

FEBRUARY 2023

THE CROSS & CROWN

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RECONCILIATION IN THE BIBLE: JACOB AND ESAU

PASTOR HANS FIENE

"Reconciliation" is what we call it when peace is restored between two (or more) people who have been separated from each other. When a divorced husband and wife forgive each other and reunite in marriage, they are reconciled to each other. When countries who have warred against each other sign a peace treaty, they are reconciled to each other. And, of course, when Christ destroyed the sins that separated us from our Father in heaven, He reconciled us to God, giving us eternal peace with the One who created us to be His own forever.

Because Christ was sent to reconcile us to God, and because Christ is the heart of the Scriptures, it should come as no surprise that reconciliation is a prominent concept in both the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, over the course of the next few months, I'd like to use my newsletter article to discuss a few examples of reconciliation that we see in the Scriptures. This month, we begin with Jacob and Esau.

To understand the story of Jacob and Esau, it helps to understand the concepts of the birthright and the blessing. The birthright was a promise rooted in inheritance, a promise where the oldest son would inherit a greater share of his father's wealth and treasure. The blessing, in the context of Abraham's greater family, was associated with the promised Messiah. God gave Abraham the promise that he would become the father of the Savior who would bless all nations of the world. Abraham then gave that promise to Isaac not Ishmael, and Isaac gave that promise to Jacob instead of Esau, which is why Christ was born into the house of Israel and not as a child of Ishmaelites (the Arabs) or the Edomites (the descendants of Esau).

But, of course, Jacob did not receive either the birthright or the blessing honestly. From the womb, he was trying to surpass Esau to be treated as the firstborn son. And through his trickery, he accomplished exactly that, getting Esau to trade him his birthright for a bowl of stew when Esau was in the throes of hunger and dressing up as Esau to deceive his father into giving him the blessing.

These actions divide Jacob and Esau from each other, both physically and emotionally. Jacob flees to the land of Haran to escape the wrath of his brother, who seems to hate Jacob for stealing these gifts more than he actually loved the gifts themselves. But in Genesis 33, after Jacob spends many years laboring in a foreign land, he finds himself standing face to face with his brother. And what is Esau's response?

"But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him." Two brothers divided by hatred, unbelief and deception find forgiveness in each other and peace with each other.

I don't think it's coincidental that this happens right after Jacob wrestles with God. Terrified that Esau is going to destroy his entire family and rob him of both the birthright and the blessing, Jacob goes off to pray and the preincarnate Son of God appears before him, inviting Jacob to dig his hands into Him. As Jacob fears that Esau is going to wipe out the promise of the Messiah he's received, the very Messiah Himself grabs a hold of Jacob and shows him that, no matter how much he struggles, God will not forget His promises. The God who could open the womb of his barren great-grandmother Sarah is the same God who can close the divide between Jacob and his brother. (CONT. on pg. 2)

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE

FEB 8

**FELLOWSHIP DINNER
(FAVORITE CASSEROLE) 5:30**

FEB 13

COUNCIL MTNG.

FEB 22

**SOUP DINNER (5:30)
ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
(7:00)**

FEB 27

ELDERS MTNG.

MAR 1

**SOUP DINNER (5:30)
LENTEN SERVICE (7:00)**



"...catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God's Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God's Law day and night."

Luther, Preface to The Large Catechism

POWER AND PRESENCE: THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION

VICAR MATT DOEBLER

When we confess that Christ ascended into heaven and now sits at God the Father's right hand, we are confessing two things to be true: 1) that Jesus is ruling and reigning over all creation and 2) that Jesus can be and is truly present in the ways he has promised to be.

To say that Christ sits at God's right hand is to say that he rightfully rules over all of creation. Shortly before Christ ascended into heaven, he announced to his disciples that "all authority in heaven and on Earth" had been handed over to him. (Mt. 28:18) This handing over was accomplished at the cross and in his resurrection. At the cross, Christ crushed the head of the Serpent and in his resurrection he defanged the jaws of Death. Thus, you might say that Christ's ascension is heaven's formal recognition that Christ has now conquered the Evil One and that "the devil and all his powers must be subject to him and lie beneath his feet until finally, at the Last Day, he will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc." (Luther, Large. Cat. 2.31)

Because Christ is ruling and reigning, he can be and truly is present where and when he wants to be. Simply put, Christ has complete authority, which means that nothing limits his ability to be present with us. This is why he could promise his disciples: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20) It's also how he can promise to be truly present in the Supper—"not according to the manner or characteristic of the human nature, but according to the manner and characteristic of God's right hand." (Form. Conc. Epit. 8.17)

The true blessing of this confession regarding Christ's authority and presence is that he exercises them for us—for us and for our salvation. Even though we do not now see Christ in the same way that his disciples did—we nevertheless experience the blessings of his reign when we hear and believe the promise that our sins are forgiven and that we have an eternal inheritance awaiting us on the day when Christ returns. Christ's ascension means that sin and death can never again overcome his power nor separate us from his presence.

**He ascended into
heaven and sits at
the right hand of God
the Father Almighty.**

CONT. FROM PAGE 1

Just as the Son of God touched Jacob's hip and put it out of joint, so the Son of God touched Esau's heart and healed it, causing the man who once wanted to kill Jacob for stealing his blessing to rejoice as he sees Jacob's blossoming family, a sign that the blessing will be fulfilled. In the end, the same Messiah who divided Jacob and Esau has now reunited them.

As Christians, this story should give us profound hope for two reasons. First, it shows us the heart of God. The reason God saw fit to have His preincarnate Son wrap His arms around Jacob was to show us that He is a God who will never let us go, the God who keeps His promises and who would give up everything in order to reconcile sinners to Himself. As St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Second, it shows that there is no earthly peace that is beyond God's reach. While it may be God's will for divisions to remain in this life, it is still certainly within God's power to turn the firsts of anger into the hands of forgiveness. If there are people in our lives who hate us because of the sins we've committed against them, if there are people who hate us because of our acts of innocence that they perceive as righteous, we are not without hope. The God who answered the prayers of Jacob and who healed the heart of Esau is our God. He can certainly make us one again. He can close our wounds, end our divisions, and make even the bitterest of enemies our beloved brothers through faith in the Son who reconciled us to Him.

MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

ALTAR GUILD

Are you interested in becoming a member of our Altar Guild? Members work in teams, preparing the church for worship and cleaning up after communion services. It requires only brief training. If you'd like to help, or want more information, please contact Melanie in the church office: melaniegoldsteinesbcglobal.net or 314-843-8448.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

Please prayerfully consider becoming a member of this new committee. Members will work together in planning and coordinating church dinners, picnics, meals for ill members, and keeping inventory of kitchen supplies, among other things. If you would like to serve on this committee, please sign-up on the bulletin board near the front door. Questions can be directed to Melanie in the church office: melaniegoldsteinesbcglobal.net or 314-843-8448.



VEGETABLE GARDEN

Thanks to all who have supported our church garden over the years. God has blessed our garden which provides hundreds of pounds of food to a local food pantry each year. They are so grateful whenever we deliver the produce.

It is now the middle of winter, but garden activities will need to begin within only a few weeks, when our first crop of onions will be planted. Our garden relies solely on donations to buy plants, seeds, fertilizer, and equipment to grow our vegetables.

To operate the Garden in 2023 we need about \$350, and we currently have only \$95 in our Garden account. We are asking for donations specifically to the Garden Fund in the next few weeks. There are POP Garden donation envelopes on the credenza in the narthex, that can be used to support our POP Garden. Looking forward to a bountiful year of gardening in 2023. We will be announcing Garden Work Sessions. Consider Joining us. Growing vegetables is one of the many Miracles of Life.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

CCLS UPDATE

Dr. Hoehner and the CCLS BOD extended a call to Rachel Klug to replace Janet Leet as the elementary school principal and she accepted.

Rachel attended CCLS as a child, and this is a tremendous demonstration of the legacy of CCLS ministry.

We remain appreciative to Janet for her faithful service and for her 50 years in Lutheran education.

LCMS LIFE MINISTRY

Our mission emphasis for the first quarter of 2023 is LCMS Life Ministry. This is a ministry network is comprised of thousands of people throughout the LCMS who are passionate about and engaged in sanctity of human life efforts, both in our church body and the culture at large. LCMS-LM speaks for human life by witnessing to our Lord's creation of life and His design for marriage and the family, and by advocating for the God-given value of all human life in the public square.

During this quarter, our congregation will match our members' contributions (up to a total of \$1500).

Find out more about the work of LCMS-LM by visiting their website: lcms.org/life

2022 GIVING STATEMENTS

2022 end of the year giving statements are available for pick-up on the credenza in the narthex. Call the church office with any questions about your statement.

A CLOSER LOOK AT... THE SEASON OF LENT

The season of Lent marks the six weeks (40 days) in the life of the church that precede Easter. The earliest record we have of the observation of Lent is in the *Canons of Nicaea* (AD 325). At this time, Lent was probably used as a time of intense catechetical instruction for new converts before they were received into the church through baptism.

As the number 40 suggests, Lent has traditionally been associated with times of fasting and repentance. Often, Lenten preaching will emphasize instruction from the catechism and/or lessons from Christ's passion.

The liturgical color for the season of Lent is purple. Historically, purple was considered the color of royalty--so much so that the ancient Romans had a law forbidding commoners to wear purple garments. Therefore, purple is a reminder that Jesus is the Righteous King who fulfills God's promise to David.

But the color purple also reminds us that Jesus came as a King who served his people through his innocent suffering and death. Purple reminds us that Jesus was "stricken, smitten, and afflicted" so that he could rescue us.

FEBRUARY 2023



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THR

FRI

SAT

	<p><i>How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!</i> Psalm 119:103</p>		<p> 1 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 2 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 3 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p> 4 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 5 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: McGrew Usher Team: 2 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 6 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Androff Usher Team: 2 8:00 p.m. Elders Meeting</p>	<p> 7 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p> 8 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 5:30 p.m. Dinner/Fellowship Night Theme: My Family's Favorite Casserole</p>	<p> 9 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 10 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p> 11 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon Swaddling Clothes Shopping Day Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 12 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Hall Usher Team: 3 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 13 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Weisheit Usher Team: 3 8:00 p.m. Council Meeting</p>	<p> 14 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study </p>	<p> 15 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 16 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 17 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p> 18 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 19 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Lasky Usher Team: 4 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 20 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Fletcher Usher Team: 4</p>	<p> 21 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 22 Matins Service 5:30 p.m. Lenten Dinner 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Worship Com. Assist.: Hall Usher Team: 2</p>	<p> 23 9:00 a.m. Matins Service</p>	<p> 24 9:00 a.m. Matins Service Church Office Closed</p>	<p> 25 Church Office Closed</p>
<p> 26 HOLY COMMUNION 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: McGrew Usher Team: 1 10:30 a.m. Sunday School/Bible Class</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. 27 Matins Service HOLY COMMUNION 7:00 p.m. Worship Service Com. Assist.: Doebler Usher Team: 1</p>	<p> 28 9:00 a.m. Matins Service 10:30 a.m. Pastor's Bible Study</p>	<p>Deadline to submit an announcement for the bulletin is 12:00 Noon, each Wednesday.</p>			<p> <i>Altar Guild</i> Ann Million Paul Heibredner</p>