus is; there is His Kingdom! This is and always has been the Lord's plan to establish His Church here on Earth. Furthermore He tells Peter that the very gates of Hell will not prevail against it.

Now, with this background information concerning the Lord's Kingdom, His Church let us examine what it is, why Jesus established it, and what its purpose is to be in the world.

In the Apostles Creed we have this concise statement of the Christian Faith:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

It is the acknowledgement of the Triune God. It also clearly states the work of the Triune God. In it we acknowledge as truth that there exists in this World the Holy Christian Church. So in the Creed we acknowledge that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered, was crucified, died and was buried. Then he rose and left for Heaven. The Holy Spirit, through the Word and Sacraments establishes the Holy Christian Church on earth. But what good is the Church if Jesus has gone up to heaven? Do we worship Him up there from down here? And how then do we get the Forgiveness of our sins?

Well the answers to these questions are as the Augsburg Confession Article V states;

1 In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. 2 For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.

Jesus Christ has established a Kingdom here on earth. In this Kingdom He has instituted a Ministry. It is a ministry of preaching the Gospel and administrating the sacraments, by which the Holy Spirit creates faith wherever and whenever it pleases Him to do so, in those who hear the Gospel.

This is how He planned to do it all along. That through this Church the Holy Spirit would attach Himself to certain earthly elements such as water, bread and wine, and that He would connect these earthly elements with the spoken word of His Stewards who repeated or proclaimed the very same words that Jesus spoke, and in this Kingdom these stewards who work for him would carry out the work of the ministry of preaching and giving out the sacraments in order that people would come to know Jesus Christ as Savior of the World through the faith that is given as a gift.

Listen to the Apostle Paul as he explains this in Ephesians three;

*8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,9 and to **bring to light what is the administration of the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 **so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church...***

So God's wisdom is to be made through the Church but what is this administration of the mystery which God brings to light?

Now I have highlighted a section of these verses for a very good reason. The word administration shows up and it is connected to the mystery which was hidden but has now been revealed. It is a very interesting word, this word administration. You can almost see the word ministry in this word and that is not an accident. So let us do a little Greek and English studying here and discover an amazing truth.

In the Greek Language the word for **administration** is οικονομία (oikonomia). This is a word that means stewardship, administration, management. In the English language this work sounds very similar to Economy. And it sounds similar for a very good reason. Theologians call God's establishment of the Church, His institution of the Office of the Ministry, the use of the means of grace to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ, The Economy of God's Salvation.

When we hear the word economy our thoughts naturally turn to things of a financial nature. And so we ask how's the economy doing? This word though has more to it than that. Consider if you will a dictionary definition that is a kind of alternate meaning and yet it is a reliable meaning;

ECONOMY – "The efficiency and conservation of effort in the operation or the achievement of something." Or another definition goes like this; "the prudent managing of resources to avoid extravagant expenditure or waste."

The economy of God's salvation; I once heard a Lutheran pastor use this term in a very creative way in a sermon describing many people today in our day and age. He said, "Many people today are more worried about the salvation of the economy than the economy of God's salvation!"

My point in all of this is that we need to return to the way the Bible uses these words rather than invent different meanings to fit our mistaken notions of what the Church is all about.

I know that I will take a great deal of abuse from my fellow pastors and the officialdom of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod when I say this but there is no such thing as the laity of the church being stewards or having a stewardship responsibility.

The Bible knows of only two individuals who are responsible for stewardship and they are God and His called and ordained ministers of the Word!

God calls and sends His stewards, His house managers, to bring to light the Administration (which is God's) of the mystery, (our receiving forgiveness, life and salvation through the means of grace; His Word and His Sacraments) so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church!

This is why Jesus tells all those parables concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. To reveal to us how it is that He has endowed His Church, with prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the work of Ministry, for the building up of the Body Of Christ, for the works of service (which by the way the called and ordained ministers of the Word do as they serve you with Word and Sacraments!) until we all attain to the unity of faith.

I have dealt with this egregious mistranslation of Ephesians 4:11-12 in a previous paper, The Office of the Ministry.

Ambassador and the Ambassadors For Christ

The next word under consideration is the word Ambassador and the attendant group of teenagers who are called the Ambassadors For Christ. Again our Church body, the LCMS, has been using this word in very unbiblical ways creating a great deal of confusion. Quite simply stated these words have been once again misapplied to the laity rather than to the called and ordained servants of the Word as the Bible uses this word, ambassador.

In its common everyday usage it has political overtones. We in the United States and I suppose most countries have Ambassadors who have been appointed to represent our government or our country, the United States Of America, to other governments and countries in the world around us. The significant words here are; "they have been appointed." This is exactly the same connotation in which the Bible uses this word. An ambassador is one who has been appointed.

There are two instances in the New Testament where this word ambassador is used and both of them are used by the Apostle Paul to refer to himself. The first one is in Chapter 6 of the Book of Ephesians;

Ephesians 6:20 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known

*with boldness the mystery of the gospel 20 for which I am an **ambassador** in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

And then again in 2 Corinthians it is used again by the apostle Paul and refers to himself. *2 Corinthians 5:20 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

This word, “ambassador” is also used three times in the Lutheran Confessions. Once to refer to the Pope’s Ambassador in the note on the gathering at Augsburg just prior to the presentation of the Augsburg Confession. We find this quote:

Electoral John arrived in Augsburg on May 2.

*The meeting began with a clear signal that the courageous Lutheran laymen were not about to concede to the emperor’s demands, nor compromise their convictions. As Charles’s royal procession approached Augsburg, it was met by a large delegation from the city, including the Lutheran princes. The **pope’s ambassador** stood to give the whole assembly a special blessing from the pope. When the crowd knelt, Electoral John and his fellow Lutheran princes refused to kneel. Charles and those with him made their way into the city and arrived at the cathedral, where a special Mass was held. The crowd noticed that again Electoral John and Philip of Hesse refused to kneel and remained standing, with their heads covered, during the blessing.*

And again it is used in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. XXIV paragraph 80; *Let us discuss the word liturgy. This word does not properly mean a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry. Liturgy agrees well with our belief that one minister who consecrates gives the Lord’s body and blood to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches offers the Gospel to the people. As Paul says, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1), that is, of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And, “We are **ambassadors for Christ**, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

And again one more time in The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration article XI, para. 27: *God does not call without means, but through the Word. For He has commanded “that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name” [Luke 24:47]. St. Paul also testifies in a similar way when he writes, “**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us.** We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

It clearly appears to me that this word, Ambassador(s) as it is used in both the Scriptures and the Confessions are referring to once again called and ordained servants of the Word. And yet in the LCMS we continue to play loosey-goosey with these important words and apply them to anyone who wants to use them to justify their involvement in the work of the Church. Perhaps they believe that getting involved in the work of the Ministry of the church is a higher calling than their own vocations. If this is true when we have returned to a form of monasticism which was prevalent in Luther's day when joining a monastery or convent was the highest calling pleasing to God.

I am convinced there are two or possibly three reasons for this. First, the LCMS has bought into the false notion of the premises of a Book written many years ago by a Lutheran Pastor named Oscar Feucht, titled, "Everyone a Minister, A guide to Churchmanship for laity and clergy." The premise of this book is exactly what it says as the author tries to convince the church that everyone in the Church is and can be a Minister. That this book has been published and endorsed by Concordia Publishing House is to our shame in the LCMS.

The second reason, and this is the very reason I am writing these series of papers. We in the LCMS have gone far afield of our understanding of both the Office of the Ministry and the Doctrine of the Church. Why does the Office of the Ministry exist? According to the Scriptures to proclaim the universal salvation of the world! Why does the Church exist? To receive from the Lord His gracious gifts of Word and Sacrament which strengthen and preserve us in the one true faith unto life everlasting and to proclaim this tremendous truth to the world around us who are heading for eternal destruction. Luther writes in the explanation to the third article of the Creed that in this Christian Church God daily and richly forgives my sins and the sins of all believers. Let me be so bold as to state that this is the only place this happens – in this Christian Church.

As a third reason of which I can give only anecdotal evidence, I am convinced that there is a very powerful anti-clerical movement in our church which tends to denigrate the Office of the Ministry.

I remember once, in a seminary class the professor comparing the time we live in now to the times of ages past when most people were fortunate to have an 8th grade education. It was pointed out that at that time the Pastor was probably the most intelligent person in his congregation. But now many members of any given congregation had degrees after their names. So the pastor is no longer the smartest person in the congregation. Well, excuse me! I have a degree after my name too but if I am at a neurologist seminar my degree in theology is worthless. This comparison is the same in the church. I literally have a rocket scientist in my current congregation but he has never studied Theology.

When Paul and our Lutheran Confessions use this Word "ambassador" they are referring to those who have been appointed to be ambassadors from the Lord Jesus Christ. Again it is

interesting to do a little Greek language study concerning the word the Bible uses for the term ambassador.

The word used in both Ephesians and 2 Corinthians is the greek word, “πρεσβευῶ presbeuō;” a word we can readily see is very similar to the word for elder presented above, which is presbuteros (presbuteros). As we have determined above this word represents the Called and Ordained Clergy in Christ’s Church. It is their job to proclaim the objective reality that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was a catholic (universal) sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. This is called in Lutheran Theology Universal (catholic) justification and it means that all men’s sins have been paid for by the all availing sacrifice of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The wrath of God has been poured out on His only beloved Son who stated that “It is finished,” all those years ago when He commended his Spirit into the hands of His Father. Jesus has commissioned His apostles when He says in John 20:21 *“as the Father has sent me so also do I send you.”* These words were spoken to the 10 apostles on the night of Easter and are followed by the giving of the office of the keys, the authority to forgive sins: And when He had said this, *He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.23 “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”*

And then just before His Ascension comes the most abused bible verse that has been used to justify the erroneous concept that all of the laity of the church have been commissioned to preach. It is even called the “Great Commission!” However let us use some of those principles of interpretation I referred to earlier, particularly the use of context; who is speaking, what is being said, and who is being spoken to.

In Matthew 28 the stage is set.

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you 1always, even to the end of the age.”

Now this is how I have heard various Lutheran commentators try to prove that this “Great Commission” has its application to the whole church.

This is their conclusion; Jesus was speaking to the 11 disciples who were at that time all of the church Jesus had in front of Him, therefore we may assume that He intended this for the whole Church! This is not an exact quote from a particular commentator however this is the flavor of contemporary thinking that the entire church (congregation) is responsible to carry out the Great Commission.

There is a very telling addition in the Augsburg confession in the Tappert Edition which is disguised as a foot note but which is in fact an editorial comment placed there by the translator of the Augsburg Confession. It is found in Article V, curiously enough the very

article that deals with the office of the ministry. There is no explanation given which backs this up and it looks like this:

V. [The Office of the Ministry]4

The disguised foot note is Number 4 and it reads as follows; **“This title would be misleading if it were not observed (as the text of the article makes clear) that the Reformers thought of “the office of the ministry” in other than clerical terms.”**
Tappert, Theodore G.: The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 0

Now here is the article in total. See if you can find where it is that this article makes clear that the authors (the Reformers) believed that this article on the Office of the Ministry dealt with more than the “called and ordained Servants of the Word.” I simply cannot find it nor do I agree with the editor’s assertion that this article is in any way applied to anyone other than the clergy.

1 To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. 2 Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. 3 And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this. 4 Condemned are the Anabaptists and others 5 who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.

In the German Translation of this article (the Augsburg Confession was written in German and Latin) the word that is used for ministry is; Vom Predigtamt. It means literally the preaching office. In Latin it is translated as; De Ministerio Ecclesiastico. It means literally “the Ministry Of The Church.”

It has always been fascinating to me that about the only place one could get away with trying to convince people that everyone can be a minister, or an ambassador, or evangelist or witness or an elder would be in the Church.

Imagine if you were at a plumber’s convention and the commission was given go out into to the world and fix all of the leaks that you can find. Could you possible believe that the job of fixing leaks belonged to the entire world or would you believe that it was you job as a plumber to get out there and fix the leaks?

Out there in the world no one would ever accept the premise that everyone is a dentist or a doctor, lawyer, plumber, or any other vocation one can imagine. I daresay if I were to publish a book titled, “everyone a computer genius” I’d go broke trying to get it sold. This does not mean that one cannot become a Doctor or lawyer or any other specialty job. However it would take years and years of training. Just as it took years of training for the Apostles as they attended a three year seminary under the tutelage of the Greatest Theological Professor who ever lived. And then they graduated and the Holy Spirit gave

them their diplomas which spelled out everything they had ever heard and seen Jesus their teacher do and say.

And now perhaps this is a good a place as any for the anecdotal evidence I mentioned above concerning anti-clergy bias displayed in our own LCMS.

If we were to contract (God Forbid) a deadly disease such as an hemorrhagic virus which is almost 99% fatal, would you want to go to a Doctor who has had the minimum amount of training in becoming a Doctor? Or would you want an expert in the field? And yet this is exactly what is happening in our Synod. Men no longer have to go to our seminaries for their pastoral education. They can do it from home or through what is called Distance Education Leading To Ordination or D.E.L.T.O. Under this program which is supposedly monitored by an ordained clergy member there is no requirement to take (and Master) Greek and Hebrew, which in my humble opinion is absolutely essential to Pastoral Formation. It seems that the Church of today is perfectly willing to receive men with the minimum amount of training rather than specialists in the field of Divine Medicine.

Also there is an interesting item to note in the comparison of two of the Hymns in the TLH and the LW under the section of Ordination. In The Lutheran Hymnal (Red) there is a hymn called “God of the Prophets bless the prophet’s Sons.” In the stanzas found in the TLH we call upon God to anoint these men **“Prophets, Priests, Kings and Apostles!”**

What is conspicuously absent in the stanzas of the Lutheran Worship Hymnal, is the stanza which uses the word King! Believe me when I say that this is no accident! Evidently we do not want anyone to consider these men as Kings. The assumption would be of course that one has to obey a King. Also that seems to be a little much for people to swallow. I mean really, we are to consider our Pastors as Kings, and prophets and priests and apostles? Are not these same four fold office that Jesus Himself held? Indeed they are and indeed they are also held by the ordained Ministers of The Lord’s word. For these men are God’s Stewards (His House, His church managers) called to distribute the means of God’s grace in His Kingdom of Grace which is His Church here on earth.

In the Table of duties of Luther Small Catechism we find these words under the explanation of “What the hearers owe their pastors;

WHAT THE HEARERS OWE TO THEIR PASTORS

*In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:14) One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. (Galatians 6:6 “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching”. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:17–18) **Obey your leaders and submit to them**, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17).*

Insofar as a Pastor remains faithful to the apostolic teachings of the faith he is to be obeyed in what he says, for he is speaking in the stead and by the command of God. Now in fairness to the congregations in which Pastors serve there is the flip side of the coin and we also have this description of the Pastor's duties or what he owes to his congregation:

FOR BISHOPS, PASTORS, AND PREACHERS

Therefore, an overseer [pastor] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, apt to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (1 Timothy 3:2–4, 6; Titus 1:9) (Table Of Duties found in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther written in 1529 AD.)

I cannot tell you how many times we seminary students were told not to be bulls in China shops and go to our First Calls and upset the people. There seemed to be this underlying assumption on the part of our professors that we just couldn't wait to get to our First Calls and destroy God's people. To me this was a very evident example of a type of anti-clerical exhibition on their part. I remember one specific example in a classroom environment where I had just had enough of this type of nonsense from some of the professors.

To understand the environment surrounding the Fort Wayne Seminary, this was back in the 1990's when Dr. Robert Preus was unjustly removed from His call as the President of the Seminary. There were all manner of rumors (slander) as to why this happened and as a result there was a great deal of suspicion between those of us students and faculty who supported Dr. Preus and those who didn't support him. I remember one of the rumors (completely unsubstantiated) that Dr. Preus had been removed because he was an alcoholic. Supposedly some student went through his trash cans at his home and found an inordinate number of empty liquor bottles. It was later shown that this was unsubstantiated. That is a polite way of saying that this student was lying.

In any event at the beginning of this class referred to above the professor made the statement that they, (the professors who were responsible for our certification and placement into our first calls) were well aware that some of us intended to go to our first calls and wreak havoc upon the people of God. The inference was of course that we were going to tell the truth to the church about the events surrounding the unjust removal of a much loved Seminary President. He made the statement that they knew who we were and he said it to the entire class. I became furious with him and raised my hand and called him out on his statement. Basically I said to him that if they knew who these men were then it was their job to remove them from the Seminary and not certify them for placement. But it was decidedly not his job to come into a classroom and make a general sweeping accusation accusing no one but indicting everyone in that class with the intended consequence of casting doubt on the reputations of every person in the classroom. He

immediately stopped the class and called me into his office and threatened me with removal from the seminary for the cause that I was obviously unfit for the ministry as I did not display enough humility in my remarks to him. I told him his definition of humility was flawed as he actually meant to say that I was unwilling to lick his boots and accept everything he said without question. He threw me out of his office and I never heard from him again and here I am, a pastor!

Humility and faithfulness are the indeed the watch words of pastor. But this does not mean a pastor rolls over when some alpha male challenges him for the leadership of God's people.

Please allow me to give you some true to life situations in which pastors were removed from their calls by all too willing congregations who were backed up by District Presidents.

Somewhere in the late 1990's I received a call from a small congregation in Goshen, Indiana. I wanted to find out why they had gone through four or five pastors in a period of about five or six years. So I spoke to the circuit counselor who had been serving the vacancy. The previous pastor had been fired for cutting the grass of the parsonage without wearing a tee shirt. The other pastors had similar experiences. I use this example to show the some of the unbiblical reasons why some pastors are removed from their calls. Believe me these are not isolated incidents. They happen almost every day in this Synod and there is little to no help from District Presidents who actually have the nerve to point out the unjustness of these actions to the congregations and how unbiblical they are. There are really only three legitimate, biblical reasons for removing a pastor from His call; First, a persistence adherence to false teaching; Second, A lifestyle incompatible with Christianity such as willful and persistent sins. And third, an inability to carry of the duties of the public Ministry. None of the above mentioned reasons are grounds for removal from office and District Presidents are aware of this and will carry all of these on their consciences for the rest of their lives.

Another Pastor was removed from his office because he refused to let the local Methodist woman pastor take part in the Thanksgiving worship services of his congregation. She was the daughter of one of this pastor's members! Yet still another pastor was removed from his office for wanting to institute the celebration of Holy Communion at every Sunday Service. This was actually after a Synodical resolution at a 1995 Synodical Convention which encouraged Congregations to return to the Biblical practice of having the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper every Sunday! And so this pastor had faithfully taught about this in Bible Studies showing from both the Confessions and the Scripture that this was a biblical practice. He even had other members of his congregation who desired to have the Sacrament every Sunday. Yet he was removed from His office for being too inflexible and unloving; for forcing his will upon the people. It should be pointed out that this was exactly why they had called him in the first place, to administer the sacraments!!! In fact it was the people who were opposing him who were being unloving as they refused to allow the Sacrament to be received by those who desired it.

There are literally hundreds of these examples that could be used to describe these egregious situations. Allow me though to present an observation I have made over the years. These types of conflicts which take place in local congregations are very rarely about the reasons which are stated. **Rather they are all about power and authority.**

They have everything to do with an anticlerical bias that stems from what has been come to be called a hire and fire mentality. Certain people in the congregation wrongly believe that the Pastor works for them and if he displeases them in any way they have the right to get rid of him. Some of these people have committed the most egregious sins against the pastor and his family to accomplish their nefarious schemes. Some examples are to cut his salary down to a dollar. Another favorite ploy is to stop paying health and retirement benefits. The result of these strategies is of course to force their pastor out of his Divinely held office and to seek a call somewhere else.

I have had many conversations with people concerning the misuse of these biblical words. The most recent was with a young lady named Bethany. She asked a very pertinent question. She wanted to know if my insistence of these words was a question of semantics and therefore not all that important. I would possible agree with her if these words were not used by the Holy Spirit to proclaim biblical truths. These are the very words God has used to convey His truths concerning these various offices. Any other human understanding of these words diminishes the intention of the Holy Spirit as He describes the Office of the Ministry and the Doctrine of the Church. The misuse of these divinely inspired words completely changes both the functions of the Ministry and of the Church. Changing these words does much damage to the Lord's Church and sends it down the wrong path.

I actually have a litmus test for much of the above misrepresented words of the Scriptures. If goes something like this; if the early Christian church (1st three centuries) did not find it necessary to utilize these various programs we have invented in the 20th and 21st century Church then we don't need them either. After all in my wildest imagination I cannot envision the Apostle Paul sponsoring an all-night youth lock in in one of the local synagogues!

If they didn't need it then we don't need it now!

